

Chairperson's Report **Tracy Riley**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the first Annual General Meeting of *giftEDnz: The Professional Association for Gifted Education*. Today I would like to share with you some of the background to the formation of our association, the work undertaken by the Board since its election in 2009, and some future initiatives. At the conclusion of the report, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Background to giftEDnz

In late 2007 a Steering Committee successfully applied for funding for the establishment of a national professional association for gifted and talented education. The \$15,900¹ of funding was needed for regular face-to-face committee meetings and for administrative and technical support to get the organisation off the ground.

The committee was comprised of a willing group of professionals interested in moving the idea forward, and representative of different educational sectors across New Zealand:

- Annie Bonifant, Gifted and Talented Education Teacher, Fendelton Primary School
- Deb Clark, Assistant Principal and Teacher, Gifted Kids Programme
- Ann Easter, National Coordinator Gifted & Talented Advisory Support, University of Waikato
- Susan Hassall, Principal, Hamilton Boys High School
- Leeana Herewini, Advisory Support (Maori Education), University of Waikato
- Roger Moltzen, Associate Professor in Gifted and Talented Education, University of Waikato

¹ Please note that the funding gained interest of \$89.32, making the total funding available \$15,989.32.

- Tracy Riley, Associate Professor in Gifted and Talented Education, Massey University
- Louise Tapper, Doctoral Candidate, University of Canterbury; and Organiser of Rising Tides conference (2006)

During 2008 and early 2009, the committee met on six occasions in Hamilton and Wellington, and communicated regularly by email, phone, and teleconference. The Todd Foundation funding was used to pay for the travel, facilities, accommodation, organisation, and catering costs for these meetings (\$7,137.30). The main work undertaken, and decisions made, during this time are detailed below.

Naming the organisation. *giftEDnz: The Professional Association for Gifted Education* reflects the goals, membership, and focus of the organisation (as outlined below).

Determining the goals of the organisation. The goals of giftEDnz are to advocate for equitable educational opportunities for gifted and talented students; to enhance the profile of gifted and talented education in New Zealand; to create a professional community for networking, supporting and learning; to encourage the pursuit and sharing of best practice in gifted and talented education; and to provide liaison with international organisations and other national associations for gifted and talented education.

Determining membership. The organisation is for anyone with a professional interest in gifted and talented education. This includes teachers, principals, counsellors, RTLBs, educational psychologists, teacher educators, professional development providers, researchers, and postgraduate students. Three types of one or three year membership are available, with different membership fees: individual, institutional, and tertiary student.

Determining benefits of membership. It is envisaged that the organisation's members will have access to regular publications; biennial conferences; online resources; professional learning opportunities; and mentoring and support. Foundation members (those joining before March 2009) received a certificate and link from the website.

Governing membership. A draft constitution was developed, but not ratified, as it was felt important that a newly elected Board make some decisions regarding government.

Applying for charitable trust status. An application was drafted, once the constitution was agreed; however, the steering committee decided that the newly elected Board would need to submit this.

Ensuring cultural inclusivity and appropriateness. It was important that biculturalism, including both language and values, be reflected in the development of all elements of the organisation (including, but not limited to, its goals, logo, 2009 mihi and protocols).

Liaising with the New Zealand Association for Gifted Children (NZAGC). It was important that this professional organisation be seen as complementary to, rather than in conflict with, the largest national association to date. This included ongoing conversations with their Board, as well as the publication of an article in their magazine, *Tall Poppies*, explaining giftEDnz's development.

Branding the organisation. The logo (as shown on banner of page 1 of this document) was designed in consultation with a graphic designer and is used for all marketing and publicity purposes, including our website. Elements of the logo reflect the goals of both the association and New Zealand's unique identity (eg., the emphasis on education; lettering integrates the koru; byline is in Maori and English; colour choice reflects New Zealand's green image).

Developing and maintaining an online presence. A website was developed, which includes an online membership registration facility. See www.giftednz.org.nz

Recruiting membership. A brochure, bookmarks, and banner were designed for distribution at conferences, to various networks and contacts. A public relations campaign was undertaken with a private media consultant.

Surveying membership. A survey of member needs and commitments was developed by the Steering Committee and released in conjunction with the Inaugural Meeting. It was analysed by a Steering Committee member to assist the Board in setting priorities for future directions and initiatives.

Electing the Board. Processes and procedures for seeking nominations and managing voting were developed and undertaken.

Hosting Inaugural Meeting 2009. On Saturday, 14 March 2009, the Inaugural Meeting of giftEDnz was held in Rotorua at the Reaching Forward conference.

Throughout the 2008 year, the steering committee felt it was important to *shape* the organisation, but not “stamp” it with any individual or collective influences or directions. Therefore, while a number of possible initiatives were debated and discussed (e.g., a newsletter, 2010 conference, affiliation with international organisations), the committee felt these were ultimately decisions of the first elected Board. Also, the committee were volunteers from different parts of the country and institutions, who were mainly working as educators. The committee decided a secretariat was needed to support the facilitation of some of the development activities.

The committee worked with Conference and Events, Ltd. which was able to provide graphic/website design, printing, hosting, distribution, etc; financial and membership management; ongoing communication with members (email, phone, postal); and assist with the organisation of the first Inaugural Meeting and Board election. The remaining Todd Foundation funding was used to pay for some of these services (\$8,852.02).

2009-2010 Progress and Initiatives

Elections for the Board were held online and announced at the Inaugural Meeting held on 14 March 2009 in Rotorua. The following five members were elected (from a pool of 12 nominated members):

- Rosemary Cathcart, REACH Education
- Ann Easter, University of Waikato
- Tracy Riley, Massey University
- Anne Sturgess, Edgecumbe College
- Louise Tapper, University of Canterbury

The Board met for the first time in April 2009, electing Tracy as the Chairperson; Louise as Deputy Chairperson; and Ann as the Secretary.

Portfolios were developed with shared responsibilities (e.g., advocacy/communications; website development). The constitution enables the Board to co-opt two additional members; therefore, given the make-up of the Board, representation from Maori and early childhood education was sought. In consultation with our Maori members, a shared position was created for this group's representation. Sue Breen, Small Poppies, Gifted Education Centre, was co-opted; Leeana Herewini, Laura Hawksworth, and Hinetai Tait were co-opted in a shared position representing Maori educators. In June 2009, Rosemary Cathcart agreed to serve as Treasurer.

During 2009, the Board met three times in Hamilton, but maintained ongoing communication using email, phone calls, google docs, etc. A major focus of the Board's work, undertaken in 2009, was establishing ways of working protocols, roles, and responsibilities – and picking up where the Steering Committee left off. Although some Board members were also on the Steering Committee, not all were – so there was some backtracking and re-thinking of priorities and initiatives. For instance, the draft constitution required additional modifications before being presented for ratification by members; the trust application needed completion and submission; and decisions needed to be made regarding a newsletter, proposed 2010 conference, and other ideas floated by the Steering Committee. The Board also began using new online tools and technology – both an experimental and challenging learning curve! Building membership and raising awareness of our existence as an organisation remained important work undertaken by the Board in 2009. A database of educational conferences and meetings was developed for distributing bookmarks and postcards, but also to inform members of upcoming events. It is hoped that in the future this database can also be used to encourage members to publish and present information on gifted and talented students across educational sectors and providers.

The Steering Committee was reliant upon Conference and Events to act as a secretariat, managing membership, finances, the website, publicity, communication with members, and so on. The Board has worked during 2009 to shift these management structures away from an external provider for both

financial and pragmatic reasons. In doing so, the Board has been fortunate to gain the sponsorship-in-kind of Massey University College of Education, the University of Waikato, REACH Education, Edgecumbe College, and the Gifted Education Centre. These organisations have provided administrative support, facilities, release from teaching for Board meetings, and some travel costs. Conference and Events has also sponsored the organisation during 2009 as these shifts are made from external management to self-management. We appreciate the support of Conference and Events, and they will continue to be recognised as sponsors-in-kind of giftEDnz.

During 2009, unexpected changes and opportunities arose in gifted and talented education, and the Board thought these were important areas for giftEDnz involvement:

- 1. Gifted Awareness Week** Initiated by the Gifted Education Centre and coinciding with the birthday of the late Prof George Parkyn, Gifted Awareness was held 15-22 June 2009. During this week, giftEDnz worked alongside other national organisations to raise awareness of the needs of gifted and talented children and young people. Shared initiatives included a press release; a co-signed letter to all Members of Parliament, including a Fact Sheet (including cuts to gifted education funding in May 2009); a template letter for writing to Parliament; and ideas for celebrating and collaborating. giftEDnz also had some of its own highlights for that week: the first issue of giftEDnewz The Online Newsletter of the Professional Association for Gifted Education; a press release to raise awareness; and a letter to all Members of Parliament. See our website: www.giftednz.org.nz/awareness.html
- 2. Gifted and Talented Education Working Group** In August 2009 Tracy, as Chairperson of giftEDnz, was asked by the Hon Heather Roy, Associate Minister of Education, to co-facilitate the Working Group with the Ministry of Education. The purpose of the meeting was to seek expert advice on, and recommendations for, the future direction and organisation of education for gifted and talented children and young

people regionally and nationally. This meeting brought together organisations and associations which have not always had a voice to Government and Ministry, but also which have not had the opportunities to work together. The minutes from this meeting are available www.giftednz.org.nz/data/Working_Group_Notes_Aug_28.pdf

- 3. Ministerial Advisory Group on Gifted and Talented** In November 2009 Min Roy announced a newly formed advisory group for gifted and talented education. Tracy, as Chairperson, was invited to represent giftEDnz.

These initiatives provided opportunities for the Board of giftEDnz to show both responsiveness and pro-active advocacy by providing a shared voice to Government, the Ministry, and other groups/organisations. Similarly though, the Board has been able to keep educational professionals informed of current happenings through ongoing communications. The three major foci of membership communications in 2009 were:

- **Emails to Members** This has proven a highly effective way of sharing the latest news, events, and issues with members!
- **Member Survey** An online survey of members was undertaken and provided important information of their needs, which, in turn, has informed our strategic planning.
- **giftEDnewz The Online Newsletter of the Professional Association for Gifted Education** Three issues were edited and produced in 2009 by Tracy and Rosemary (available at www.giftednz.org.nz/news.html). 2010 will see the creation of four issues by an editorial committee (distributed to members only via email). The newsletter provides members with information on upcoming events, resources, different perspectives, Board reports, advocacy and legislative updates, etc.
- **www.giftednz.org.nz** The website has been substantially updated and added to in 2009. It now includes more information about giftEDnz

activities, but also a greater number of resources for members to explore and access.

Over the last few months, the Board has been working towards this first Annual General Meeting, and we are delighted to have been able to hold this in conjunction with today's mini-conference. I would like to thank Massey University College of Education for supporting the event and to acknowledge the contributions of our speakers.

- *Vision and Initiatives for Gifted and Talented Education*, The Hon Heather Roy, Associate Minister of Education
- *Implementing National Standards for Primary-aged Gifted and Talented Students*, Chris Harwood, Ministry of Education
- *Using Learning Stories with Young Gifted Children*, Dr Valerie Margrain, Lecturer, Massey University College of Education
- *Supporting Māori and Pasifika Gifted and Talented Students*, Viv Russell, Rutherford College
- *Empowering Children Through Personal Growth*, Professor Michael Piechowski, Senior Fellow of the Institute for Educational Advancement and Professor Emeritus of Education and Psychology, Northland College, Ashland, Wisconsin, USA

Looking Ahead

In January 2010 the Board held a Strategic Planning Day. This gave an opportunity to reflect upon the association's goals, and how these might be realised in practice in the long and short term. These plans remain a 'work in progress' but explore the possibilities of developing stronger relationships with national and international educational, political, advocacy and media organisations; the development of resources for educators; offering online and face-to-face professional development opportunities; and hosting a national conference in 2011.

As a first step towards achieving these goals, the Board submitted an Expression of Interest to the Todd Foundation last month. The proposal has been short-listed and a final application will be submitted in early April. The proposal seeks funding for the ongoing development of giftEDnz through enacting our strategic plan, and specifically the goal to create a professional community for networking, learning and support. The initiatives, to be funded over two years, include:

1. **Formation of Special Interest Groups** – In the first instance we would like to develop groups focused on Maori learners and young gifted children (early childhood). These groups would be supported by sponsored writing retreats for the development of resources (online, presentations, and publications), an online learning environment to enable peer mentoring, and a strand in the 2011 national conference. We see the development of this model as leading in future to other interest groups (e.g., twice-exceptional, postgraduate research students).
2. **Board Meetings and Planning Days** – Currently the association does not have adequate funding to support the facilitation of regular face-to-face meetings of the Board. As volunteers we are paying from our personal and professional funds (with the support of our employers in some instances). We are seeking funding for these meetings.
3. **National Conference 2011** – We are seeking seed funding for a national conference for professionals in gifted and talented education.

Members will be informed on the outcome of this funding application in early May, and we look forward to greater membership involvement in these initiatives!

We are working towards greater empowerment of our members to be more actively involved in meeting the organisation's goals. For example, in 2010, an editorial committee has been established for the newsletter. There is a continuing drive to attract new members so that we are able to fulfil the goal of supporting, and sharing ideas with, as many professionals as possible

throughout New Zealand. We are currently at 199 members, and these include individuals and institutions. Perhaps today we will get member number 200!

In 2010 we will also be working alongside other groups to celebrate Gifted Awareness Week, 14 to 20 June. The Gifted Education Centre has been the leader in initiating and planning this week as a celebration of our gifted and talented children and young people, and to coincide with the birthday of Prof George Parkyn, one of New Zealand's leaders in education. You will find some suggestions for activities that can be undertaken in your schools and communities in your conference bag. Other ideas are available on our website.

On reflection, and as a member of both the Steering Committee and the Board of giftEDnz, I believe the greatest cause for celebration has been the bringing together of passionate educators with a shared purpose. Being able to collaborate, communicate, and advocate with other like-minded teachers, academics, researchers, professional development providers, and others has been positive, and giftEDnz has, to a large extent, served as the catalyst for this bringing together. This is in line with the original aims of such an organisation which were expressed at a meeting of 100 interested people as far back as 2006, when the idea of a national organisation was first suggested. I also believe that giftEDnz has enabled greater transparency in gifted and talented education, particularly the sharing of information about initiatives at a governmental and ministerial level. The collaboration with different key stakeholder groups has also led to greater inclusion of multiple perspectives as gifted and talented education develops. Having a shared voice and vision has also helped raise the profile of gifted and talented education in New Zealand.

However, it has not all been smooth sailing! As this report indicates, the Steering Committee employed the services of an external organisation for secretariat support, and the transferral of the organisation's management and structures to a new Board has been challenging. The start-up and set-up

costs (in terms of both finances and time) have been high, and require enormous amounts of 'unpaid' voluntary input, in order to begin to meet the goals of giftEDnz. Without the generous support of the Todd Foundation in our initial development, and subsequently, the Board members' employers, the many milestones we have met would not have been possible.

As Chairperson I would like to acknowledge the contributions made this year by each of our Board members. Without their support, this organisation would not be where it is today. It has been, at times, a steep learning curve, and I have greatly appreciated the professionalism, passion, and commitment of my fellow Board members. Thank you!

It is now time to empower you, our members, making this *your* professional association for gifted and talented education. I look forward to working both with and for you over this next year.