TEACHERS AND CURRICULUM

VOLUME 11 2009

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Subscriptions:
within New Zealand $25 (includes postage)
overseas $40 (includes postage)

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It includes articles about curriculum issues, research in the area of curriculum and informed curriculum practice. Reviews of curriculum related books may also be included.

The Opinion item is contributed by a leading New Zealand educationalist.

ISSN 1174-2208

Notes for Contributors

Teachers and Curriculum provides an avenue for the publication of papers that:

• raise important issues to do with the curriculum
• report on research in the area of curriculum
• provide examples of informed curriculum practice
• review books that have a curriculum focus.

This peer reviewed journal welcomes papers on any of these from tertiary staff and students, teachers and other educators who have a special interest in curriculum matters. Papers on research may be full papers, or if time or space is at a premium, research notes, that is a 2,000 word summary.

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Length

Manuscripts should not normally exceed 7,000 words, including references and appendices. An abstract must be provided. Abstracts should not be more than 100 words.

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Acknowledgement of Reviewers

We wish to thank the following people who reviewed for this volume of Teachers and Curriculum. Asterisks indicate those reviewers who contributed more than one review.

Debbie Hill
Gregory Lee *
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David McKenzie
Trish McMenamin
Philip Munro *
Anne-Marie O’Neill
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Nurturing Gifted and Talented Children: A Parent-Teacher Partnership.

Wellington: Learning Media.

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The need to cater for students who are gifted and talented is now recognised officially in New Zealand. In 2001, a Ministry of Education working party on gifted education recommended that a book be published that would encourage and assist parents and teachers to form positive and facilitative partnerships in order to "nurture" children who are gifted. This long-awaited book draws on the experiences and reflections of teachers, caregivers, and children, and is intended to serve as a "bridge" between educators and families. In this country, school teachers are able to establish and implement their own programmes for gifted children based on flexible guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2000). This book provides some "common ground" for both schools and communities. Hopefully it will enable both teachers and parents to come to useful understandings about what being gifted and talented can entail, and how these special abilities might best be developed for each young person.

Jill Bevan-Brown and Shirley Taylor, who are the authors of this book, have been careful to include cautions about the identification, characteristics, and milestones of individuals who may be gifted. They emphasise that each child is unique and, while there may be common aspects amongst children who are believed to be gifted, "these children are individuals who may experience many, some, or none of the challenges described" (p. 57). Throughout the text, quick reference icons are used to highlight information to be thought about or followed up. Finally, at the end of the book, to assist caregivers an extensive range of resources is outlined, such as books, websites, and relevant organisations.

The book is made up of two long chapters and the layout, like the walls and backdrop of the contemporary primary classroom, is very "busy". The many images of happy people will invite readers to engage with the content and the variety of these pictures also shows an earnest commitment to diversity, as mandated by the Ministry of Education (2007). There are, however, an array of assumptions within the text which demand examination. Foremost amongst these, perhaps, is the uncertain nature of what it means to be gifted. The book's definition of who is gifted is elusive, and hence expansive, and this means that, inevitably, some children are going to be identified as gifted who are not. Conversely, a child who is gifted according to one school's criteria may not be so when he or she is shifted to a new school.

There is absolutely no reference to expectation research in the text, and yet we have known since Pygmalion in the Classroom (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), and before, that expectation effects can be very powerful in terms of children's performance. Actually the text has many expectations of its own. For example, children who are gifted can be "quiveringly alive" (p. 54), and these sorts of expectations can be fairly tiring for young people to have to live up to! The authors do well to explain that the emotional "overexcitabilities" referred to here need to be cushioned by support from dedicated adults and peers, if this intensity is to become a "positive and integral part of their giftedness" (p. 54). Incidentally, the book expresses a belief that it is possible to be gifted and "well adjusted." This is an understandable hope but it may be that most forms of exceptionality come at a price. In other words, a person simply cannot be "different" and "regular".

It is a fact that the pace and forms of human development in early childhood are such a miracle that it is easy to perceive normal development as exceptional attainment. Masten (2001) invoked the term "ordinary magic" to describe the
The complexity of community and family influences on children’s achievement in New Zealand: Best evidence synthesis. Wellington: Ministry of Education.


