

Celebrate Gifted Awareness Week 15-22 June

8 June 2009

Dear Member of Parliament

Every child deserves the right to an appropriate and meaningful education. Providing educational equity means meeting the learning needs of all individuals and gifted students need educational experiences that match their different ways and rates of learning so their potential can be realised.

This coming week, 15 to 22 June, we will celebrate *Gifted Awareness Week* to bring broader awareness to the joys – and challenges – in teaching, parenting, mentoring, supporting and, most importantly, *being* a gifted and talented child. On behalf of our members and stakeholders, who represent teachers, professionals, parents and gifted and talented children, we are writing to urge you to discuss and debate the issue of gifted and talented education.

Giftedness and talent is broad and wide-ranging, inclusive of all ethnicities, cultures, socioeconomic groups and those with disabilities. Having exceptional academic, creative, artistic, cultural, leadership or physical abilities and qualities means these children have unique learning needs and social and emotional differences that require appropriate education, support and understanding.

Since 2005 schools have been required to identify and provide for gifted and talented students, and this has been a huge step forward in raising the awareness and interest for appropriate gifted education provisions for all schools. However, recent reports demonstrate that many schools are struggling to meet this requirement due mainly to limited funding and insufficient professional development and support.

The Ministry of Education has supported initiatives in gifted and talented education since 2003, including professional development, innovative programmes and research. The 2009 Budget has cut funding for professional development through School Support Services. The other initiatives are currently under review and potentially at risk.

The future of gifted and talented education is unknown, and yet recent research shows that many of our schools are failing to identify and provide for gifted and talented learners. The enclosed fact sheet further details the current situation.

We celebrate *Gifted Awareness Week* by urging you and your colleagues in Parliament to question, debate and discuss the review, with the aim of *increasing* the investment in and attention to our gifted and talented children.

Yours sincerely

Assoc Prof Tracy Riley, giftEDnz The Professional Association for Gifted Education
Rose Blackett, New Zealand Association for Gifted Children
Kathy Williams, Gifted Education Centre
Deb Clark, Gifted Kids Programme
Rosemary Cathcart, REACH Education
Jeanette Christensen, Christchurch Association for Gifted Education
Mary St George, Waikato Association for Gifted Children
Carolyn Stein, Otago Association for Gifted and Talented
Kate Coleman, Canterbury Association for Gifted Children and Youth
Linda Williams, North Canterbury Support for Gifted and Talented Children

Enclosed: Fact Sheet, Organisational Contacts