FRONT COVER

Cloe Legge
Gore High School in Southland
The cover picture is a print by Cloe Legge. Cloe is a Year 10 pupil at Gore High School in Southland.

The print is part of a study of Gore and the immediate surrounds. The print is the distilled essence of Cloe’s view of the area in which she is educated. The koru represents not only the many gardens and parks but also echoes the arching shape of the leaping trout for which the Mataura River is famous.

Gore High School was established in 1908. It was the first school and the largest secondary school in Eastern Southland. The school opened on its present site in 1954. The coeducational Year 9-13 school has a roll of 580 local students and six international students. The school sits in nine acres of grounds in the heart of Southland surrounded by beautiful productive farm land, and close to stunning lakes and majestic mountain scenery.

Gore High School hosts one of the three RTLB who service the Eastern Southland cluster.
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Editorial

The indigenous artwork on the cover of this issue of Kairaranga reminded the editing team of the first journal cover in 1999, and caused us to reflect on the "grass roots" of the journal. Key purposes of the journal have always included the promotion of effective practice and relevant research in special education. Education is a broad and diverse sector, and the contributions to this journal are an eclectic mix that reflects this.

The "grass roots" theme also highlights that effective practice is not necessarily novel – it is also important that we continue to reinforce sound practices that we assume are universally known, although they may not necessarily be so. Publishing examples of quality everyday practice provides opportunities for us all to reflect on whether there are differences between our beliefs, what we think we do, and what we really do in our work with children, teachers, families, whānau and communities.

First in this issue is George Middleton's interview with Professor Ted Glynn, who has made a huge contribution to education in New Zealand. Ted modestly discusses how his personal journey has woven with his professional life, and the importance of his bicultural learning. The experience of being special education needs is reiterated in the following two articles also. Chris Brough practically illustrates how teachers can draw on students' lived experiences and integrate these with curriculum and classroom learning. Professor Barry Carpenter contributes a UK perspective to the journal, and highlights the critical but sometimes neglected contribution of fathers. Family and whānau support is especially critical for learners with special education needs, and this article provides some practical suggestions for schools on how to support fathers.

Bullying is an issue of strong interest to Kairaranga readers, and we have two articles in this issue. The first is a timely research paper looking at one aspect of text-bullying; the second draws from rural New Zealand to provide an analogy between animal and school behaviour.

Examples of good practice are reported in four papers of different content and context, but that collectively acknowledge the critical role that teachers have in supporting student learning. The research paper on the Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading illustrates how important it is for teachers to evaluate assessment instruments and their purposes. The multiplicity of roles teachers have as they work with learners can be illustrated in two stories, one on transition to school and one of a learner in a residential setting and her caseworker. Practical suggestions for teachers to use music within their repertoire of strategies for learners with special education needs are provided in Paula O'Regan's practice paper, and we hope many of you will include some of these in your work.

The final paper in this journal continues the music theme with a substantive contribution reviewing music therapy research. As music therapy is becoming increasingly used and acknowledged in New Zealand, this is also a timely article. We hope that each reader finds material of particular personal resonance amongst these diverse contributions.

Noho ora mai, nā
Carol, Graeme, Jean, Jo & Valerie

Hutia te rito o te pū harakeke
Kei whea te kōmakō e kō?
If the flax plant is allowed to wither
From where will the bellbird sing?

A plea to acknowledge grass roots
The essences of life abide there

Kairaranga

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Merging Personal and Professional Identities

An interview with Ted Glynn

George Middleton
Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour, Hamilton West RTLB cluster

Professor Ted Glynn
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ABSTRACT
This is an excerpt from two conversations between Professor Ted Glynn and George Middleton. Ted Glynn’s contributions to education have included being Foundation Professor of Teacher Education at the University of Waikato, a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand, and researcher and author. Professor Glynn was a part of the team of academics from three universities, Waikato, Auckland and Wellington, responsible for training the first teachers to become Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (Brown et al., 2000). Ted shares part of his professional journey and how it was illuminated by his family experiences, and how he hopes to continue researching in bicultural and bilingual education.

6. What was your theoretical position when you started on your journey?

T. There’s some interesting background there, George. When I became a Masters student in Education at the University of Auckland I’d just completed my primary teacher training at Auckland Teachers College, and completed a third year studentship to allow me to finish the degree. During the time I worked on my Masters degree I encountered two engaging and enthusiastic lecturers, Marie Clay, who had just come up from Wellington, and Warwick Elley who’d just come back from Canada, and I was deeply influenced by each of them. My undergraduate degree was a double major in psychology and education, and I received a fairly traditional behaviourist background, but I also had a reasonably good educational background having qualified as a primary teacher. Marie Clay’s work influenced me by showing that if we wanted to develop materials and strategies to help children experiencing difficulties with reading then we needed to observe children who were successful readers and find out what it is they do that’s successful and then try to understand it and include this in programmes for readers who needed support, rather than just offering them more and more of the same. I asked Warwick for advice as to whether I should go on in psychology and education because I had majored in both. I knew he had been in the same position. He said, “Well, for me there was no choice. I chose education and I haven’t regretted it one bit.” I thought, “OK, if it’s good enough for him …”, so I made that choice.

G. Yes. RTLBs have had national conferences in Waitangi and Rotorua where we experienced two very different and enriching Māori worlds. How did you start your journey into learning te reo and tikanga?

T. There are probably two answers to that. When I was doing my PhD in Canada (University of Toronto) I was asked if I could speak Māori by various other PhD students, and I couldn’t. I knew only a few words and a few phrases. I decided that when I had got this PhD out of the way, and returned to New Zealand I would certainly undertake to learn Māori, and I took a number of courses beginning around 1969, and then intermittently, one or two a year, with occasional years off. I am very aware that I have been given a great gift, in the form of support and teaching from Māori women that were my tutors in those courses. I’m thinking of Tilly Reedy, … and Meremere Penfold, who started me out on this journey. Then, while I was Chairperson of the Department of Education at the University of Otago, there was a woman who, sadly, has now passed on called Alva Kapa, a strong, staunch Kai Tahu woman, and she “gingered me along,” in my role as departmental chairperson. It was 1990, the time for recalling the 150 years since the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, and for assessing to what extent the Treaty had been honoured in that time. I took these Treaty issues and challenges seriously and tried to effect some changes within our department, like inviting local Kai Tahu people, associated with marae at Otakou, Huirapa and Moeraki into the department to talk to the staff and to our postgraduate Educational Psychology and Counselling students about the implications of the Treaty for educational professionals. That was a really challenging process! But it was also really rewarding in terms of positive outcomes. Some of those educational psychologists and counsellors from those years say they still value very much what they learned about their job from listening to those Kai Tahu people talk about their history and their current concerns for the wellbeing of their children and mokopuna. Some of these graduates have gone on to take Māori language courses but, just as importantly, others have become so much more aware of how to understand and relate to Māori people with respect.

So, yes, it came from there. But there was also a powerful defining moment for me, a personal experience around about fifteen years ago. I met, for the very first time, an older brother, a tuakana, who is now in his mid-80s and who lives in Waipiro Bay, where he has lived all his life. We have found out that we have the same father.
My father married Hiria Akena in the 1920s and she died in childbirth, giving birth to this boy, this baby, my brother Albert Fairclough Glynn, but known as Jack Wharehinga because he was a whangai of the Wharehinga family. Now, if you think about the 1920s in the East coast of New Zealand, there’s no way a Pākehā man could have taken a baby away from the whānau after the death of his mother so near to childbirth. Now it’s a long story. My father had married twice since that marriage, and before I came on the scene, and so had my mother. At that time I had two half-sisters and a half-brother, all over twenty years older than me. But all through my growing up I had no knowledge at all of having another older brother. However, looking back with the advantage of hindsight, I realise that I had been aware that there was something going on that I didn’t know about, and that some of my family were not at all keen for me to learn about it, for all those sad reasons that go back to that era … But I had these strange early childhood memories of my father singing to me in Māori, especially when he sang me to sleep, so he must …

6. He was a Pākehā?

T. … Pākehā … absolutely. So Jack and I are whanaunga, tuakana and teina, because we have the same father. One of us was born in the 1920s and raised by Māori family, speaking the language and living and working in the heart of Ngāti Porou, and the other was born over 20 years later and raised completely as a Pākehā, living and schooling in South Auckland. But the point is, as a young child you never question many things that happen. The questioning often comes much later when you recall some of those early childhood memories … I can still remember him singing those Māori songs, and using quite a few Māori words in his talking … but I never ever asked why, or how …

6. No, they were just natural …

T. That was just my Dad. Many years later, long after he had died, and after I got the news that I might have another older brother, I did ask the question! I was determined to work on it. My wife Vin has a long-standing interest in genealogy and she certainly helped me enormously with my search … but to cut a long story short … I then looked back on my childhood memories and I began to reflect more carefully on … specific family events, and to “reinterpret” certain family conversations. I began to see things quite differently …

6. Talk about a paradigm shift!

T. … It was an utterly transformative process! So, again to cut that long story short, we tracked down his whereabouts, see things quite differently …

It will either be him or the next one, but try.” She put me through, and I suddenly found I had to say something to this voice at the other end! I recall saying something nerdy like: “Excuse me, you don’t know me, but …”, that kind of a conversation, and that started me on this long and very emotional journey, a journey of self-discovery as much as anything else … and that gave me a huge impetus to do more Māori learning and to get to know my connections with my tuakana. But being in the heart of Ngāti Porou, Jack had been brought up as a Māori speaker, and English for him was very much a second language. So that provided me with a further incentive to try to learn to speak a little more. I am now very proud to acknowledge the world of my tuakana and how much it means to me, in my mihi:

Ko Hikurangi te maunga
Ko Waipu te awa
Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi
Ko Te Whānau a Rakairoa te hapu
Ko Kiekie te marae
Ko Hau te whare
Ko Rapata Wahawaha te tangata
Ko Jack Wharehinga tōku tuakana

That powerful experience of discovering important whanaunga connections has very much altered my own identity as a Pākehā person in Aotearoa / New Zealand. This in turn, led me into taking out a Diploma for Graduates (in Māori Studies) while I was at the University of Otago. In that programme, I received some beautiful and inspirational teaching from two very talented academics, Godfrey and Toroa Pohatu, which I will always treasure. (Sadly, Godfrey is no longer amongst us). And all those experiences later built my determination to ensure that a strong input from Te Ao Māori went into the development and implementation of the RTLB programme …

6 I wondered how your experience and cultural understanding changed after discovering in fact you were whanaunga to Jack?

T. It certainly made me look at things and listen to Māori people in a completely different way. But, yes, I certainly did have a strong background in applied behaviour analysis, but I was never … maybe you could have said I was probably a methodological behaviourist, in terms of the importance of gathering and analysing data on behaviour but not so much an ideological behaviourist. You could see that in the work that I was engaged in at Glenburn, the early days of Glenburn in Auckland, and also in South Auckland during the early days of the Mangere Guidance Unit. These were both crucial experiences for me that eventually fed into the RTLB programme, especially given that we had to find better ways of supporting and working with Māori students, and their whānau. I could see some particular strengths of that kind of applied behaviour analysis approach. You had some fairly good tools, and you could actually put those tools, the behaviour observation and recording tools into the hands of teachers or students and they could even learn skills in self-management of behaviour …
It didn’t have to be top-down, like “I’ve come to fix you, and here are the answers”. It was more like: “Here are some tools that you could look at, and that I have found very useful, particularly in the difficult situations of students at Glenburn (you know this was at the very beginning of Glenburn), kids with emotionally, so-called emotionally disturbed behaviours and so on, and behavioural self management strategies did give me a way in, but I never ever felt constrained to understand what happened only in terms of behavioural constructs. I would look at the outcomes, even back then, and think, yes, well, there could be a number of reasons why this (good result) has come about, even though we did quite specific things.

And so, later on, when I started looking at behaviour through cultural eyes, I thought well, there’s a whole different way of understanding what’s happening here. Some of the more recent work done by our Poutama Pounamu whānau (that’s the Ministry of Education (GSE) Educational Research Centre in Tauranga) has contributed importantly to an analysis of special education best practice for Māori, within the Specialist Education Services (SES), just before SES was wound up and became Group Special Education (GSE) within the Ministry of Education … We had noticed in our work at Poutama Pounamu that despite all the things found to be wanting within SES at that time, they had got a number of things right, particularly concerning effective practice for Māori. I think this was mainly because Māori cultural messages and concerns were being listened to. We identified a number of sites of effective practice for Māori (Berryman, Glynn, Togo & McDonald, 2004), for instance, a whole-school project, involving eliminating violence, a Mau Rakau wānanga for older students experiencing serious behaviour difficulties, on an island in the Marlborough Sounds, as well as excellent case work supporting Māori whānau – in really challenging situations like a family with four young children including newly-arrived twins and at least three of those children needing to wear hearing aids. The highly effective outcomes in this case indicated a wide range of people had been involved – both family and professionals, and that they had worked within a Māori worldview … Somebody moved to support that mother, somebody else supported the father – and others supported the children. These people were not your highly qualified professionals; they were ordinary family members, extended family members, whānau basically. But they were working alongside and in full collaboration with SES professionals … so that the input from both the professionals and from whānau members was enhanced by the collaborative relationship.

6. Mediated like …
T. And professionals listened to the cultural messages and responded to them, so there were some very good outcomes. The Sites of Effective Practice for Māori (Berryman et al., 2004) is one project that we learned a tremendous amount from.

We looked at the sort of data we had to hand, not just “hard” data you can get from experimental interventions, but also the sort of field data that you get from projects where people are empowered to work collaboratively, and these data all looked very positive, and consistent with outcomes reported in international indigenous literature. But also we, (I think it was Mere Berryman who had the idea) decided to ask our whaea and kuia, who had been actively engaged in this project – they’d been out doing the field work and they had visited these sites – to look at the findings and interpret them what they thought about them. We found that they went back into their Māori world and used Māori cultural constructs to understand and explain what had happened. So, for example, instead of talking about eliminating violence, or reducing rates of challenging and disruptive behaviour they talked of restoring the mana of students whose mana had been destroyed, or nearly. They talked about a whole-school intervention as whakawhanaungatanga which is keeping on working until you’ve “got everyone on board the waka”. We were talking about the same thing, probably basing our explanations on very similar evidence, but I think there was little chance then that such culturally based analyses and interpretations would have been acceptable to many educational professionals and behavioural practitioners.

6. Has learning te reo Māori been important for your own growth and development?
T. Yes, very much so George. Its like, if you do a little bit of work on the language people will respect you for trying and they give you so much more, like those Māori women who taught me, and who have given me so much. And what that does is enlarge the window, and the more you see, the more language you pick up, and the more of the kōrero that you understand because you’ve talked about it and you’ve shared those experiences, and then you’re able to see a bit further. So, yes, those kinds of experiences are really amazing.

6. I believe that if you spend time working alongside Māori people you start to have those sorts of experiences; they start to happen around you. Do you think it’s to do with your growth or development as a person that you start to tune in?
T. I think you do tune in, and I think one of the most important learnings is that if Māori people invite you to go with them to cultural events, powhiri, whakatau, tangi or hura kohatu, then you don’t need to feel that you have to know and understand everything before you go! You just need to be willing to listen and learn. When I was chairperson of the Education Department at Otago University, there were some occasions when I had to at least respond to whakārōtanga because at that time we had so very few Māori speakers in the university, so that when tangata whenua came to our department to support us or to give us a seminar or to do whatever, someone had to reply. I felt OK about doing that because I was the department chairperson and it was up to me to say something, we didn’t have Māori staff in the education department at the time.
However, later we went on to appoint Māori staff. Russell Bishop became our first Māori full-time permanent academic staff member.

What I've come to realise … and what I see a number of other professionals doing … that worries me … is that when they are invited to attend a Māori event they are often turn up expecting to speak. They often seem to think along the lines "that's why I'm here; they've come for my professional knowledge and expertise …". Now, fortunately not all professionals are necessarily expecting to speak formally on the paepae, although there are some who expect even that (!). However, after a pōwhiri, whakatau or hui is over, many professionals do expect to be called on to speak then. And what I've learnt is that you shouldn't hold any such expectation. This is because (I believe) from a Māori point of view if you attend a hui, but say nothing, your influence within the group can be every bit as powerful as if you had spoken. This seems to me to be especially true if while you are saying nothing, you are listening carefully and respectfully. I have found that Māori people usually will read this very clearly as tautoko for the kaupapa of the occasion. In the same way, other types of behaviour may well be interpreted otherwise! I've always felt very comfortable in that (less dominant) role at any Māori gathering. So the best thing you can do is to go along and listen (and to answer your question, George), it is in that active listening and tuning in, and not relying only on the words you hear, that you actually gain some sense of all these other things going on, even if you don't fully understand them. Of course, it is a different matter entirely, if you have been clearly invited to speak! This is a great honour and privilege, as many Māori adults may not yet have been given the opportunity to exercise this privilege, even on their own marae.

G. That sounds like helpful advice. Now, to conclude, in terms of your research interests, where are you heading now?

T. Long before I came up to the University of Waikato, I was closely involved with the research whānau at Poutama Pounamu, who have been researching ways of supporting the language and behaviour of Māori students in both Māori and English medium contexts since 1991. Poutama Pounamu has been a formative research and professional experience for me. Very recently, I've been caught up in so many different things I haven't been able to work with the whānau as much as I would like. I am now hoping to pick up on that.

G. Thanks. I hope things work out so that you can continue your relationship with Poutama Pounamu, and continue with your journey into the language and culture.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


INTERVIEWEE PROFILE
Ted Glynn, PhD, is Foundation Professor of Teacher Education at the University of Waikato and a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand. He has a wide background in applied behaviour analysis, inclusive education, and Māori and bilingual education. He helped to pioneer the Pause Prompt Praise (Glynn, 1994; 1995) reading tutoring procedures, and the Māori language version, Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi (Harawira, Durning & Glynn, 1993). He is a member of the New Zealand Universities Consortium which produced the Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) professional development programme, part of the NZ Government SE2000 Special Education 2000 policy initiative, now delivered to 800 teachers nationwide (Brown et al, 2000). Ted is a member of the Ministry of Education (GSE) Poutama Pounamu Education Research Centre in Tauranga, working to improve behaviour and learning outcomes for Māori students in Māori immersion and English immersion education.

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INTERVIEWER PROFILE
George Middleton has been involved in special education since the 1970s. He has worked as a teacher in special classes, an organiser of special classes, run an adjustment class and has been the principal of a special school. Since 1993 he has worked as an itinerant resource teacher in Hamilton. These positions morphed into Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour. He was a part of the first group of teachers to be trained as RTLBs.

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Nurturing Talent through Curriculum Integration

Chris Brough
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ABSTRACT
In this paper I discuss the benefits of curriculum integration for gifted and talented students in the regular classroom setting. Although this approach to curriculum delivery enhances learning for all learners, the focus of this article is the gifted and talented student. In this paper I begin by describing the approach and the teacher’s role in the process. I then explore how curriculum integration differentiates learning, enhances cultural inclusiveness and crosses traditional subject boundaries. Examples of integrated units are woven throughout this paper to illustrate how this approach can be implemented in practice.

Practice Paper
Keywords
Curriculum integration, differentiated curriculum, differentiated instruction, gifted, inclusion practices, inclusive classrooms, gifted, learning experiences, Māori culture, negotiating curriculum, teacher roles.

INTRODUCTION
In New Zealand education it has long been accepted that "one shoe size does not fit all". Individualisation of instruction has been the established form of practice, and teachers have become well versed in modifying the regular classroom to meet student needs. National Administration Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2005) mandate that the needs of gifted and talented students must be addressed and curriculum statements have been designed to allow flexibility of delivery (Ministry of Education, 2000). Research reveals that, although progress is being made in the education of gifted and talented students, there is need for further development in this area (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind, & Kearney, 2004). In this article it is proposed that through adopting an integrated approach to curriculum delivery the needs of all learners, including gifted and talented children, can be addressed. Curriculum integration provides a more inclusive and equitable learning environment where teachers negotiate curriculum, differentiate learning, accelerate content and enrich.

WHAT IS CURRICULUM INTEGRATION?
Curriculum integration involves teaching through contexts that are gleaned from children’s experiences, interests, wonderments, and passions. These meaningful contexts may evolve as a result of a skilled teacher seizing upon a teachable moment or, alternatively, may be sparked by a child posing a question or, as Beane (1997) suggests, the investigation of an issue or concern.

The Draft New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2006) discusses the need for children to experience a curriculum that connects with their lives. In my teaching experience students have pursued investigations fuelled by a bullying incident, an international email arriving and even boredom in the playground. "These questions and issues are then used to 'co-construct' or "negotiate" the curriculum with the teacher, allowing all children's voices to be heard and valued" (Brough, 2006, p. 10). These voices include the voices of our gifted and talented students.

Curriculum integration is not so much an approach as a way of thinking about learning and teaching. The process is driven by the students and the themes provide a vehicle for the students to explore and learn about the world in which they live. Once questions are posed, students begin to negotiate the curriculum considering what they already know about the topic, how to group or organise investigations, how they might find and implement solutions, what skills they may require, and how they will present and assess their learning. Children are able to see a genuine purpose for the acquisition of particular skills. It is important to appreciate that curriculum integration is more than merely integrating subjects. It is a philosophy that crosses traditional subject boundaries and empowers the learner (Brough, 2006).

THE TEACHER’S ROLE IN THE CURRICULUM INTEGRATION PROCESS
The teacher’s role in the learning process necessitates a high level of pedagogical skill. Expertise in questioning is required, skilled classroom management and a comprehensive knowledge of curriculum allowing teachers to compact several curriculum levels when required. These skills allow the teacher to provide appropriate resourcing, scaffolding, enrichment, and acceleration. Teachers who are most successful with talented students are those who adopt a particular pedagogical style that involves the sharing of decision making with students: they facilitate, rather than regulate, mentor rather than teach, while providing holistic educational experiences (Tomlinson, 1995). For many teachers this entails a paradigm shift requiring them to move from a position of power to one of empowerment.

Cathcart (1998) views the teacher as someone who is a partner, facilitator and resourcer. She describes this as a new way of thinking about teaching. While this is not a new concept, it can be an approach many teachers might find too challenging and uncomfortable.
**CURRICULUM INTEGRATION DIFFERENTIATES LEARNING**

Another challenge facing teachers is the need to differentiate or individualise curriculum delivery. This requires that the content, process and products all be adjusted to suit individual needs. While differentiation is necessary for all students, educators of gifted children have expressed a particular need for its implementation as it has the capacity to address many of the frustrations currently experienced by gifted students. As one teacher noted, ‘Children already come to us differentiated. It makes sense that we would differentiate our instruction in response to them’ (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 24). Differentiating instruction often necessitates compacting the curriculum or acceleration. This involves early exposure to new content, or coverage of the same content more rapidly. Curriculum integration addresses this issue, providing students with the opportunity to follow their own passions and work at a level that provides challenge and extension. The Ministry of Education (2000) suggests differentiation is not about more of the same but it is about ‘well-thought-out, meaningful learning experiences that capitalise on students’ strengths and interests’ (p. 36). It is obviously important to establish children’s prior knowledge in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, allowing teachers to match learning experiences to need.

It could be argued that differentiating the curriculum is easier to define than to implement (Tomlinson, 2001), and many teachers may have difficulty visualising how to manage and implement this approach in the classroom. A window into my classroom programme is provided to illustrate how adopting an integrated approach to curriculum delivery can enhance learning and differentiate curriculum.

**CURRICULUM INTEGRATION IN ACTION**

On Monday morning the teacher aide who worked in my Year 1 to 2 class announced excitedly that he had driven to school in his new car. The children then proceeded to ask him a number of questions, one of these predictably being ‘What colour is your car?’ He replied that it was white, and he thought white was the most popular colour car on the road. This comment generated a debate as many of the children’s family cars were not white and Batman’s car was black and, therefore, he must be wrong. I seized upon this learning opportunity and asked the children how we could find out for certain about the most popular colour. Amongst the many suggestions were: ‘We could see what colours our cars are then ask children in other classes’, ‘We could go and look at the colours of the cars parked around school, and in the staff car park’, and ‘Some of us could go and watch the cars going past on the road’. All the children were very keen to pursue the investigation, and I then asked them to consider how they would show their findings. They were given the freedom to work in groups or as individuals.

The collection of data varied greatly. Some individuals designed a variety of tally type charts and one child drew a mark with a different coloured crayon to represent the colour of the car going past. One group chose to draw pictures of cars using the appropriate coloured crayon, and another attempted to write down the colour of each car as it travelled past. Both of the latter two groups found they had to adapt their initial method of recording because they were unable to record the data quickly enough. On the children’s return to class the results were discussed and the different processes for collecting data were shared. The children were surprised to learn that some of their results differed. After a long, thoughtful silence a student suggested he and another child should total the results so they could be sure. Other students offered to make a large graph to show their families what had been discovered and a discussion took place on which graph would be the most appropriate. Colours of superheroes’ cars were also discussed and this investigation snowballed to include the children exploring automobiles in cartoons and graphic novels.

**UNPACKING THE ACTION**

Throughout the initial investigation children were provided with choice of presentation. For instance they were asked what they already knew about graphs, and invited to display their data in a meaningful way. Acceleration was used to extend the children who were calculating and displaying the classroom data. They were introduced to more sophisticated graphing methods and involved in collating and calculating large amounts of data. All these young children were able to discuss the results of their investigations as they were in control of the learning process. This approach is in contrast to the teacher who may have pre-planned the statistical investigation topic and provided a bar graph for the children to colour in as instructed.

The learning context described arose as a result of capitalising on children’s interests, an essential component in the curriculum integration process. The investigation of car colours provided individuals with the opportunity for flexible grouping and cooperative learning. The children not only worked as individuals but were also provided with the opportunity to work with friends or complete the more challenging class graph activity. This provided both heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping. Continual exposure to traditional heterogeneous cooperative learning can result in frustration or lack of challenge for gifted and talented students. It is therefore essential that a flexible balance of grouping practices is employed (Ministry of Education, 2000). The students’ suggestions extended the initial investigation further to include superheroes’ vehicles and comics. They read and studied a variety of comics, designed their own story boards and published materials for our library.
Differentiation arises when lessons are learner-directed rather than teacher-directed. This investigation was initiated by the children and the process was driven by the students’ suggestions. The children’s learning needs were differentiated as the process and content was individualised. Learning was accelerated where necessary by extending literacy, graphing and calculating skills. A responsive learning environment according to Clark (2002), provides challenge, offers opportunity for in-depth activity and provides minimum time constraints. One of the skills teachers of curriculum integration require is the ability to be flexible, especially in terms of planning and timetabling. The children’s debate concerning the car resulted in a complete change to the intended classroom programme.

**CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

Curriculum integration not only provides motivating learning contexts and differentiates curriculum but also creates a more culturally-inclusive learning environment. Teachers who provide culturally-inclusive classrooms recognise that meaningful contexts vary from individual to individual and from culture to culture. It is essential therefore, that teachers are sensitive and informed about the individuals in their class. Teachers should also be aware that their cultural perception of what it means to be “gifted” may be vastly different from the children they teach. If this is overlooked, teachers can inadvertently deny children an inclusive learning environment, and as a consequence, their talents may be neither recognised, nor nurtured.

In New Zealand it is essential that teachers are aware of the Māori concept of giftedness. Molten (cited in RymarczykHyde, 2001) reports that gifted Māori children are rarely identified or provided for. This is probably due to cultural stereotyping and lack of understanding. From the results of Bevan-Brown’s research a Māori “concept of giftedness” has emerged which includes a multitude of different abilities. However, she stressed that these concepts will not necessarily apply to all Māori learners as they are a diverse people (Bevan-Brown, 2004). These concepts include: being of service to others; interpersonaland intrapersonalskills such as humility, reliability, patience, honesty and moral courage; ability and skill; Māori knowledge; language ability; leadership (both up-front and behind the scenes), and the passing on of knowledge. It is also essential to note that gifts and talents can be “owned” by a group. Individuals are often not named as ability is demonstrated through group interaction. These are presumably challenging concepts for many teachers as research shows that many New Zealand schools do not make provision for Māori perspectives and values (Riley et al., 2004).

Curriculum integration endorses a culturally responsive pedagogy as the decision making process empowers learners. Inevitably, this results in the provision of a more equitable learning environment. Curriculum integration values prior knowledge, celebrates diversity and is holistic in nature. Children feel heard and valued. Beane (1997) views curriculum integration as a way of bringing democracy to the classroom. Bishop (2001) suggests curriculum integration is a way of establishing collaborative learning partnerships which help to enhance student/teacher relationships and address learning needs. Fraser and Paraha (2002) concur, suggesting it promotes the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi through partnerships.

**CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN ACTION**

As a non-Māori, the author has attempted to address the needs of Māori students not only through embracing shared decision making but also by tapping into the richness of the Māori culture. The following is an example of a learning experience that provided an opportunity for giftedness to emerge and be nurtured. The experience arose as a result of a name being bestowed on a whānau grouping of classes to which my students belonged. The name “Raukura” was given, which was interpreted to mean a precious treasure, symbolised by the rarity of the albatross feather. During this integrated unit two classes of 8 to 10 year old children (in a year 4 and 5, team teaching situation) decided to create a dance that was to be performed for the benefit of both the local and wider community. The children wished to challenge the audience to address the plight of the albatross which they had studied at some length. The students built on dance skills acquired throughout the year, working in groups, sharing leadership and creating movements that represented the ocean and the dangers the albatross faced at sea. To present the challenge some of the boys needed to learn how to use the taiaha as part of their haka. Senior boys skilled in the use of the taiaha were called upon and, with the appropriate supervision, proudly passed on their knowledge to the younger boys. Advice was sought from parents and many of them involved themselves in costume making and moko designs.

This unit of learning encompassed the sharing and teaching of traditional skills and knowledge, service to others, consultation with whānau, creativity, artistic talent and use of contexts for learning that were relevant to Māori. As the draft New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2006) suggests, this group of children experienced a curriculum that addressed their learning needs, affirmed their identity, heritage and talents. The group as a whole acknowledged “kotahitanga”, as this is what generated the outstanding dance performance. It also gave the opportunity for several children to earn mana; some were recognised for their personal qualities, service, or artistic ability, and others for their leadership roles.

In previous years, several of these children had been known for their non-conformity and over excitability rather than their performance and leadership skills. Bevan-Brown (2004) suggests environments that allow talent to emerge are; holistic and flexible; appreciate talented groups; foster language development; embrace Māori perspectives and culture and offer opportunities for leadership and service. Curriculum integration has the potential to address many of these needs. In my experience, parents and whānau of Māori children are exceptionally supportive when teachers show a genuine desire to embrace their children’s culture. Similarly, I have found the parents of children from other cultures were equally as keen to have their child’s culture respected and celebrated within the class. They also appreciated the opportunity for a more holistic approach to curriculum delivery that crossed traditional subject boundaries.
CROSSING CURRICULUM BOUNDARIES

In the real world we are rarely laced with problems that do not involve us drawing on numerous different skills, strategies and subject areas. As with most children, gifted and talented students possess wide-ranging interests that often cross subject specific boundaries. The following is an example of an integrated unit which resulted in numerous curriculum disciplines being explored. This unit was planned with my class of 8 to 10 year old children previously discussed.

I was fortunate to receive an email from a teacher in England who was planning to visit New Zealand. He wanted his children, who were living in a predominantly white British community, to correspond with a class in New Zealand to learn about a culture other than their own. I shared the email with my students and they were very keen to respond, and they immediately began asking a barrage of questions about living in England. They considered how they might organise and find answers to their questions, anticipated what skills they would require, and how they would demonstrate their learning. This integrated unit was driven primarily (and simply) by curiosities. Ultimately, it resulted in numerous curriculum areas being covered and the programme allowed time and flexibility for children to pursue specific interests in depth. The children suggested activities and examined differences and similarities across countries. They were involved in a vast array of investigations triggered by questions: Why were the English children asleep when we were at school? Why are the seasons different? What different sports and interests did they have in common? What was their school like? Where did they go for their holidays? What were their favourite games, books, foods etc?

The children also considered different ways they could communicate, what they would share and how long each method would take. Faxes were exchanged, letters and parcels were posted and emails sent daily. Tapes and videos were created to share local legends through stories, art, songs and dances. The children planned and prepared for several web camera evenings and a pōwhiri (welcome) was conducted to greet our English visitor. This comprehensive unit resulted in the coverage of five different curriculum areas (mathematics, science, English, social studies, the arts) with Māori and information technology woven throughout. The five key competencies – self-management, relating to others, participating and contributing, thinking skills, the use of language symbols and texts – would also have been required (Ministry of Education, 2006). This unit was planned primarily by curiosity; it resulted in numerous curriculum areas being covered and the programme allowed time and flexibility for children to pursue specific interests in depth. The children suggested activities and examined differences and similarities across countries.

Throughout integrated units both skilful management and scaffolding must be in place, to ensure that quality outcomes are being achieved. Children should be involved in setting goals to ensure individual needs are catered for and that acceleration occurs where necessary. Acceleration can be tackled through the use of group and individual conferences, as gifted children require content and skills that are often more advanced than that of their peers.

Curriculum integration allows students to move beyond the basics to the complex. It provides the opportunity to make connections between ideas and involves higher order thinking strategies. Riley (2004) commented that integrated approaches not only allow for relevant content, but also simulate the knowledge and thinking needed by professionals who work within separate disciplines. Research to support an integrated approach is strong with gains seen in academic, motivational responses and positive teacher attitudes (Van Tassel-Baska & Brown, 2001). According to Moltzen (2005), students who are gifted and talented wish to: explore topics of interest in-depth for sustained periods of time; engage in rich discussion and debate; partake in tasks involving creative and higher order thinking; be provided with a differentiated programme that takes prior knowledge into consideration, and have the opportunity to work with likeminded others. They seek teachers who model a love of learning and recognise them as individuals; they wanted teachers who understood that “one size does not fit all”. This sounds remarkably like curriculum integration in action.

Throughout this paper I have outlined how curriculum integration nurtures young talent in the regular classroom setting. It ensures all children are given the opportunity to develop to their full potential. As Renzulli (1998) suggests “A rising tide lifts all ships”. While undoubtedly beneficial for all children, implementation is critical for gifted and talented students from all cultural backgrounds whose needs many New Zealand schools have failed to fully nurture. ‘Education is not filling a vessel, but lighting a fire’ (Jung, as cited in Boyes, 2001, p. 38).

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ABSTRACT
Fatherhood in this 21st century is changing. There is wider societal recognition that, for the sake of our children, we need to value fathers and the contribution they make to family life. In the United Kingdom, various initiatives are actively supporting ‘Dads’ in their role.

For fathers of children with disabilities, there are even greater challenges to their fatherhood. This article reviews ways in which fathers of children with disabilities have traditionally been viewed. It asks schools to reflect on ways in which they engage fathers, and makes specific reference to the new UK report (chaired by the author) on Recognising Fathers (Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, 2006).

INTRODUCTION
Fatherhood in the 21st century is very different to how it was a hundred or even fifty years ago. Then, being a father, with all of the Victorian patriarchal overtones of authority and discipline, was largely undertaken within the context of a married relationship, with both parents living under one roof. In 2003, 41% of all births in the United Kingdom were outside marriage. This is a substantial increase when compared with the 1980 figure of nearly 12% and is mainly due to the increasing number of cohabiting couples (Office of National Statistics (ONS), 2005).

This trend is also observed across the European Union, where for only one family in seven is mother, father and two children the reality (Roll, 1991). The UK also has the highest level of teenage pregnancy in Europe; in 2003, there were 26.6 live births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years and 149 live births per 1,000 girls aged 14 years and under in the UK (ONS, 2005). It is reasonable to conjecture therefore that a similar number of young men become fathers.

The social structure of fatherhood has changed generally for all men, and very specifically for a few (e.g. teenage fathers) (Cohen, 2001). Today’s media frequently publish photographs of fathers carrying their babies, pushing prams, playing with their children. Prominent political figures (e.g. the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and David Cameron, Leader of the Opposition) are depicted as proactive fathers, alongside a whole host of celebrity fathers from footballers to pop stars.

By the end of the 20th century the acceptable father figure was “softer”, more liberal and one who acknowledged the need to “get in touch with his feminine side” (Lamb, 2004).

Patterns of fatherhood have varied throughout history. When men were weavers, farmers or craftsmen and worked at home, they were involved with their babies. Industry changed all that, sending them into factories and keeping them apart from their children. Now things are changing again as more men work from home and have regular coincidental contact with their children (Carpenter, 2002).

The traditional definition of fatherhood within the stereotypical definition of family is no longer totally helpful to modern families. Families today are far more “self defined” (Carpenter, 2000) and therefore fatherhood itself needs not only to be redefined, but also to be re-assimilated by society in its modern, dynamic and ever-changing context.

All of the current social roles need to be accepted as “units of masculinities” (Tolston, 1977), alongside those often perceived as inherently masculine, such as “protector”, “provider”, “strong in a crisis”, “emotionally competent” (Herbert & Carpenter, 1994). Expressions of fatherhood in a variety of modern media forms are now readily available to men.

A recent issue of Dad (the magazine for new fathers) asked the question, “Can fatherhood be cool?” – a question variously answered by Pierce Brosnan, David Beckham and the author, Tony Parsons (2003), who gave an insightful analysis of his own response upon becoming a father:

I didn’t understand the love [my dad] felt for me and the pride he took in childish achievements until I had a son of my own. I looked at my tiny baby and there was some kind of chemical reaction – here was the most precious and beautiful thing I had ever seen, here was the best thing that had ever happened to me (p. 25).

In another magazine, FatherWork, the social changes imposed on fathers are discussed in the context of political reform. Beverley Hughes, a UK Politician, states that ‘services which support parents should be geared to supporting fathers as well as mothers’ (Hughes & Fisher, 2006, p. 4). Hughes and Fisher (2006) call upon services to modernise to support other significant carers in the family, notably fathers. Within the context of the service development guidance should be given that encourages service providers to think carefully about ensuring that their services are father-friendly. If fathers are now looking after children for lengthy periods of time, fathers need the same skills and knowledge that we have traditionally expected mothers to have.
Paternity leave is now available in the UK to all men in the time following the birth of a child. The rights of fatherhood are championed by the organisation, Fathers Direct (www.fathersdirect.com). They offer advice, resources and valuable links to dads at all ages and stages of fatherhood. To encourage services, Fathers Direct have developed a Fatherhood Quality Mark, which identifies and celebrates agencies which have positive strategies for strengthening children’s relationships with their fathers.

A new resource, The Dad Pack (www.dad.info), has been produced by Fathers Direct. The pack is a basic toolkit for organisations to use in supporting dads in being, and becoming, more involved with their children. It covers issues such as pregnancy, birth, work, relationships, health, benefits, legal rights and responsibilities, and how to praise children (Fathers Direct, 2006). It may seem that such approaches over-emphasise fatherhood, but this may be necessary to counterbalance stereotypical attitudes to fathers, and a lack of realisation that the demands of 21st century fatherhood are very different, both in context and delivery – for some men direct nurturing may be necessary. Are fathers born or created? Even now, seemingly innovative courses on working with families ignore completely the role and needs of the father (Moore, 2005).

Effective fatherhood has always been essential to society’s well-being and that of its children. It is even more essential in today’s transformed and transforming society, and strategies which engage men as dads throughout modern media and technology can ultimately only be to the benefit of our children and the well-being of the men themselves.

THE NEEDS OF FATHERS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Research around the needs of fathers of children with disabilities has been infrequent (Gavidia-Payne & Stoneman, 2004). In families of children with disabilities, mothers and fathers can react differently to the news that their child has a disability or special need (Fidalgo & Pimentel, 2004). Different family members may look to the father for support at a time when he is adapting to a new and sometimes difficult set of circumstances. The needs of the father, among them for him to be nurtured himself, often go unrecognised by professionals (Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), 2005). Fathers have been identified by researchers in this field as “hard to reach” (McConkey, 1994), “the invisible parent” (Ballard, 1994), and the “peripheral parent” (Herbert & Carpenter, 1994).

Sheila West (2000), based on her research, described them as “just a shadow”, where, generally, fathers felt that the support systems that were in place were beneficial to their partners, but not to them. Improved support, information and the opportunity to access services, fathers felt would enable them to be much more involved with their child. Carpenter and Herbert (1997) observed that fathers found it difficult to assert their involvement. Neither health and education professionals nor employers recognised the need of the father for inclusion in the family situation. Fathers were forced by professional structures and social expectations to fall back on the 19th century stereotyped role of “protector”, of “being competent in a crisis”, yet emotionally uninvolved.

Emotional reactions by fathers to the birth of their child with a disability vary (Rendall, 1997). Meyer (1995) tells how the birth brings about life-transforming experiences. For some, it is a challenge that allows them to display aspects of their personality not previously acknowledged. For others, it causes stress, disorients their life goals and affects their work patterns. Many fathers in the New Zealand study, Perilous Passage, spoke of their almost immediate worry about their child’s long-term future (Bray, Skelton, Ballard & Clarkson, 1995). This study also reported that fathers consumed more alcohol and more frequently as a way of dealing with their emotional trauma. Throughout all of these studies, the provider/breadwinner role of the father is central, a finding confirmed by Contact-a-Family in their recent study (CAF, 2005). Conversely, a recent report from the National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) stated that fathers of deaf children actually believe they are overlooked by service providers (NDCS, 2006).

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO SUPPORT DADS?

Whatever the school setting, there will be a father of a child with special needs/disabilities who has experienced some of the emotions and reactions described earlier in this article. It would be unrealistic to expect every school to have resources available to support dads directly, but they can act as a conduit. Schools, probably through the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), can have some key website contact available (www.fathersdirect.com; www.cafamily.org.uk; www.ndcs.org.uk).

More fundamentally, all schools can ask: Are we father-friendly? Do dads feel welcome in our schools? Do we engage fathers as supporters of their children’s learning? Some fathers will have come through early years programmes where they have been actively involved in the care and education of their child. Indeed, Family Services should “have specific strategies and activities which increase the involvement of fathers in the services” (Department for Education and Science, 2003).

Hughes and Fisher (2006) describe the Daddy Cool programme at a Sure Start Children’s Centre in Southampton, which has developed Saturday morning breakfast clubs for male carers and their children. It has a special magazine for fathers, and runs a weekly five-a-side football game for them as well as other activities. The result is a large increase in the number of dads at the centre, learning about childcare, first aid, debt management and a host of other issues vital to the lives of their children. What is the potential transference of such ideas to the concept and practice of other family-focused services in other settings?

There are a range of paper-based resources that schools could have available – the Dad Pack (Fathers Direct, 2006) or the Fathers Factsheet (CAF, 2005). Advice to staff is also downloadable from SCIE, who have produced a summarised literature review. Outcomes from the Recognising Fathers research project are also available via the internet (www.fpld.org.uk). Books written by fathers of disabled children are increasingly available (for example, Ollie by Stephen Venables, 2006). The National Deaf Children’s Society has recently published a blog written by a father of a deaf child on its website (www.ndcs.org.uk).
For some fathers, support groups around disability might be a good way of meeting other fathers who are in a similar situation. In the CAF (2003) study, one dad reported how useful it had been to make friends with another father, “You need support from people who ‘get it’—only dads who are in the same situation can really understand” (p. 8). While a school may not run its own support group, it would be possible to network fathers to groups that may exist in the area. Not all groups need to meet physically; some are virtual. Sunfield School in Worcestershire, UK, runs an email group for its fathers—SunDads.

The same school has also developed a model of training. Celebrating Families, which specifically addresses the needs of particular family members and brings them together annually for their own training events (e.g. Mum’s the Word, Sibling Workshops) alongside a general family training programme (Carpenter, Addenbrooke, Attfield & Conway, 2004). Specific Dad Days have focused on such topics as housing, sex education, challenging behaviour and fatherhood. Men process information differently: research on fathers of children with disabilities has indicated that they tend to focus on the “big picture” (Gray, 1992). Their concerns are often for the future—employment, housing, work, money. Training needs to be tailored to these topics and to male brain modes of learning and acquiring information (Baron-Cohen, 2003).

Many fathers have specific skills from their professional lives which mean that within a model of reciprocal partnership that relies on skill-sharing as an approach to problem solving and development (Carpenter, Attfield & Logan, 2006), they can assist many aspects of school policy development.

THINKING “DAD”?

Do our schools think ‘Dad’? There has been a worrying trend towards parents evenings being held between 4.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. when many fathers (and mothers too) may not have returned from their own day jobs. If only the mother is able to attend such parent–teacher interviews, then she again becomes the holder of complex, detailed information, which it is assumed she will transmit to the father. Where parents have different foci of interest in their child’s education, this could cause conflict. Why are we putting such unnecessary pressure on relationships when some optional, later evening times would have enabled both parents to attend the consultation?

Among parents of pupils with special needs, many fathers would welcome the opportunity to attend their child’s review meetings in school, but research reported by Carpenter (2002) discovered that many were given little, or no, notice of the review meeting date, and the school’s expectation was often that the mother only would attend. Fathers in this study recommended that schools should always give them the option to attend. To achieve this, they felt several months’ notice in advance would help them either to plan time out, take paid or unpaid leave or, as one father who worked in a manual post suggested, arrange to skip a lunch break. Most of all, these fathers wanted their right to attend acknowledged and for the decision to rest with them.

Many schools are locked into operating only within defined hours, Monday to Friday. This may coincide exactly with a father’s working hours and give him little or no opportunity to visit the school or participate in school-related activities. Can we not generate more flexibility in how school staff discharge their working hours? One school organised a termly Saturday morning computer club where dads supported their child with special needs; the school benefited directly in that several of the fathers were able to offer particular expertise regarding information technology. Another school organised a summer holiday working party, where fathers volunteered to carry out painting of classrooms. The Head reported that during these three days the fathers not only achieved a lot for the school, but bonded as a group, exploring their attitudes, feelings and thoughts around rearing a child with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

The Recognising Fathers (Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, 2006) project has echoed some of the key messages found in the earlier research studies cited. From the interviews conducted during this project, it was apparent that many fathers of children with special educational needs are playing an active role in family life—through providing care to their children, supporting their partner and campaigning for resources. They are often balancing this with paid employment. The interviews in this study identified several aspects of good practice (e.g. flexible working patterns), but concluded with a series of major recommendations for policy makers, service providers and professionals.

What is new is that the Recognising Fathers study has articulated these messages in the context of 21st century fatherhood. The range of initiatives around fatherhood generally (e.g. paternity leave) may at long last mean that the messages will be heard and acted upon. Government policy and service provision need to be challenged, and, finally, fathers can be liberated from the “myth of manhood” that has trapped them within a previously unquestioned set of expectations, both in their role as providers and as family members.

Fatherhood needs to be offered status and equality, and the fathers of disabled children warrant respect and support. For the sake of these children, we need to be “Recognising Fathers”.

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Text-bullying among Early Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Increased availability of cell-phones has provided new avenues through which adolescents can bully their peers. Text-bullying is an emerging form of bullying which may threaten the emotional well-being of early adolescents. In this study 565 early adolescents (10–13 years old) completed questionnaires regarding their experiences with bullying (text-message and traditional) and measures of depression and self-esteem. Findings were that: (a) 15% of early adolescents had been text-bullied in the current school year; (b) victims of text-bullying reported more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem than non-victims, and (c) victims who experienced both traditional and text-bullying in the current school year report more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem than those not involved or those who were bullied only at school. Text-bullying may add to negative outcomes suffered by victims of traditional forms of bullying.

INTRODUCTION

Today’s adolescents are the first generation to have grown up in a society where cell-phones are an integral part of daily life (Berson, Berson, & Ferron, 2002). A recent survey found that 73% of adolescents had cell-phones and of these 23% had received text-messages that they considered offensive, abusive, or threatening (Internet Safety Group, 2005). Bullying by cell-phone text-messages is called “text-bullying”. Text-bullying is bullying in which text-messages are the primary form of communication. Text-bullies send text-messages to spread rumours or secrets, call victims mean names, or to organise exclusion of victims from social activities.

Text-bullying is a relatively new way of bullying because of the boom in technology and the growing importance of cell phones in social relationships of adolescents. One of the central tasks of early adolescence is to find acceptance and belonging in peer relationships and cell-phones can be used to start and maintain relationships with peers. A national survey in the United States found that 45% of adolescents aged 12-17 years had cell-phones and 33% used text-messages to communicate with friends (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005).

Entering intermediate school seems to be a “tipping point” when many adolescents get cell-phones and start using them as primary means of communication with peers (Berson, et al., 2002; Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). Therefore, text-bullying may begin in early adolescence.

BACKGROUND

Before the limited findings on text-bullying are reviewed, the definition of bullying and its forms will be discussed. Traditionally, bullying is said to occur when a student is the target of any behavior that is:

(a) harmful or done with intent to harm;
(b) repeated or occurs over time; and
(c) characterised by an imbalance of power, such that the victim does not feel he or she can stop the interaction (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Olweus, 2001).

Carroll-Lind and Kearney (2004) found with 1,480 students from eight full primary and three secondary schools in New Zealand that 63% of students were bullied in a single year. In their sample, 46% had experienced bullying by mean teasing. 34% by having untrue or mean gossip spread, and 33% were excluded or purposely left out.

There are three main forms of bullying: physical, verbal, and relational. Physical bullying is when students physically attack one of their peers (Olweus, 2001). Verbal bullying involves insults or taunts such as teasing or name-calling (Olweus, 2001; O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001). Relational bullying or aggression is characterised by psychological attacks (i.e. humiliation and/or manipulation of relationships) and may include physical and verbal actions as well. Relational bullies often use rumours and exclusion from activities as means of controlling and harming their victims (see Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Spreading gossip, rumours, secrets, and facilitating exclusion are forms of relational aggression. Sending insults, threats, and mean names are forms of verbal bullying. Text-bullying makes use of relational and verbal forms of bullying.
CURRENT RESEARCH

Studies examining the prevalence and effects of text-bullying are sparse and rely mostly on convenience samples. In one survey in the United Kingdom, 14% of students aged between 12-16 years reported being victims of text-bullying (NCH, 2005). A survey of one secondary school in New Zealand found that 12% of students 13-18 years old reported being text-bullied while 47% knew personally of someone who had been text-bullied in the current school year (Raskauskas, Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2005). More research with representative samples is needed to establish the prevalence of text-bullying, especially among young adolescents.

The effect of text-bullying on victims also needs to be examined. Text-bullying may be more damaging than traditional bullying because bullies are removed from their victims and the impact of their actions (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Students may feel free to say things by text that they would never say in face-to-face interactions (Dykes, 2005). This distance may also make it easy for victims to respond immediately to harassing texts. When they respond in anger it may lead to quick escalation of text-bullying. Due to the detached nature of text-messages, students can read negative intention into ambiguous messages and read into them meaning not intended by the sender. This can make it harder for students who feel victimised to seek help and possibly escalate the situation if they respond to an ambiguous message with hostility.

Text-bullying may also pose more of a threat to emotional health than traditional bullying because it transcends school grounds into the home. Cell-phones have been described as “an adolescent’s most treasured possession” and they tend to keep it with them all the time which means that text-bullies have 24 hour access such that victims are not safe even in their own homes (NCH, 2005). In fact, text-victims may also be traditional victims at school – if so, increased access could mean that bullying may be continuous, occurring both at school and after via text-messages. A study of one New Zealand secondary school found that 70% of the text-victims were also victims of verbal and relational bullying at school (Raskauskas, Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2005). The present study will examine the relationship between victimisation by text- and traditional bullying among early adolescents, as well as its relation to depressive symptoms and self-esteem.

Research has consistently shown that students who are bullied suffer negative effects (see Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Being a victim of bullying has been related to general emotional distress, as well as specific indicators such as heightened anxiety, depressive symptoms and a lower sense of self-worth (Grills & Ollendick, 2002; O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001). Anxiety and feelings of depression may result in part to the fact that text-messages are permanent. That is that they can be read over and over, re-victimising the student, and that text-messages are received and stored even when their phone is turned off.

Similarly, student stories have related text-bullying to negative effects like anxiety, depressive symptoms and, in extreme cases, to suicide (Bramwell & Mussen, 2003; Hall, 2006). A recent case in New Zealand involved a 12-year-old girl who took her own life. In her suicide note she blamed months of bullying via text-messages and emails from a group of girls at her school (Hall, 2006). The mother of a boy who had jumped from a cliff after receiving text-messages harassing him for months said to reporters, “Text-messaging isn’t going away. Bullying isn’t going away. That combination killed my son!” (Bramwell & Mussen, 2003). The effects of text-bullying have yet to be established in research. This study will examine reports of self-esteem and depressive symptoms among victims of text-bullying.

METHOD

The present study included 565 participants (48% male, 52% female). All participants were intermediate school students, 10- to 13-years-of-age (M = 11.59, SD = .61 years). Students were from 22 classrooms at three intermediate schools in New Zealand, 41% of students were in Year 7 and 59% in Year 8. The sample included a random selection of classrooms from each school: School 1 (6 classrooms, n = 143), School 2 (8 classrooms, n = 227), and School 3 (8 classrooms, n = 200). Recruitment of participants was conducted in accordance with procedures approved by the Massey University Ethics Committee.

Classroom surveys were used to collect data from early adolescents. Students self-reported their age, gender, and year in school. They were also asked to rate the extent to which they had experienced different types of peer victimisation that year. Types included having students say mean things to them or call them names (verbal), and having students start rumours about them (gossip) or leaving them out on purpose (exclusion). Also included in this list of forms was receiving mean or harassing text-messages (text-bullying). To examine whether victims of text-bullying also experienced traditional forms of bullying students received a dichotomous score for whether or not they had been victimised that school year for each form of peer victimisation (verbal, exclusion, gossip, text-bullying). Table 1 displays the number of students in each category.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Victimisation</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>363 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>338 (59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossip</td>
<td>290 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>178 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-bullying</td>
<td>85 (15%)</td>
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</table>
Students also completed items from the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory (WAI: Weinberger, 1997; Weinberger, Feldman, Ford & Chastain, 1987) to assess depressive symptoms and self-esteem. The scale contained seven items to measure depressive symptoms and seven to measure self-esteem, and three validity markers. Item responses were on a 5-point scale with 1 = false and 5 = true, and an average was calculated across items for each scale. In the present study, the overall average for WAI depression was 1.12 (SD = .91) with Chronbach alpha of .79. The average for WAI self-esteem was 1.52 (SD = .85) with acceptable internal reliability, Chronbach alpha .70.

The procedure began with the recruitment of schools. Early adolescents at three intermediate schools in New Zealand were invited to participate in this research. Random selection of eight classrooms at schools from three suburban centers on the lower part of the North Island were selected and the teachers approached to participate. Twenty-two teachers consented to participate and consent letters were mailed home to the parents of students in participating classrooms. Passive consent was used such that parents who did not want their child to participate removed them from the study instead of providing written consent for participation. Across the three schools only seven students were removed by parents. Students were also given the opportunity to consent on the day of data collection.

In each classroom, researchers distributed surveys in the classrooms with students completing the measures quietly on their own. For most students the survey took 15-20 minutes to complete. Students were provided with an anti-bullying hotline number. Approval for this research was obtained from the Massey University Ethics Committee.

RESULTS

Prevalence of text bullying among the early adolescents in this study is reported in Table 1, and shows that 15% of participants had experienced text-bullying within the current school year, which is similar to prior research with New Zealand secondary students (Raskauskas, et al., 2005). More girls (n = 57) than boys (n = 28) in this sample reported being victims of text-bullying and slightly more Year 8 students (n = 52) than Year 7 (n = 32) were victims of text-bullying during the current school year.

To see whether students involved in text-bullying were also bullied at school through traditional means (experienced any of the following: mean name calling, exclusion, and gossip spreading), chi-square analyses were used. Text-bullying victims were also found to be traditional victims, based on a significant chi square $X^2$ (df = 1, N = 482) = 19.998, p < .001. The number of text-bullying victims who also experienced traditional bullying (95%, n = 76) was larger than those who did not (5%, n = 4). This relationship indicates an overlap between text-bullying and traditional victimisation.

It was also of interest to see whether text-bullying was related to student scores on depressive symptoms and self-esteem (Figure 1). As shown in Figure 1, T-test comparing text-victims ($M = 1.57$, $SD = .96$) and non-victims ($M = 1.00$, $SD = .86$) on depressive symptoms, $t(462) = 5.20$, $p < .001$, indicated that text-victims reported more depressive symptoms. T-test comparing text-victims ($M = 1.24$, $SD = .78$) and non-victims ($M = 1.59$, $SD = .86$) on self-esteem, $t(448) = 3.32$, $p < .001$, also showed that text-victims reported lower levels of self-esteem. These comparisons indicated that text-bullying may have negative effects on victims similar to traditional bullying.

![Figure 1. T-test mean differences in depressive symptoms and self-esteem between Text-victims and Non-Victims (N = 462).](image)

Due to the large overlap between victims of traditional and text-bullying, students were also organised into the following categories for analysis: Not Involved ($n = 115$), Traditional Victim Only ($n = 287$) and Both Traditional and Text-bullying Victims ($n = 76$). To compare groups on depressive symptoms and self-esteem measures ANOVA analyses were used. Depressive symptoms and self-esteem were entered as dependent variables with the student’s victim classification as the independent variable.

These groups were found to differ on both variables: Depressive Symptoms, $F(2,436) = 39.376$, $p < .001$; and Self-esteem, $F(2, 425) = 5.811$, $p < .01$. Specifically, victims experiencing both traditional and text-bullying ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .88$) reported significantly higher number of depressive symptoms than traditional bullying only ($M = 1.17$, $SD = .88$) or were not involved in victimisation ($M = .52$, $SD = .55$) this school year. Victims of both text-bullying and traditional bullying ($M = 1.25$, $SD = .82$) during the school year reported lower self-esteem ($p = .002$) than those who were not involved ($M = 1.71$, $SD = .84$). Traditional victims only ($M = 1.56$, $SD = .87$) differed significantly from both traditional and text victims ($p = .03$). Traditional only victims did not differ significantly from not involved students. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 2.
The majority of text-bullying victims were also victimised by similar forms of bullying at school. The overlap between traditional and text-bullying is important because it means that some students are facing bullying both at school and outside school. This overlap is also concerning because of the findings that students who experienced both traditional and text-bullying reported more depression and lower self-esteem than only those bullied at school or those not involved. A cumulative effect is indicated such that text-bullying adds to the risk from traditional bullying. Since the majority of text-bullying victims were also traditional victims no conclusions can be made about the independent contribution of text-bullying since outcomes reported by text-victims in this study may also be partially due to co-occurring traditional bullying.

CONCLUSIONS

This research highlights the fact that text-bullying is an issue for early adolescents. Lenhart, Madden, and Hitlin (2005) make the argument that adolescents’ relationship with cell-phones begins in middle or intermediate school. In this research some early adolescents had experienced text-bullying and suffered negative effects. This indicates that education about text-bullying should start in intermediate school or even before.

It is important to note the limitations of this study. This study uses primarily self-report data for all forms of victimisation. A single item was used to identify victims of each form, so the use of multiple items in replication studies will strengthen these findings. These data are correlational so the relationships may be interpreted in both directions (i.e. it is possible that being depressed may make students more at risk for experiencing both text and traditional bullying) and causality cannot be inferred. Despite these limitations these findings provide needed information on text-bullying and associated effects among early adolescents. This research is a necessary first step in examining the overlap between text-bullying and traditional bullying at school.

REFERENCES


Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice.

AUTHOR PROFILE

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The Comparable Worlds of Calves and School Bullying

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ABSTRACT
This article provides a light-hearted example of how a behavioural intervention, used in the animal world to reduce bullying, might be adapted and applied to reduce bullying among students. Based on observations of bullying among calves, effective strategies to reduce bullying are based on acknowledging that bullying is occurring, and recognising that the victim is unable to stop the bullying without support.

Practice Paper

Keywords
Behaviour problems, bullying, intervention strategy, peer rejection, school based intervention, school violence, victimisation.

THE CALF-WORLD
Having too much grass on our lifestyle block, we purchased six heifer calves from the local sale-yards. They came from five different lots and ranged in age from a suspected one to three days. Four were black, one was red and white, and one was black and white. So as to distinguish between the black calves, we named them Heather, Dot, Stripe and Stinky. Within days both desirable and undesirable characteristics began to emerge. The black and white — now named Freida - developed into a 'sucker'; Stripe, her target, became the 'suckee'. Freida was fixated with Stripe's umbilical area and she would aim for it at every opportunity. As Freida's attention continued, Stripe would stand passively, unresisting. Her ears hanging down, her body slumped forward, she appeared depressed. When Freida was pulled off her, Freida would rejoin the other four calves while Stripe would sit metres away, alone. On the rare occasion when Stripe approached the group, they rebuffed her and she would go off on her own again. Even Stinky, the smallest calf and next lowest on the pecking order, ostracised her. As the days passed, Freida's attacks continued. I sought advice from 'real' farmers and was told this behaviour was normal among calves; that eventually Freida would grow out of it. In the meantime, Stripe's umbilical area prolapsed, her malaise increased and she stopped feeding from the calfeteria. Fearing for her well-being, we separated her from the other calves, and attempted to hand-feed her warm milk, but she showed little interest. The saddest little animal I had ever seen, Stripe's will to live was diminishing. We opted instead, for an intervention that began with a day of small, 2-hourly feeds of Vytrate (an electrolyte replacer) to build up Stripe's energy levels. We then put her in the main paddock with three of the calves: Stinky (the smallest), Dot (Dot and Stripe had come from the same lot) and Janice (the friendliest calf). Freida was put into a nearby paddock with Heather, the largest and most dominant calf. Their night shelter was divided into two parts. Each night and during bad weather, Freida was put into one side with one of the other calves (never Stripe or Heather) while the other four calves had the other side. With Freida no longer having access to Stripe, her umbilical area began to heal. While she would hang back while the others fed, she began to show interest in the calfeteria and allowed herself to be coaxed into drinking the warm milk. In the meantime, in the neighbouring paddock, Heather was losing her dominance and one morning I saw Freida sucking at Heather's umbilical area, and Heather was submitting to it. While it was tempting to, at best put Freida by herself, at worst send her to the 'works', we determined to give it one more go. We decided to put the six calves back together.

Within minutes of being together as a herd, Freida made a beeline for Stripe. But we were prepared. To deter her, each time her head went under Stripe's stomach, she was distracted using a variety of methods (e.g. a loud noise) whilst we simultaneously yelled out, "NO!" Looking for patterns and possible reasons for the bullying behaviour, we noted the times she showed interest in sucking and found that an hour before and after her milk feed (they were fed at 6.30 am and 5 pm) were the riskiest times whilst there were long blocks of time when she just grazed or slept. Unsure about her behaviour during the night, we bedded her by herself, rotating one of the other calves (never Stripe) to keep her company. For an hour before and after feeding, we stood on guard, ready to intercept when necessary. During those hours we stood among the calves, Stripe was given lots of positive attention. This included speaking softly, stroking, and scratching her under the chin and neck which she loved. The other calves would come close to us seeking the same attention and in this way Stripe became one of a group of five, whilst Freida held back. Within days, calling out the word "NO!" was sufficient to deter Freida's unacceptable behaviour.
While Stripe was now happily resting, grazing, playing and bouncing among the herd, Freida was wary of us and we had to rebuild her trust. This was done slowly over time, beginning with close proximity, soft talking and eventually, she allowed us to stroke her neck. While she would occasionally go to suck at Stripe’s umbilical area, either Stripe would move away or within seconds Freida would lose interest. Three weeks after the interventions began, all six calves were contentedly cohabitating together.

THE SCHOOL-WORLD

So, what can we, as humans, learn from this interaction among calves? While bearing in mind that humans experience life in different ways to bovines, there are some similarities between the way that the calves acted and the social interactions we observe with children. The calves’ responses illustrated some important aspects of the development of human relationships.

Whilst bullying is deliberately harmful behaviour repeated over a period of time by a person or group who target a less powerful person as the victim (Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2004), it usually involves one child directing aversive behaviour to another child that physically or emotionally harms or intimidates. It is repetitious and characterised by relationships with an asymmetrical power hierarchy. In other words, the bully has more power than the victim does. There is evidence that peer-on-peer types of abuse, or bullying, has an important relationship to homicide and suicide (Hazler & Carney, 2000). Most prevalent in school settings, bullying takes place during the primary school years, but it can also occur during the secondary school years (Bloomquist & Schnell, 2002; Maxwell & Carroll-Lind, 1997).

As a special education advisor who has worked alongside children exhibiting severe behaviours within the school setting, by observing the role of a perceived “bully” and “victim” in the contained world of a few calves, I gained some insight into how school personnel might possibly intervene in school-world bullying. The intervention would follow a set of procedures and is based on the fundamental principle that the intervenor has some standing in the school. The higher your ranking and status with the students, the greater the chance for the intervention to succeed.

First, you have to recognise that bullying is actually occurring, identify the primary bully and any secondary bullies (i.e. copy cats, or who Eddy, Reid and Petrow (2001) refer to as the “observing non-participants”), and acknowledge the victim. Bullies use rough play to establish their dominance in the social hierarchy, and they selectively choose less tough students to exploit as they publicly demonstrate their physical and/or social prowess (Farmer, 2000). Be mindful that a secondary bully may initially appear to be the primary bully as many primary bullies are clever enough to manipulate a suggestive peer (Cameron & Woods, 2004).

Secondly, you need to be consciously aware that the victim will no longer have the personal resources to be able to stop the bullying from happening and needs immediate intervention. By the time it has come to your attention that someone is being bullied, in all probability there will have been a history behind the bullying behaviour and the victim does not have the power to resist or negotiate (Bloomquist & Schnell, 2002; McEvoy & Welker, 2001). There is almost always evidence of damage caused by the bullying. While boys are more likely to use physical aggression, girls fight with body language and relationships through verbal and psychological intimidation (Bloomquist & Schnell, 2002; Simmons, 2002). In Stripe’s case, there were both physical and emotional injuries.

Now that you have identified the three main players: the primary bully, secondary bullies, and victim, focus on providing the victim with “healing” time where s/he can recover energy and begin to feel heard and supported. Use this time to plan and prepare for your strategy around the bullying. To empower the victim, involve him/her in the planning stage. A suggested strategy:

(a) In the short term, keep the victim and primary bully apart. This could be achieved by putting the bully in with stronger/older peers. The bully should be informed of the unacceptable bullying behaviour and the need for the intervention, but s/he should not be punished, as this will impact back on the victim.

(b) With supports, keep the victim in with the original peer group (this includes the secondary bullies)

(c) Create opportunities for the victim to mix with similar-interest peers.

(d) Make opportunities where the bully and victim are together as part of a natural group.

(e) Use positive reinforcement (verbal and body language) for acceptable behaviours emitted from the victim, primary and secondary bullies.

(f) Identify pro-social peers of the victim who could play a role in supporting him/her.

(g) Be vigilant for signs of recurring bullying behaviours and when it reappears, make a stand to demonstrate that it is unacceptable.

(h) Privately and frequently praise the victim for his/her resilience.

(i) Empower the victim with strategies and supports when targeted for further bullying.

(j) Identify the moral reasoning behind the bullying behaviour; what satisfaction does the bully derive from singling out the victim?

(k) Privately and frequently praise the bully for his/her personal growth and strength of character in accepting rather than harming someone who is different from him/herself.

(l) Praise the secondary bullies for their part in reducing bullying in the school.
Publicly praise the victim’s peer group for their role in reducing bullying in the school.

Maintain a positive relationship with all parties, the primary and secondary bullies, the victim and the peer-support group.

Stay vigilant, watching the victim for evidence of surreptitious bullying.

While following these procedures is likely to have a positive outcome, the most effective intervention to support the victim against further bullying is most probably your willingness to be seen to be “doing something”. Carroll-Lind and Kearney’s (2004) study on bullying indicated that there is a clear link between students’ perception that school personnel are making an effort regarding bullying and the occurrence of bullying within a school.

Many “real” farmers, no doubt like many school personnel, might argue that intervention on behalf of one individual victim is too much trouble, given how many for whom they are responsible. However, like the story of the boy who threw the stranded starfish back into the sea, timely and appropriate intervention makes a difference to the one who is suffering. And for that individual, it is worth the trouble.

REFERENCES


STAR Implications and Issues
An analysis of data generated from the *Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading*

Dr Keith Greaney & Distinguished Professor William Tunmer
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**ABSTRACT**
In this paper we argue that the data generated from the New Zealand *Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading* or STAR (Elley, 2001) may not be conducive to helping teachers identify specific learning needs at the individual level. We further contend that the main use of the data obtained from the STAR is the presentation of the results as aggregated stanines to show large group performance trends. To obtain a more in-depth understanding of the causes of low scores on the STAR we suggest that teachers might need to undertake an analysis of individual performances. Such an analysis was the focus of this paper and the results showed that for the two sub-tests analysed (*Sentence Comprehension* and *Vocabulary Knowledge*), the overriding problem was related to poor decoding ability. This was a surprising result given that all the students in the sample had scored 90% or better on the *Word Recognition* (STAR) sub-test.

Even the presentation of stanine scores (which are obtained from converting the raw score totals) do not offer particularly useful diagnostic information at the individual level of performance. Yet, the stanine scores are the most often cited STAR data.

**SOME RELEVANT RESEARCH STUDIES**
If we are really going to help students, we need to understand the underlying reasons for their test failure. Simply knowing which students have failed is a bit like knowing that you have a fever when you are feeling ill but having no idea of the cause or cure. A test score, like a fever, is a symptom that demands more specific analysis of the problem (Valencia & Buly, 2004, p. 520).

In a study that investigated why 4th grade (New Zealand Year 5) students had failed the mandated *Washington Assessment of Student Learning* (WASL) reading test, Buly and Valencia (2002) drew attention to the problem of using group-administered tests to identify reading difficulties at the individual level. These authors noted for example that “from the scores alone, derived from a group administered measure, little was known about the specific reading capabilities or difficulties that may have contributed to their poor performance” (p. 124).

In order to better understand why some students performed poorly on a mandated reading test, Valencia and Buly (2004) undertook an analysis of test data and identified six distinct sub-groups or profiles of reading disability. These six sub-groups were labelled as:
- automatic word callers (18%)
- struggling word callers (15%)
- word stumblers (17%)
- slow comprehenders (24%)
- slow word callers (17%)
- disabled readers (9%).

It is interesting to note that almost 50% of the error sub-groups were directly attributable to poor or inefficient word identification skills. Many of the remaining sub-groups were also most likely to have word identification problems. The authors noted for example that the disabled readers had ‘experienced severe difficulty in all three areas: word identification, meaning and fluency’ (Valencia & Buly, 2004, p. 527).

**INTRODUCTION**
New Zealand teachers have access to more published procedures for the assessment of achievement in reading than in any other curriculum areas. The teaching of reading has been considered to be a strength of New Zealand primary schools and it is an area that has quite a strong tradition of teacher assessment (Education Review Office, 1999, p. 17).

It is often very difficult for teachers to identify specific teaching needs at the individual level on a reading test that is undertaken in a silent reading situation. The main reason for this is that the metacognitive and cognitive strategies that the student uses to complete such a test are not transparent in the test responses (i.e., answers). This is more problematic with tests such as the *Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading or STAR* (Elley, 2001) where the answers are presented in multiple choice formats in which the student is only required to select one answer (word or letter) from a selection of choices. The quality of the data that teachers have to work from as a basis for diagnosing specific learning problems and/or planning for future teaching is therefore compromised.

Research Keywords
Assessment tools, data collection, educational testing, needs assessment, reading achievement, reading comprehension, statistical analysis.

Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice.
However, while many of the students had experienced word identification problems, this does not mean that every poor performing student will necessarily require more instruction in word identification strategies. In-depth analyses of test data at the individual level are more likely to show that “one size of instruction” does not necessarily fit all students. Students fail tests for a variety of reasons and it is important that teachers are aware of these different reasons when attempting to plan and teach programmes.

Dewitz and Dewitz (2003) investigated the reasons why some 4th and 5th grade (year 5-6 New Zealand) students had failed the mandated Qualitative Reading Inventory (QR1-3). Some of the reasons why the students had scored poorly on this test included a failure to adequately link key ideas in the passages and to overly rely on prior knowledge when answering the questions. In their investigation the authors had asked the students to discuss and elaborate their particular responses to the various test questions. These elaboration opportunities allowed the students to explain their reasoning in much greater detail than was evident by only checking their answers at a later date. The investigators were also more able to identify inefficient or inappropriate metacognitive strategies that the students had used and which had subsequently resulted in or contributed to their receiving a low test grade score. A similar study by Greaney (2004) involved a retrospective analysis of some New Zealand Progressive Achievement Test (reading comprehension) data to identify the reasons why some students scored poorly on this test. Twenty-nine Year 4-6 students were asked to re-read some of the passages from their reading comprehension test and to explain the reasons why they had selected the incorrect (multiple choice) answers. Like the Dewitz and Dewitz (2003) study, Greaney (2004) also noted that the students often used inappropriate prior knowledge and showed an inability to link key ideas within the passages. However, the important point to be taken from these studies is that teachers need to be aware that raw test score data by themselves is of only limited value, particularly if used as a basis for identifying the teaching needs of students who have low scores.

THE NEW ZEALAND SUPPLEMENTARY TEST OF ACHIEVEMENT IN READING (STAR)

Although there are no national data on the use of this test, anecdotal records suggest that it is used in more than 50% of New Zealand primary schools at least once per year. The STAR (Year 4-6) test has national norms for three different test-points during the year (February-May, June-August, September-November) and comprises four sub-tests; Word Recognition, Sentence Comprehension, Paragraph Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge. However, the Paragraph Comprehension sub-test was not a focus for this paper, so will not be discussed further.

Word Recognition

According to the Teachers’ Manual (Elley 2001) the Word Recognition sub-test ‘shows how well the pupil can decode words that are familiar in their spoken language’ (p. 7). Ten groups of four words are presented and the student is required to first, identify a picture (e.g., an umbrella) and then identify the matching target word from the group (e.g., under, union, umbrella, umpire). The maximum score for this sub-test is 10.

Sentence comprehension

The Teachers’ Manual states that the Sentence Comprehension sub-test ‘shows how well pupils can read for meaning’ (p. 7). Ten sentences are presented and the student is required to select one word (from groups of four) to complete each sentence (e.g., Your mother’s sister is your… uncle/aunt/grandmother/cousin). In all cases, the missing word is at the end of the sentence. The maximum score for this sub-test is 10.

Vocabulary Knowledge

According to the Teachers’ Manual the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-test measures pupils’ knowledge of word meanings in context (p. 7). Simple sentences are presented with target words underlined and the pupil is required to select (from a group of four alternatives), the word that is closest in meaning to the underlined word (e.g., The lake is often calm before a storm – smooth/rough/dark/beautiful). The maximum score for this sub-test is 10.

How the STAR test scores are reported

Each of the sub-test scores are added together (maximum 50, as the Paragraph Comprehension subtest is marked out of 20) and the total raw scores are then converted to stanine scores. Many schools prefer to use the stanine score as the standard measure for reporting individual and class level performance data.

METHOD

The Research Problem

The most common measure used by most schools for reporting STAR reading test achievement data is the stanine unit. We contend that this unit is not refined enough for teachers to gain an in-depth understanding of causes of low performances on this test. While a very high stanine score (e.g., 8 or 9) may suggest proficiency of the skills assessed, a low stanine score of 4 or less may not necessarily indicate anything except that the student has scored low. Even looking at individual sub-test raw score data may not necessarily shed light on the reasons why some students score poorly. Yet schools seldom report or analyse the STAR data beyond the level of the stanine unit.

Procedures

Twenty-one Year 4-6 students who had scored 90%+ (9 or 10) on the Word Recognition STAR sub-test but 50% or less on the Sentence Comprehension and/or the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-tests were selected to participate in the study. The students were required to re-read orally the items in the sub-tests that they had incorrectly selected in their original test. Records of their oral reading of the test items were recorded to check the level at which the students were able to accurately identify (decode) the words in the various sub-test tasks.

Rationale for Selecting Students who Scored 90% or Better on the Word Recognition Sub-test

According to the Teachers’ Manual pupils who score 90% or more on the Word Recognition sub-test have ‘mastered the elements of decoding’ (p. 19). This statement therefore suggests that provided a student scores 90% or more on this sub-test, any low scores on the remaining sub-tests are not likely to be seen to be caused by a decoding problem. Teachers would also therefore, be unlikely to even consider investigating decoding problems with this group of students.
ANALYSIS

The 21 Year 4-6 students’ raw scores for the three STAR focus sub-tests (and the stanines) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Id No</th>
<th>Word Recognition (n=10)</th>
<th>Sentence Comprehension (n=10)</th>
<th>Vocabulary Knowledge (n=10)</th>
<th>Stanine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The results in this table show several interesting points. First, all 21 students have scored 90% or better on the Word Recognition sub-test which, according to the Teachers’ Manual, would all be categorised as “efficient decoders.” A score of 90% or better on this sub-test was the initial “trigger” for selection for the study. The target scores that were analysed are inserted within brackets. That is the scores of 50% or less on either or both of the Sentence Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge sub-tests. Second, the data in the table show that all but one of the students (i.e., 95%) had scored 50% or less on the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-test, and ten students (i.e., 47%) scored below the threshold score for the Sentence Comprehension sub-test. Third, nine students (i.e., 42%) scored below the threshold levels on both the Sentence Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge sub-tests. The results of the analysis of the responses for the Sentence Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge sub-tests are presented in Tables 2-3. The Paragraph Comprehension sub-test scores have not been included in Table 1 as this sub-test was not the focus of the study. However, each student’s stanine score is included and it is interesting to note that all but one student have stanine scores between 4 and 7.

Given that schools tend to use the stanine score as the main measure for reporting the STAR results, and given that the STAR Manual (see p. 17) reports that stanines 4 to 7 fall into the “average” category, these students are not likely receive specific attention on the basis of these scores.

Analysis of the Sentence Comprehension Sub-Test Data

The data in Table 2 present a summary of the two main categories of errors that affected the students’ performances on the Sentence Comprehension sub-test. The data also show that two sources of difficulty were apparent for the students. These included poor decoding skills and poor vocabulary knowledge. Because the Sentence Comprehension sub-test required the students to select a word to complete each sentence, it was important that the words (and especially the target words) were correctly decoded first. If all the words in the sentences (including the four optional words) were read correctly yet an incorrect answer was selected, this was coded as a vocabulary error. However, if the student was unable to correctly identify a key word in the sentence or was unable to read the target word in the answer options, then this was coded as a decoding error.
Table 2
Main Error Categories for the Sentence Comprehension STAR Sub-Test

Teaching focus shown by asterisk (*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Id No</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Main Error Category</th>
<th>Recognition Score</th>
<th>Comprehension Score</th>
<th>Decoding</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>(5)</td>
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<td>3*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of the students’ main reasons for their errors on the Sentence Comprehension sub-test indicate that, in all but one case, they had problems decoding a key word either in the initial sentence or the target word among the options in the answers. For example, in Table 2 student (Id 12) scored 5 (out of a possible 10) for the Sentence Comprehension sub-test. On closer analysis of the errors it was found that this student was unable to read either the key focus word from among the four answers or one of the key content words in the question. As an example, in the sentence: As the snake slithered closer, Sam’s eyes grew wide with … fascinating/pleasure/anticipation/terror, several students were unable to correctly decode the word slithered and others could not identify the target word terror. While some of these students may well also lack the vocabulary knowledge (which is the main skill that this sub-test assesses), the data in Table 2 suggest that their main problem is poor decoding skills. This was an interesting (and unexpected) finding given that these students had all scored 90% or better on the Word Recognition sub-test. On the basis of this data, the main teaching focus for most of these students should be one that includes an emphasis on developing more efficient decoding skills. This is because 73% (i.e., 41) of the errors were related to poor decoding skills.

Analysis of the Vocabulary Knowledge Sub-Test Data

The results for the analysis of the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-test are presented in Table 3. As with the Sentence Comprehension sub-test, the purpose of the analysis of the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-test was to investigate the extent to which errors reflected vocabulary knowledge problems or decoding problems.

If the student was able to correctly identify all the words both in the sentences and (in particular) the target word among the four alternates yet selected an incorrect answer, the cause for the error was categorised as a vocabulary problem. A decoding error was recorded whenever the student was unable to correctly decode a key word in the sentence or the key target word among the four alternates. For example, in the sentence: I found Nick’s story quite incredible/convincing/inaccurate/memorable/unbelievable, the key words included: found, story, incredible and unbelievable. It was hypothesised that a decoding error involving any of these words would be likely to impact negatively on the student’s ability to select the correct answer option.

The data in Table 3 show that 20 students scored 50% or less in the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-test. There were a total of 121 errors analysed from the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-test and 60% (i.e., 73) of these errors were related to poor decoding skills with the remaining 40% categorised as vocabulary-related. In this particular sub-test analysis it would be expected that the teacher plan for two distinct teaching loci, where one group of 11 students would require a decoding skills focus and the other nine students would benefit from an instructional approach that encourages the development of vocabulary skills.
Table 3
Main Error Categories for the Vocabulary Knowledge Sub-Test

Teaching focus shown by asterisk (*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Id No</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Word Recognition</th>
<th>Vocabulary Knowledge</th>
<th>Main Error Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Decoding</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The STAR Teachers’ Manual (Elley, 2001) states that ‘most students with low scores on Word Recognition have low scores on all sub-tests” (p. 19). This would be expected because if students were unable to read the words adequately, they would certainly also have problems completing the STAR reading test. However, the focus of the current study included the students who were very good decoders (as evidenced by their high Word Recognition sub-test scores). Twenty one “high decoder” students had scored 50% or less on the Sentence Comprehension and/or the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-test. These students were given the opportunity to orally re-read their incorrect test items on the STAR test in order to investigate the level at which poor decoding skills may or may not have impacted on the low scores. The data showed that the main cause of their low scores for both the Sentence Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge sub-tests were due to poor/inefficient decoding skills. This was rather surprising given that the students were initially selected based on their very high Word Recognition sub-test scores. Teachers may therefore be led to believe that a low Vocabulary Knowledge score is due to only poor vocabulary knowledge. While some of the students may well have also had low vocabulary knowledge, the investigation demonstrated that many of the students were simply unable to decode the target words adequately.

In these cases, a teaching focus that included explicit instruction in how to decode such words would be more relevant than one that focused on developing vocabulary knowledge. Yet most teachers would be more likely to introduce a vocabulary, rather than a decoding focus for students who score poorly on the Vocabulary Knowledge sub-test. Similarly, while the results show that the main problem with the Sentence Comprehension sub-test was also due to poor decoding, it is unlikely that teachers would focus on this problem when deciding on a teaching focus. It is also interesting to note that the STAR Teachers’ Manual does not highlight the possibility that poor decoding skills may still be a likely problem on sub-tests other than Word Recognition.

CONCLUSIONS

Timperley and Parr (2004) discuss the benefits of analysing assessment data in some depth in order that teachers develop a more focused understanding of the specific teaching needs. The authors term this analysis process “mining the data”. However, in the text the authors use the STAR reading test data as an example of mining the data but they also focus mainly on the use of stanines (pp. 88-89) to show large group results. They do not discuss the relevance for “mining the data” in a way that shows individual performance problems.
The STAR reading test is used in many schools in New Zealand, and often in preference to the Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs). Moreover, schools generally prefer to report the results by presenting stanine scores for large groups. While this level of data presentation is suitable for showing large group trends, we maintain that the stanine statistic is not refined enough to reveal the underlying cause of low scores. To obtain information about causation we recommend that teachers undertake a finer-grained analysis of student performances at the individual level.

Many normed reading tests (e.g., STAR, PAT) include multiple choice answer responses. However, such tests are not particularly informative as diagnostic measures. There are many reasons why a student selects incorrect responses in multiple choice tests and it is important that teachers are aware of these possibilities if they are to design focused interventions based on individual needs.

Finally, it is important to note that the STAR reading test is only one reading assessment tool, and when taken in isolation, may not be particularly informative. However, in this study we demonstrated that, when further more in-depth analyses were undertaken with students whose scores were particularly low, that useful and more relevant information was obtained about the causes of the low scores. Furthermore, this additional information was not transparent merely from viewing the aggregation of stanine scores alone. As with any standardised reading assessment tool, it is useful for teachers to be aware of the limitations of using grouped or aggregated data as a proxy measure for causation. Popham (2003) also warns that most accountability tests have very little value for improving teaching and learning. In fact Popham argues that such tests can even ‘lull educators into believing that they have appropriate data when they do not, and as a consequence, many educators fail to ask for more meaningful, instructionally valuable data that would help them teach students better’ (p. 192).

It is important that if teachers are sincere about “closing the reading achievement gap” between the high and low ability readers in their class, they need to be prepared to undertake a finer-grained analysis of the assessment data for their low-achieving students in order to develop more focused teaching strategies for this group. Such an analysis was the focus in this paper.

REFERENCES:


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Bill Tunmer
A Story of Transition to School

Louise Bourne
Supervisor, Beanstalk Kindergarten, Tawa, Wellington

ABSTRACT
This article discusses and reflects on some issues that may arise when a child with special needs and their family transition from an early childhood setting into their chosen school. In this instance, the author examines the case of “Aroha”, and considers specifics such as the writer’s ethical and professional role as an early childhood teacher, valuable strategies for a successful transition, relevant theories, the influences of relationships with significant people who support Aroha in her differing environments, and the concerns teachers and parents have relating to Aroha’s diagnosis of attention deficit disorder (ADD).

Storied Experience
Keywords
Early childhood education, ecological perspective, parent choice, scaffolding, school environment, teachers, transition to primary school.

When Aroha and her parents arrived at our setting several years ago I became their point of contact with overall responsibility for their inclusion and well-being. Our centre’s philosophy encompasses the importance of contribution from each child, family, teacher and the community. Well supported, I was able to record Aroha’s learning and development through learning stories, observations, events, paintings and drawings which were then collated into her profile book. It soon became apparent through this process that Aroha had learning and socialising difficulties. In partnership with her family and the Ministry of Education, Special Education (GSE) early intervention team, which consisted of a Kaitakawaenga (Māori cultural advisor and co-worker), a behavioural specialist, and a teacher aide, it was possible to work together to develop new strategies that supported Aroha and her family in our setting in a way that was culturally acceptable to them.

A time of re-adjustment for Aroha and her family had begun. Aroha’s parents had asked for advice regarding the school we thought would best cater for her needs. Our kindergarten provided Aroha’s parents with up to date brochures from the local schools and books from our parent corner that related to starting school. We also encouraged informal visits to each school by Aroha’s parents in order for them to feel comfortable and welcome in the school environment. Once the decision of which school Aroha would attend was made, further discussions were held with Aroha’s parents at a subsequent transition meeting.

Everyone was involved from Aroha and her extended whānau, to our kindergarten’s teachers, GSE staff and the principal and new entrant teacher of their chosen school. As transition is closely linked with inclusion, we believed that group support for Aroha was imperative. We also believed it was important for Aroha to understand that her time at kindergarten was coming to an end and by exploring the new option of school together; we could make any adjustments needed for her successful transition into school.

From a teacher’s perspective, making adjustments for each child’s transition to school means specific planning, collaborating, strategising and scaffolding of their social and learning environments (Cullen, 1998). Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory, where each child’s characteristics are seen to be influenced by their surroundings and affected by people, places and things, is crucial for teachers to understand when linking or examining continuity between their centre and the school settings. ‘Educators need to develop partnerships across the settings, which enable common learning goals to be set’ (Howie & Timperley, 2001, p. 2).

Children have differing needs and lifestyles. Matters such as their family’s history, jobs and community affect their cultural and social environments. Aroha’s family must also deal with her doctor’s diagnosis of ADD, which means she has difficulty sustaining attention for tasks or play activities and is often forgetful or easily distracted by unrelated stimuli. This extends into all areas of Aroha’s environments and requires the added support of specialist workers to provide comprehensive developmental, medical, and behavioural assessments for Aroha, and further support and education for her family.

Our setting used teaching techniques such as scaffolding a child’s learning and planning ahead to effectively manage the signs and symptoms of ADD. We believe Vygoty sk’s (1978) sociocultural theory of temporarily supporting or scaffolding a child’s learning within their zone of proximal development is a valuable concept for teachers, and we offer guidance through collaboration with a child. We did this for Aroha by ensuring our kindergarten environment was accessible, comfortable and safe; we encouraged group and turn taking activities where social skills with peers were promoted and extended, and in addition we provided various activities, games, writing and math experiences set at different age levels and abilities. Extra support was provided for Aroha by a teacher aide who also scaffolded her learning in these areas and then withdrew once each task was mastered, leading Aroha towards her goals of independence and self-management.
The effective technique of planning ahead allows teachers to gently pave the way for parents and children into school. An example of planning ahead was to invite the school teacher to visit Aroha in her kindergarten environment prior to starting school. The new teacher was able to see how Aroha interacted with teachers and peers in a familiar environment. The teacher also shared Aroha’s interests, learning and development by discussing the pages of Aroha’s profile book with her. These highlighted her abilities, cultural values and specific goals set and achieved in her individual plan. Further teaching techniques included; holding informal discussions with Aroha about how a school day worked with longer hours, and why the bell rang for play periods and lunchtimes, encouraging friendships with children who were going to the same school, and inviting past pupils back from the school for a shared lunch.

Encouraging children to complete an activity, such as writing their name or finishing a puzzle, and sharing special items from home with their peers, enhances their confidence. A candle-lit birthday cake, made by Aroha in collaboration with her peers, was used as a symbol to celebrate her birthday and songs such as ‘Happy Birthday’ and ‘Happy School Days’ were important for everyone to realise the significance of her transition.

We continue to support parents prior to their child’s transition to school by hosting parent/teacher meetings twice a year, inviting new entrant teachers from various schools in our community to informal parent evenings where we discuss expectations, transition, school philosophies, policies, the curriculum and other issues that parents wish to raise in order to gain reassurance. By providing this service, continuity between home and school environments is promoted and relationships are fostered.

From Aroha’s perspective, transition means a time of intensity, challenge and courage as she says goodbye to some elements of familiarity; her setting, teachers and peers. For support, Aroha uses a set of visual display cards within both settings to maintain consistency and routine. It has been noted that a large part of Aroha’s learning and developmental growth is achieved through watching others in their play; for Aroha transferring these observation skills into her new school environment is an important tool for her to learn the new rules and routines. To make the transition easier for Aroha, several visits to school were necessary so she was able to independently locate important places such as the toilets, library and office.

From Aroha’s parents’ standpoint, involving Aroha in community sport has helped her establish new friendships with several children in her soccer team who are the same age and are attending the same school. Aroha’s parents have been able to foster these relationships by inviting these children into their home and including them in extended whānau activities. Aroha’s parents believe regular routines such as breakfast to start the day, getting dressed independently and looking after personal belongings are important skills for her to have prior to starting school. These skills offer independence and can be learned at home through Aroha observing her parents.

Aroha’s parents have taken the time to talk to her about school and the length of her day, concluding that an early pick-up for the first few weeks will be important to alleviate any burnout or distress. Together Aroha and her parents shopped for a new school bag, lunch box and other items from a book list provided by the school.

School presents several new adjustments to Aroha’s ongoing learning and development because of the differences in physical environments, teacher/child ratios, timetabling events, curriculum and philosophies of teaching and learning. School grounds offer open spaces with grass fields and large concrete court yards, all within unfenced perimeters. They are very different from the generally much smaller, well fenced kindergarten environment. Teacher: child ratios at school are approximately one teacher to twenty five children; in kindergarten they are approximately one teacher to fifteen children. This highlights the importance of adapting school activities using, for example, visual displays, in order to accommodate the busy curriculum requirements. The team supporting Aroha included older peers or adults in the playground until she became familiar with the boundaries and expectations of school.

It is important that teachers from both kindergarten and school settings are aware of the signs of stress in children who are overwhelmed by their changing circumstances or lack confidence when transitioning between settings. Some signs of stress and anxiety may be that a child regularly feels sick or nauseous, they may become withdrawn, aggressive or restless at their activities, towards teachers or with peers. However, it may be difficult for teachers to pick up on these signs of stress, as children with ADD often display these behaviours.

The practices discussed here with Aroha and her family are common in our setting. We believe in the importance of forming collaborative and reciprocal partnerships with children, parents, schools and other professionals in our community. We must first discover, appreciate and then celebrate each child’s individual differences in culture, values and abilities for teachers to be successful in supporting children through their transitions to school, as no two children are ever the same. We can alleviate potential stresses for children and parents when transitioning to school by planning ahead and having policies and strategies in place to provide maximum support for families.

REFERENCES
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Let Me Fly

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Storied Experience

Keywords
Family involvement, parent child relations, parent choice, parent school relationship, residential special schools, special education

The plane doors shut behind me with the sound of a suction pump, and as I shuffled my way sideways down the aisle like a crab, I realised something was missing. It was the dreaded panic feeling of being trapped which, strangely, was not clutching my chest. After my three busy days, I sank down into my seat with the heaviness of satisfied tiredness, instead of the former weight of paralysing anxiety as I anticipated crossing Cook Strait in a "flying pencil".

I waved vigorously through the misty port-hole to the teacher and two students from Salisbury School, a residential special school for girls, who had brought me to Nelson airport after my once-a-term school visit. Anna, one of the students, was jumping up and down on the balcony, waving wildly as if trying to bring the metal beast back as it gathered speed.

As I settled for the half hour flight, I thought about the positive changes I had seen in Anna during the two years visiting Salisbury School. Anna has Down syndrome and the relentless day-by-day stress for family and staff, of coping with her disability prior to her placement, had contributed over the years to family problems and discouragement of staff in her local school. Staff were also dealing with challenging behaviour on a daily basis, and despite prolonged efforts, had exhausted their resources. There was no special school in their area, and Anna's parents needed to devote some quality time to their two other teenage children who were exhibiting some emotional and behaviour difficulties. Her parents were also working with a counsellor on their own relationship. With the best will in the world, it is not always possible to create the ideal learning environment for a young person in their home community. Conversely, a boarding situation is not necessarily the best alternative. On the rare occasion when Salisbury School was not a good "fit" for a student, attendance was discontinued and the young person returned home.

As a parent myself, I had expected my children's educational needs to be met in the local community school, and would never have considered a boarding school option. I had developed stereotypes of boarding schools from literature and the media which had never been tested in reality. As a special education employee I embraced the mainstream inclusion philosophy wholeheartedly – and still do – but this experience, while admittedly a controversial one in educational circles, had taught me to remain open to alternative provisions.

What was causing the significant positive turn-around in behaviour that I witnessed in Anna each term I visited Salisbury School? As I saw it, possibly it was a combination of factors, difficult to reproduce in any other setting: small class numbers and a high adult to student ratio; 24-hour consistency of management between school and "cottage"; shared care and team work amongst staff (director, principal, teacher, teacher aide, social workers and residential manager); and regular on-site counselling input. Nelson Special Education staff also visited the school to offer behavioural support. Salisbury offered a safe learning environment for students where safety may have been compromised at home.

There were also senior student flatting and community work experience programmes for older students, well supervised extra-curricular activities seven days a week, outdoor education trips – and quality time with rested families in the holidays. Regular contact with families was maintained during the school term by phone calls, emails, letters and the occasional exciting parcel!

Sometimes I met Anna and her family at the home end. Most of my work was off-site. I met parents at the local airport at the beginning and end of each term, and witnessed the gradual restoration of families assisted in part through students' attendance at the state-funded special education facility. In my area I facilitated, for six months, students' re-inclusion to home communities at the end of their two-year placement. This involved family support and ongoing education/training for the students. Thus I was, in part, facilitating the lifelong learning process and meaningful participation of individuals in their local communities, which was a key part of Ministry of Education goals.

1 Names and circumstances have been altered in this story to protect identities.
As I perceived it, many of these students had left home as children with a range of needs and returned two years later as young adults who had increased self-control, improved self-esteem, and who demonstrated positive learning outcomes, as testified to by their immediate and wider families, present and former staff. As a result of my experience in this position I had to rethink my understanding of inclusion and consider the issue of family/whānau choice in a different way, while still respecting those who have a different perspective. I had learned that special education provision is not black or white, but may include colours of the spectrum. Factors such as flexibility, quality relationships, individualised learning programmes, managed transitions and communities of support, could be crucial.

Anna had one term left of her placement at Salisbury School. Most of the anti-social behaviours had been eliminated. She had gained self-care skills, developed some basic learning skills and had stopped running away. Sitting in on daily morning staff meetings I heard her teacher describe how incidents of spitting had reduced from several times daily on admission to once a term on average. She had also improved her reading level from 2 to 3, and her oral communication. At Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, her social worker described how the daily battle over showering and putting on clean clothes had disappeared, and Anna now enjoyed the regular routine and was taking a pride in her hair. Gone also were the upturned plates in the dining room when she took a dislike to something.

At Salisbury School she had been nurtured by caring, respectful teachers and teacher aides, dedicated social workers, counsellors and psychologists, and her self-confidence had blossomed. Her family was deeply grateful for the unique educational opportunity which combined caring and commitment of professionals dedicated to delivering quality service. With support from regular IEP teleconferencing, her parents were able to collaborate with staff about strategies for management and share progress and milestones. This gave them more confidence when she returned home for holidays. Anna had been offered a new start, and her head was held high.

The intercom interrupted my thoughts. We were coming in to land in Wellington. I hadn't even registered the odd bump in transit, and prepared for the usual dreaded approach to the airport with scarcely a flutter. With a huge sense of achievement I realised that I had defeated my fear of flying by facing and doing it often, as part of my work. If Anna and my other students at Salisbury could fight their dragons and overcome some of them, so could I.
Making Musical Connections

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Storied Experience

Keywords
Behaviour management, educational programmes, learning experiences, music therapy, student achievement, teacher education, teaching strategies.

BACKGROUND

I didn’t dare use the term “Music Therapy” in my title as I’m certainly not a registered music therapist, but the work I have done with children with special needs in the music field has been heavily influenced by a number of eminent music therapists. I have to say that this work has also been the most enjoyable and often the most exciting of all my experiences as an educator.

An educationist! What a grandiose term! I started off as a classroom teacher and at that stage had no aspirations to be anything else. I loved the classroom and the kids I worked with and what I relished most of all was the opportunity I had to share my own passion for music with my students. Integrated programmes were encouraged and of course mine were always around musical themes. It was a great life, but there were even more exciting things to come.

Now relax! I’m not going to bore you with a blow-by-blow account of my progression from job to job but I will refer only to the three positions which led me to an awakening to the amazing power of music as both a learning and a therapeutic tool. Those three were teaching (naturally!), working as a music advisor and becoming a psychologist with what was then, the Psychological Service of the Department of Education.

As I appeared in certain schools as a psychologist instead of a music advisor, there was some confusion and then the question came, “what’s the connection between music and psychology?” Well, I didn’t know at that stage, did I, but I certainly found a connection eventually in the field of music therapy. But let’s keep calling it music in special education.

I decided to focus on the seniors first and studied the group. At that time they had quite a high proportion of students with Down syndrome. So what did they bring to our music? Well, it certainly wasn’t an awareness of pitch differences or an ability to reproduce melodies with a high degree of accuracy, so singing songs was not terribly rewarding for anybody. But what a great sense of rhythm most of them displayed! That was when I had my “Aha!” moment. Carl Orff, I thought, and the pentatonic scale!

I have used the good old pentatonic scale so often since then, and have shown so many teachers and teacher aides how to use it, that I must devote some time to it here. I am hoping that some of you will be inspired to rush off after you’ve read this and try it out.

The scale we normally use in Western music is the diatonic or 8 note scale. Use the wrong notes together and you get horrible discords. But remove the 4th and 7th notes and you can combine the remaining five in any order and you cannot create discords (and yes, 8-2 really does leave 5 when you remember that 8 is just a repetition of 1 an octave higher. Confused? Don’t worry! You can test it out later!)

Carl Orff uses the Pentatonic Scale in his “Music for Children” programme and what’s more he starts with only two notes and gradually builds up to the five. The two notes he uses are the 4th and the 3rd notes of the pentatonic scale (which would be the 5th and 3rd if we were using a diatonic scale) and they form a minor 3rd. When and if singing is introduced, he starts with only the two notes, so it’s more of a chant than a melody. The instruments used are xylophones, glockenspiels and simple percussion instruments such as bells (the jingly kind), hand drums, etc. If you are finding it hard to follow this, think about the old chant “It’s raining! It’s pouring!” or the notes children use when they are teasing one another e.g. “I know your boyfriend!” Those are the first notes that are sung or played.

Our students were really good at mastering simple rhythmic phrases which they only had to repeat over and over. The school had one or two glocks and xylos; we used the music grant to get some more plus a basic set of versatile chime bars. We simply took out the 4th and 7th bars (oh yes, make sure you get the xylophones and glocks with removable bars – no sweat setting out the chime bars!) and away we went. If a wrong note was hit occasionally, it didn’t really matter. Our more challenged students stuck to the untuned percussion and even the most disabled could have a bracelet of jingle bells on an elastic band, slipped over a wrist.
The instruments were accepted with enormous enthusiasm and slightly stunned yet pleased surprise by the teachers. But what really stayed in my mind was the astonishment and delight on the faces of the parents when we performed our first concert for them.

So what did these students actually gain from working on those very basic musical skills?

1. There was marked improvement in both fine and gross motor skills.
2. They learned to share and to turn take.
3. Listening skills definitely improved.
4. Self-esteem rose before our eyes.
5. They had so much fun!

I was able to step back at that point and leave it to school staff, to look at the abilities of their various groups, the goals they wanted to achieve and how music could be used to move towards those goals. Would it be through singing, instrumental work, movement, listening or exploring all of the above.

EARLY CHALLENGES

It was at that same school that I met my first music-lovers with autism spectrum disorder. I will call them Linda and Jason (not their real names). Neither one was very interested in group music sessions, but what did that tell us? Many years later in Hamilton a frustrated teacher appealed to me about the boy in her class who was severely challenged with autism. "His parents say he really loves music but he won't even stay in the classroom while we're having music!" I agreed to sit in to see what happened — and to listen! Afterwards, I said to the teacher, "Don't take offence, but I think it's because he loves music that he can't stay in the room during class music!" Well, have you ever really listened to some class music sessions?

Later, I settled myself out in the playground, a comfortable distance from Sam (another pseudonym) with a few carefully selected instruments on the ground around me. Eventually, it was the soft, muted tones of the autoharp that lured him closer and drew him into some tentative turn-taking with the instrument. In Sam's case, it was the blissful smile that lit up his face when he produced those sounds, that lingered in my mind.

But back to the two children I met in Dunedin. Linda was an 11 year old with a great deal of purely echolalic speech and the stiff, puppet-like movements that sometimes accompanies autism. She had a ready smile which often seemed directed at her own inner world. Linda and I began listening to music and soon I discovered that her preferences were for Strauss waltzes and Tchaikovsky's ballet music. She would either stand and simply conduct the music or she would dance around the room with extraordinarily graceful movements. But when the music stopped, the awkwardness returned and we never did succeed in transferring her musical achievements to daily life.

However, Linda learned some interesting skills which were transferable. When she saw me coming and carrying the portable record player (I told you it was a long time ago, didn't I?), she would run to meet me and take the player out of my hand. We would then walk together to the staffroom and she would set up the player, plug it in, take the record out of its sleeve with great care and sit it on the turntable. She mastered all the steps to play her music and her fine motor skills seemed to improve quite rapidly. These skills did transfer to other situations and staff were able to extend her in other fine motor areas as well. Obviously too, the music could be used by anyone at home or in school to soothe her and relax her when she became tense or distressed.

Jason was a very different child in that he presented with extremely challenging behaviours. He was six years old and it was some considerable time before I saw him smile. He had no speech, was hyperactive, and frequently screamed, head-banged, bit other people and tried to run away. I worked regularly with Jason at the time, and had the scars to prove it. There is no space here to go into detail about our programme which was purely experimental but I discovered someone who could calm this child, silence the screams and still the compulsive physical motion — Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart! Jason would come close to the player, sink onto a low easy chair strategically placed nearby, and sit there, slumped and relaxed with a faraway smile on his suddenly peaceful face. I felt a bit of a failure for not being able to do anything else for Jason through music until it was pointed out to me just how important it was to be able to get him to relax.

MEETING THE MUSIC THERAPISTS

By now I knew that there had to be more to all this. I needed far more skills and music-based insights than I possessed, and it was about then that I discovered that there was something called Music Therapy and there were people who could show me how to use music to achieve a wide range of goals.

The awakening began with the first visit to New Zealand of Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins in the '70s. Paul was a retired Professor of Music as well as a composer, and Clive was a teacher of the deaf who became interested in the wider field of special education. The two men met when Clive was working in that wider field at the Goldie Leigh Hospital in London. I was lucky enough to attend the course they ran in Christchurch. While the course was essentially practical with tapes of casework and practical demonstrations using groups of local children, it was based very firmly on the musical knowledge and expertise of Paul. Of course, implementing such a programme with two practitioners provided huge advantages. Clive Robbins had a warm, dynamic personality and the speed with which he was able to form a warm, interactive relationship with each child in a group situation was a revelation! Meantime Paul would be watching as well as providing the accompaniment and musical base for songs, movement or instrumental work. He would pick up on the vocal pitch used by an individual child or the rhythm of a child's walk and weave it into a simple greeting song for that particular child.
I went back from the course armed with the Nordoff and Robbins Songs for Children (mostly written to teach simple daily living skills or basic learning tasks), the musical game of "Pif-Paf-Poltrie" and the Christmas operetta about the fourth wise man. But I also had lots of ideas as to how I could use my own favourite music plus my teaching skills to help children learn, live and be happy. That's what inspirational people do to you!

I haven’t described the work Paul and Clive did with individual children who were not able to respond in group settings. That was a revelation too, and tremendously exciting. The only opportunity I had to practise in that area was when I was given approval to set up a special project during my time as a lecturer at Dunedin Teachers’ College. I worked in conjunction with another staff member who was also a music enthusiast – but that’s a whole separate story!

I went to a number of music courses in the following years, thanks to the New Zealand Society for Music Therapy who arranged them, and to my district officers and managers who could see their value in equipping me with skills I could pass on to teachers. I learned from all of them. The only other presenter I will mention here is Maggie Pickett who was the Director of Music Therapy at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. From Maggie I learned many skills, but the one that had the greatest impact on me, was the confidence to improvise. "If you’re going to do this sort of work, you must be able to improvise."

"I can’t improvise!" I protested.

"Everyone can improvise!" she responded imperiously and ordered me to go and sit at the piano. I obeyed. I put my hands on the keys wondering what would happen! I improvised. I don’t remember what my theme was or what I was trying to communicate but I do remember finishing to applause from my fellow course members and warm praise from Maggie.

I am relaying this incident because this is at the heart of using music as a therapeutic tool. It is all about presenting someone, child or adult, with a musical experience which will have meaning for them and will leave them with a sense of achievement and pride, as well as the pleasure of the experience itself.

WHAT CAN THE REST OF US DO?

Now I’m struggling, because I want to pick out the experiences from more recent years that might inspire some of you who are teaching to actually use music to supplement your current programme and help the students you teach to reach learning and behavioural goals in an enjoyable and non-threatening way. I haven’t used the term "non-threatening" before but it’s a really important one in this context. All the tutors I’ve worked with have emphasised that this is the key to using music with children who have challenges in intellectual, physical, emotional, behavioural or social areas – plus any combinations of the above. It is a non-threatening medium and you can start with a purely fun session as you get to know and understand one another. Then your skill has to be applied to use the music to teach the skills you need to develop in your student or students.

There are programmes you can follow, of course, like the "Take Note" programme produced by Gendie Jury and Sally Berg. I was fortunate enough to work with Gendie and Sally in the 1990s in presenting the programme in certain parts of the country and to help in the training of teachers at that time. My then manager (we were Specialist Education Services in those days!) was an enthusiastic supporter of the programme and was happy to release me from my duties as a psychologist to help introduce the techniques in Hawkes Bay, Canterbury, Otago and Southland as well as in my then home area of the Waikato.

Gendie and Sally set out to produce songs and activities which linked directly to curriculum areas and were designed also to develop social skills and build self esteem. Books, tapes and later a computer were part of the programme. This programme lends itself particularly well to an inclusive education programme.

I have encouraged a number of teachers over the years to experiment with the pentatonic scale. If you’re doing it vocally, start with that Minor 3rd that seems to occur naturally in children’s chants. Paul Nordiff said he’d worked with children in 56 countries and had not found any country where that chant didn’t occur in some form. He and Clive would use it to get a response from children who seemed remote and unreachable in any other way. I’ve heard teachers use it calling the roll and the children echo back the notes in their response.

If you’re a pianist or keyboard player, try the G above Middle C and the E below it. Then bring in the A above the G. Sing familiar rhymes or questions on those three notes. If you can get hold of Orff’s Music for Children, look at the way he introduces "Bobby Shaftoe."

The full pentatonic scale on the piano white notes would be CDE GA. But if you just want a background for movement activities, or for relaxation, try the black notes, which give you a natural pentatonic scale and you don’t have to think about which note to hit! Yes, you can use both hands and play any of the notes in any combination and you won’t get any discords. That’s why you can give kids chime bars, xylophones and glockenspiels and just let them experiment as long as you’ve removed the 4th and 7th notes (F and B if you have that C Major scale). Just set a rhythm by clapping or using a hand drum. Instant improvisation at its simplest!

I don’t think this article was meant to be a teaching exercise but I can’t resist the urge to get some of you experimenting! It’s so rewarding when you see the reactions of the children, I know that some of you will have your own repertoire of music that links with maths, language, science, studies of other cultures (that’s an easy one!), etc. Some will also have sorted out favourite CDs that relax or activate, or musical games that help build social skills. You can use music at any level and regardless of your own level of musical expertise.

Most of us support and promote the philosophy of inclusive education. Music lends itself superbly to a truly inclusive programme. Whether you are using listening, movement, singing, instrumental work or any combinations of the above, it is a subject in which all students can participate at their own level and yet each child can feel part of the group.
Let me tell you just one more story. One young man I see regularly—let’s call him Tom—has a syndrome which manifests itself in major learning delays and challenging behaviours. He is mainstreamed in a Year 8 class. The teacher and the other students try to include him but I have watched his face and seen bewilderment turn to sullenness and finally anger as he tries to make sense of the world around him. Eventually the rest of the class members just get on with their work and ignore him. Then at best he will sulk in sullen isolation, clear out of the classroom and disappear if there’s no teacher aide to follow him or at worst lash out physically at someone he perceives as annoying him.

A few weeks ago I visited the school to observe his behaviour so that we could re-look at our behaviour management strategies. I was directed to the hall where all the seniors were assembled for a session of “Jump Jam”. An enviably lithe and energetic teacher was out the front leading the group, beside the video screen and speakers. The session was in full swing, but where was Tom? I could hardly believe my eyes! There he was in the middle of the group leaping and prancing with an energy and enthusiasm I had never seen before, and a grin from ear to ear. Best of all, he took a breath from time to time to exchange giggling remarks with the boys on either side of him. For the first time, I was seeing him as part of a group, able to do what the others were doing and fully accepted as one of them. But what really stayed with me afterwards was the joy on his face.

CONCLUSION

We are fortunate nowadays to have registered music therapists and a tertiary training programme for them here in New Zealand. That is thanks to years of hard work, and repeated representations from the New Zealand Society for Music Therapy, and the tireless work of Morva Croxson of Massey University in particular. It is wonderful to have this course established and these skilled people available. But anyone with the will to do so can use music to help improve the achievements and brighten the lives of our children with special needs. Thank you to those of you who are doing it already and to the rest of you—go out there and have a go! It’s definitely worth the effort!

AUTHOR PROFILE

Paula O’Regan has worked as a classroom teacher, district music advisor (Otago), lecturer at Dunedin Teachers’ College, Inspector Supervising Special Education (Auckland), and psychologist (Otago and Waikato). In 2003, Paula was awarded the Queen’s Service Medal for Community Service in the field of Special Education.

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Music Therapy in Special Education
Where are we now?

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ABSTRACT
Research is an essential aspect of the music therapy profession. Practice is grounded in theoretical frameworks based on research studies and the evaluation of clinical interventions. Early research drew heavily on behavioural principles, observing measurable change in response to musical interventions. As the profession gained stature, music therapy researchers also began to ask questions requiring in-depth qualitative analysis. Nevertheless, ready acceptance and appreciation of music therapy as a valid service within special education settings in both Australia and New Zealand is variable. Music therapists continue to be challenged to demonstrate the effectiveness of music therapy. The current article outlines the historical precedent for a likely increase in qualitative emphasis, and describes the current knowledge base generated through the literature on the topic of music therapy in special education. It also explores the need for new research in the evidence-based framework and proposes a research path for future studies.

Research Paper
Keywords
Effective practices, evidence based practice, inclusive education, individual education plan, music therapy, qualitative research, quantitative research.

BACKGROUND
The applied discipline of music therapy was established in the post WWII years (Davis, Gfeller & Thaut, 1999). Although music has traditionally been used as a form of healing in many cultures, contextualisation of the work within psychotherapeutic frameworks and principles – primarily in behavioural, humanistic or psychoanalytical terms – led to the professionalisation of music therapy. Theoretical underpinnings are drawn from numerous fields including psychology of music, physiology, biochemistry, sociology, psychology and education. Students undertaking music therapy training are required to develop an understanding of dominant theories from these fields, and to develop a wide range of competencies in music therapy methods (e.g. improvisation and/or song-writing) and research (Bunt & Hoskyns, 2002; Darnley-Smith & Patey, 2003; Wigram, Pederson, & Bond, 2002). Music therapists in many countries, including New Zealand, Britain, and Australia, are commonly classified as health professionals and work within allied health teams across a range of settings from special education to nursing homes, psychiatry, palliative care and in hospitals.

The World Federation of Music Therapy (1997) offers the following definition of music therapy:

Music therapy is the use of music and/or musical elements (sound, rhythm, melody and harmony) by a qualified music therapist, with a client or group in a process designed to facilitate and promote communication, relationships, learning, mobilisation, expression, organisation, and other relevant therapeutic objectives, in order to meet physical, emotional, mental, social and cognitive needs. Music therapy aims to develop potentials and/or restore functions of the individual so that he or she can achieve better intra- and interpersonal integration and consequently a better quality of life through prevention, rehabilitation or treatment (p. 1).

Music therapy in special education differs from music teaching in its emphasis on the acquisition of non-musical skills, using music as a symbol of emotional and personal growth rather than as a cognitive skill-set to be learned and practised. The profession is guided by ethical policies grounded in the acknowledgement of the importance of the relationship between client and therapist.

A great deal has been written about the value of music therapy for children who have special needs (Boxill, 1985; Bunt, 1994; Bunt & Hoskyns, 2002; Chester, Holmberg, Lawrence & Thurmond, 1999; Davison & Edwards, 1998; Jellison, 2000; Ockelford, Welch & Zimmermann, 2002; Wilson, 1991) and the literature includes references to programmes undertaken in special schools, units, or mainstream settings (Brunk & Coleman, 2000; Bunt, 2003; Lathom-Radocy, 2002). In the USA in the 1970s, when government legislation for inclusive education was passed, there was a considerable increase in the number of music therapists employed in educational settings to provide service for school-aged children who had special needs (Alley, 1977, 1979; Jellison, 1979, 2000; Lathom-Radocy, 2002).

A procedure of referral, assessment, treatment, documentation and evaluation shapes the clinical intervention in line with the Individualised Education Program (IEP) structure (Davis et al., 1999). Teachers and allied health professionals typically refer children to music therapy. Music therapists work with clients either individually or in groups depending on the identified needs of those individuals.
Early literature identified the assessment process as crucial to ongoing clinical evaluation (Cohen, Auerbach & Katz, 1978; Cohen & Gerick, 1972). Several authors have published assessments suitable for use with children who have special needs (Boxill, 1985; Brunk & Coleman, 2000; Bruscia, 1988; Darrow, 1991; Elliott, 2000; Gilbert, 1980; Goodman, 1989; Layman, Hussey, & Laing, 2002; Nordoff & Robbins, 1977; Shoemark, 1993; Wigram, 2000; Wilson & Smith, 2000). However, none of these are standardised. Further, Loewy (2000) has reported that 94% of music therapists she surveyed in 1994 were not using the formal music therapy assessment tools available to them. Wigram et al (2002) note instead that ‘clinicians have developed their own very effective and appropriate ways of analysing and recording change in music therapy’ (p. 257). This unfortunately reduces the possibilities for replicable controlled studies without a change to naturally occurring practice.

Nevertheless, therapists have often used behavioural analysis or developmental tools in order to align their practice with the IEP process (Adamek, 2002; Brunk & Coleman, 2000; Johnson, 2002; Lathom-Radocy, 2002). Chase (2004) surveyed 207 music therapists working in the USA with children who have developmental delay. She found that data was consistently collected by observing behaviour. Music therapists reported they were assessing in the following domains:

- Motor skills (sensory motor, physio-motor, physical, perceptual motor, fine motor, and gross motor).
- Communication skills (vocal expression, vocalisations, speech production, expressive language, language, language development and verbal skills).
- Socialisation (behaviour, attention, social/emotional skills, interpersonal skills, relatedness/relationship).
- Cognitive skills (perceptual, sensory, academic).
- Musical responses (rhythm, beat, melody/tonal, instrumental exploration, interest/preference) were also documented.

The information gathered in a music therapy session can provide a different picture from that seen in other settings (Bunt, 1994; Gantz, 2000; Loewy, 2000; Wigram, 2000). The opportunity exists to evaluate a child’s responses in terms of their potential to respond to other forms of therapy or intervention (Wigram, 2000). Children often show enhanced responses in a music therapy environment. Despite seeming to have significant disability or neurological trauma, they respond to music (Gantz, 2000; Nordoff & Robbins, 1977; Sacks, 1995). Jellison’s (2000) comprehensive review of music research with disabled children and youth identified that when comparisons were made there was often no significant difference in the musical abilities of children deemed to have disabilities and those who were not.

Drawing on this potential, music therapists often work closely with members of multidisciplinary teams to help the student achieve goals set by other professionals. This includes the physiotherapist or occupational therapist, who might measure outcomes in physical terms; speech and language therapists; and classroom teachers who might measure outcomes in cognitive or social terms.

The challenge of evaluating collaborative and consultative models of practice, where a student’s progress towards IEP goals cannot be directly or independently attributed to music therapy interventions, have been discussed in the literature (Register, 2002).

THE HISTORY OF MUSIC THERAPY RESEARCH

Quantitative research in music therapy aims to control a range of variables in order to demonstrate the relationship between the music therapy intervention and the outcome, thus proving its benefit. In contrast, qualitative research attempts to capture the richness of the client’s experience and to value an individual’s experiences. Although both qualitative and quantitative research use rigorous scientific methods, qualitative investigators believe that knowledge is constructed by individuals and distrust quantitative findings that claim to be true for all people given particular variables.

Early music therapy research was predominantly quantitative and drew heavily on behavioural principles, observing measurable change in response to musical interventions. Music therapists documented and evaluated the work in behavioural (Alley, 1979; Appell, 1980; Presti, 1984; Steele, Vaughan, & Dolan, 1976) or developmental (Coates, 1987) terms to meet all criteria for accountability.

In contrast, Hansen (1999) suggests that for music therapists ‘accountability means describing the processes which affect the people with whom they work’ [italics added]. Nevertheless she also encourages clinicians to provide ‘objective evidence of their effectiveness’. Hansen argues that by communicating these ideas to clients, colleagues, legislative agents or others, music therapists ‘establish the basic parameters of their task’ (p. 35).

Wigram (1993) found that towards the end of the 20th century music therapists had begun to question the traditional methods of music therapy research. Controlled methods using objective measures—which were predominant in the USA—were thought by some to have considerable limitations for individual cases and particularly for psychotherapeutically based work. Because of the potent relationship between music and the emotions, it can be a unique tool to address psychological aspects of development that are related to disability, such as sense of identity, self-esteem and expression of emotions such as frustration, anger, loss and fear. Outcomes of these interventions may be measured through behavioural strategies, as seen by reductions in self-harming behaviours. However these psychodynamic changes have proven to be difficult to capture with quantitative designs.

Over the past two decades, music therapy research has increasingly relied on qualitative descriptions to communicate outcomes. Questions have changed in focus from, “Does this work?” to “Why does this work?” In music therapy, qualitative research is popular not only for capturing the spoken descriptions offered by clients, but also their musical material. It allows researchers to capture the musical dialogues which occur as part of the primary communication between the therapist and the clients in music therapy sessions, a topic of great interest to music therapists and other music researchers.
Wigram’s (1993) analysis of the content of American and British journals of music therapy (1987-1991), found a total of 453 articles that focused on fields of special education and described children with developmental disability (291), autism and psychiatric issues (72) and sensory and physical disability (90). Two hundred and forty-seven (247) of these articles focused on clinical work, 176 on research, and 30 were general papers. Nevertheless, Wigram concluded that there was a lack of research in music therapy clinical fields, and even where some studies had been undertaken they were in quite selective areas. Wigram, therefore, encouraged music therapists to continue to undertake research which demonstrated the efficacy of their work using quantitative designs.

**MUSIC THERAPY RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS (1995-2005)**

In a further systematic review, Jellison (2000) identified 148 studies of disabled children and youth published in refereed English language journals between 1975 and 1999 (inclusive). Only papers that reported data and used well-established descriptive or experimental research methodologies were included. A North American bias was apparent in the selection of literature. Jellison identified a balance between articles which described clinical practice (n=72) and empirical articles (n=76) where researchers structured music to facilitate the acquisition of academic, social, motor and verbal behaviours’ (p. 235) to evaluate outcomes. One hundred and nine of the studies noted the function of music for non-music outcomes. The reports demonstrated that music used as a stimulus cue or prompt, could improve the accuracy of student responses and increase activity levels. It was shown to improve functional hand use, early written communication skills, social skills and comprehension, head posturing, in-seat behaviour, and preacademic skills, and to increase interactions and imitative behaviour. The use of music to facilitate specific behaviours did not reduce the participants’ enjoyment of music in other settings.

Most recently, Gold and colleagues (Gold, Voracek, & Wigram, 2004) conducted a meta-analysis of eleven music therapy studies involving children and adolescents with psychopathology, including six which were carried in special education settings (Edgerton, 1994; Eidson, 1989; Haines, 1989; Michel & Farrell, 1973; Michel & Martin, 1970; Montello & Coons, 1998). The review found that music therapy is highly significant (p<.001) as an effective treatment for children and adolescents with behavioural or developmental disorders. It was theorised that this effect may be due to the short concentration span experienced by children with these disabilities, with music therapy interventions serving as a motivating medium for engaging the child and therefore allowing them to achieve their full potential. It also noted that eclectic music therapy approaches were the most successful, with strict behavioural interventions indicating non-significant outcomes.

In 1998, Daveson and Edwards published an article outlining the role and application of music therapy in special education in Australia with reference to the most recent research and practice literature at the time. They argued that the available evidence highlighted extensive and unique applications of therapy in special education and that music therapy should be included as part of the special education curriculum and services. These authors noted that funding was being allocated within special education for music services to be implemented by people with music interest and abilities, but who lack necessary qualifications and training for music therapy practice. This situation results in a lack of awareness about the powerful emotional responses that can be evoked by music and the ability to successfully work with these psychological responses. More recently Booth (2004) examined the provision of music therapy in special schools in Victoria, Australia. She found that 41% of respondents did employ a music therapist and that their answers to interview questions accurately reflected the nature of music therapy indicating a high level of understanding of this service. Nevertheless she found that some misconceptions did still exist and that more work needs to be done to ensure relevant information is provided to schools regarding musical interventions.

In another important study, involving preadolescents who had emotional, learning and behavioural disorders, Montello and Coons (1998) showed that that students’ attention, motivation and hostility had improved significantly after receiving music therapy. Building on Montello and Coons work, Rickson and Watkins (2003) used a randomised control design to determine whether music therapy was effective in promoting prosocial behaviours in adolescent boys who had clinically significant aggressive behaviours. While the study involved a small number of students and no definite treatment effects could be detected, the results suggested that a music therapy programme promoting autonomy and creativity could help adolescents to use more appropriate behaviours in the residential villa setting. However, there were also indications that some students’ behaviour temporarily deteriorated in the classroom following music therapy sessions and that some students, particularly those who had a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) might require more highly structured music therapy sessions.

To answer the question that arose in the 2003 study, Rickson (2006) investigated the impact of instructional and improvisational music therapy approaches with adolescent boys who have ADHD. The instructional approach was based on behavioural and developmental theory and involved direct teaching and modelling of specific beat and rhythm tasks. The improvisational work involved using instruments in a freer way to promote communication and expression.

The specific target goal to reduce restless-impulsive and hyperactive-impulsive behaviours on the Conners’ Rating Scales (Conners, 1997) subscales was not achieved, and there were no significant differences between the treatments. However, teachers reported a significant reduction in the
Conners’ DSM-IV Total and Global Index subscale scores suggesting that music therapy does contribute to a reduction in a range of ADHD symptoms in the classroom.

Elefant and Wigram’s (2005) examination of individuals with Rett syndrome utilised a single subject, multiple probe design to examine learning ability within the music therapy context. This methodology is popular in behavioural analysis and considered appropriate by evidence based advocates for use in investigating young people with multiple disabilities. It involves changing the conditions at some arbitrary points in the study to evaluate whether participant responses are related to the test conditions—in this case, the music therapy. In this study, the seven girls, aged between 4 and 10 years, participated in tri-weekly music therapy sessions over 8 months. Results indicated that song frameworks provided a strong motivation for learning as seen by an increase in the rate of intentional choice making across time, reduction in the required number of sessions to learn new songs, and a very high and sustained level of intentional choice making. This research has been widely applauded within the Rett syndrome community due to its rigorous design and findings that challenged the “uneducable” label often ascribed to these young women.

Music therapy is frequently used with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and has been the focus of many quantitative investigations continuing into the current century. A Cochrane review has been conducted (Gold, Wigram, & Elefant, 2006) to examine the effects of music therapy for individuals with ASD. This methodology is highly regarded within the evidence based framework because only controlled trials are included. According to The Cochrane Collaboration (2007), a Cochrane review is ‘a review of a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyse data from the studies that are included in the review’. The Gold et al. review of relevant studies by Cochrane standards provided evidence that music therapy can help children with ASD to improve communication skills. In all cases, music therapy was found to be superior to a placebo intervention or standard care in terms of communication outcomes, a central component of the autistic condition.

A meta-analysis of homogeneous research with children and adolescents who have autism (Whipple, 2004) also showed that the use of music in treatment with this population has a relatively high effect. In addition the results of a survey of goals and outcomes for 40 music therapy clients who have autism (Kaplan & Steele, 2005) also suggested that a wide range of specific music therapy interventions are effective with this population and that generalisation does occur.

In addition to the kinds of studies that draw on behavioural analysis, it is also important that music therapists continue to investigate the questions that emerge from their clinical practice. A greater understanding of the communicative and symbolic meanings of clients’ musical material is needed and qualitative analysis has been used to address these questions (Aigen, 1991; Arnason, 2002; McFerran & Wigram, 2005; Rainey Perry, 2003). In addition, continuing to gather rich descriptions of participants’ experiences in music therapy is a valid and important methodology for improving understandings of the benefits of music therapy (Aigen, 1997), although difficult with non-verbal populations such as those frequently found in special education.

One excellent example of the value of qualitative investigation is the rigorous analysis undertaken by Perry (2003) in a study of communication outcomes for 10 young people with severe and multiple disabilities in individual music therapy. A qualitative case study design was utilised that incorporated methods of naturalistic inquiry to analyse a single session. Data was collected through a number of sources. A communication profile designed by the researcher was used in the analysis of video of sessions. Results of the analysis indicated that within the musical dialogue, different communication strategies could be identified such as turn-taking, engagement and attending. This provides evidence to support the importance of music therapy in achieving these communication goals, although it is not numerical evidence. According to Tesch’s (1990) description of research methodology, this use of qualitative, explorative investigation to underpin the accuracy of further quantitative, measurable outcome studies is a valid sequence. Perry’s (2003) study provides insight into the validity of measuring communication outcomes in music therapy to provide an indication of multiply disabled children’s communication skills generally. Improvements fostered in music therapy can then be understood as valuable for broader development and interpreted accordingly.

**FUTURE RESEARCH PATHWAYS**

Because of the diversity of music therapy practice, it can be difficult for researchers to recruit sufficient numbers of students with similar needs and working on common goals, who are able to participate in research projects that might produce statistical evidence for the support or negation of music therapy. Nevertheless, ‘research in the broad field of music therapy has been a real focus of attention over the last forty years, and a number of clinicians and academics have obtained whatever resources they could find to initiate, carry out and report studies’ (Wigram et al., 2002, p. 221). The problem of sample size has been partially addressed by recent advances in the use of meta-analysis. ‘Because of their intuitiveness, they may help to bridge the ‘gap’ between research and clinical practice….and help to identify what research findings are clinically relevant’ (Gold, 2004, p. 94). On the other hand although meta-analysis is a rigorous research method in its own right, Dileo and Bradt (2005) point out that meta-analysis procedures:

1. are labour intensive, time-consuming and require expertise in selecting, computing and interpreting appropriate statistics.
2. do not highlight more subtle aspects of a study.
3. are vulnerable to publication bias which occurs when only material which suggests the intervention was successful is published and other studies are not.
4. include studies that might not be homogeneous (i.e. not very comparable).
Ockelford, Welch and Zimmermann (2002) acknowledge that ‘a great deal of significant work takes place in (music therapy and music education) contexts... but further research, leading to the provision of new resources for curriculum and staff development, is crucial to the realisation of music’s full potential in the lives of pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties’ (p. 178). Although music therapy is being used to support child development in many domains, it is important for music therapists to continue to question and explain the uniqueness of the discipline (Gant, 2000) and to choose research methodologies which capture meaningful information.

Jellison and Gainer (1995) measured a participant’s on-task behaviour in music education and music therapy settings for a full year and although they were able to note that the child was for the most part on task in both settings, following the study they had serious doubts that ‘behaviours that traditionally have been identified as good indicators of a child’s success in the classroom (i.e., on-task behaviour and correct task performance) are in and of themselves adequate measures of the child’s success in either setting’ (p. 238). This doubt has resonated with many music therapy clinicians who have found the quantitative research studies that are revered by the evidence based approach to be irrelevant to their clinical practice.

Music therapy research employs many different research designs and strategies (Aldridge, 1996; Bruscia, 1998; Bunt, 1994; Gold, 2004; Jellison, 2005; Langenberg, Aigen & Frommer, 1996; Rogers, 1995; Smeijsters, 1997; Wheeler, 2005; Wigram, 1993). Although evidence based approaches are increasingly demanded (Ansdell, Pavlicevic & Procter, 2004) this should not undermine the importance of investigations of a qualitative nature (Edwards, 2005). In fact, Lincoln (2005) a respected qualitative researcher in the field of education, argues that the recent emphasis on this framework within education is dangerous methodological conservatism. She emphasises that multiple perspectives have long been considered as the most rigorous approach to investigation, with an emphasis on individual researchers ‘determining best practice for pursuing research questions’ (Lincoln, 2005, p. 178). Although the results of rigorous qualitative research are not fully recognised under the evidence based framework, this does not deplete their value. Nonetheless, it is crucial that music therapists acknowledge identified gaps in the literature and seek to address these with appropriate studies. Recent reference to music therapy as a ‘controversial’ and “unsupported” practice in special education (Stephenson, 2006) fails to recognise the wealth of literature and research that has been conducted over the past 25 years and appears not to value the qualitative evidence which underpins music therapy practice.

Stephenson (2006) identified a lack of recent quantitative studies investigating the impact of music therapy for improving communication in children and adolescents with severe intellectual disability. In response to her challenge, the authors are collaborating with her to undertake a research project that fulfils the expectations of the evidence based framework. The study uses a quantitative methodology considered suitable for investigations where a mean response is less informative than detailed information about individual responses. The single subject ABAB design will incorporate an initial baseline phase (A) where the music therapist plays with the identified child, offering opportunities for communication, but not including musical strategies. The intervention phase (B) will utilise improvised and semi-structured music therapy strategies to engage the child in communication. This will then be repeated in order to account for the potential influence of a rising baseline. Analysis of the video footage of both the child and the therapists will be used to provide valid evidence that it is the music therapy intervention that results in increased communication.

Further studies can be developed from this quantitative basis, and complemented by the more in-depth analysis available from mixed designs and qualitative investigations. Music therapists are both creative and practical according to personality studies (Holmes, 2004) and these joint skill-sets are the basis of the powerful clinical work that is undertaken as well as important research work of the past, present and future. Edwards (2005) has outlined the affinities and challenges that exist between music therapy research and evidence-based approaches. It is generally agreed that this in an important model within special education and medical fields that must be acknowledged. The increasing prominence of evidence-based practice in the 21st century provides an important opportunity for the discipline to re-establish a balance between qualitative and quantitative research.

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Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice.


Daphne Rickson (MMusTher, HealSc (MenH), LTCL, RMTher)

Daphne Rickson is a lecturer on the Master of Music Therapy programme at the New Zealand School of Music. She has had 15 years clinical music therapy experience working predominantly in special education settings. Her major research interests have been investigating music therapy with aggressive adolescent boys, and with adolescents who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Daphne is currently engaged in doctoral research exploring the potential role of music in special education settings and the development of a music therapy assessment and consultation protocol.

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Dr Katrina McFerran is an Australian music therapist and lecturer at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne. She has worked with young people with a range of disabilities over the past fifteen years, in special school, paediatric palliative care and hospital settings. She has conducted research into the efficacy of music therapy in supporting young people who are bereaved, chronically ill, and living with disability or mental illness. She has published in a range of international refereed journals and presents regularly on the topic of music therapy research.
NEW HORIZONS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION:
EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IN ACTION

Editors: Barry Carpenter and Jo Egerton

This book presents a collection of evidence-based reports from practitioners at Sunfield School in the United Kingdom. The school serves young people with profound autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or complex developmental disabilities and has built a culture of encouraging evidence-based teaching practice to help children be healthy, stay safe, and develop qualities that positively affect their life. The Sunfield Research Institute supports inclusive, child- and family-centred, practice-informing research as exemplified in this book. Teachers and academics have engaged in and reported on what they have found works for them in their teaching practice. This is consistent with current understanding of effective professional development that is context based and involves teachers as researchers enhancing their practice with robust data (for example, Allen, 2005; Cordingley, Bell, Evans & Firth 2005; Guskey, 2002). The book is not a comprehensive academic treatise on educational research but it is a useful model of how theory and practice can merge; it shows what teachers working alongside others can do.

New Horizons has six sections; introduction to evidence-based practice, building communication, enhancing health and well-being, inclusion in the community, the SIECCA curriculum, and preparing for the future. The various chapters within each section are written by practitioners who share the evidence they have gathered. The result is a rich source of practical material ranging over topics such as pre-verbal communication through play, adaptation of social stories for self management, dealing with co-morbid mental health and intellectual disabilities, strategies for strengthening emotional well-being, and collaborative approaches to community inclusion. Two chapters describe the Sunfield Integrated Education and Care Curriculum Approach (SIECCA) that is a comprehensive autism-specific programme.

The final section (preparing for the future) covers not only the area of transitions to the wider community but also includes a chapter entitled “Research tools for evidence-based practice” that offers a concise summary of issues relevant to conducting research in practice. The chapter author underscores the intention of the book when she states that for ‘practitioners, the value of research lies in its ability to equip them with a toolkit of resources which are responsive to the ever changing needs of children with whom they work under the conditions imposed by their environment’ (Whitehead, 2007a, p. 222). While the book will have particular appeal to those working directly with children who have special education needs the demonstration of the “toolkit of resources” makes it of practical value to all practitioners who seek to refine their teaching practice.

In chapter 11 (Changing perspectives on disability and inclusion) Whitehead reports on the learning that resulted from a collaborative project involving students from mainstream and special education settings (a similar NZ project using MacBeth can be found in the Kairaranga Special Edition, Vol. 7, 2006). A comment from one of the young people involved demonstrates an attitude that is relevant to teachers working with a diverse range of students:

Nothing was challenging – unless you have a challenging angle, it’s not challenging. You’ve got to be willing to give it a go. (Whitehead, 2007b, p. 163)

This book shares some of “the toolkit” that could help teachers “give it a go”.

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1 The book launch of New Horizons was held 22nd March, 2007, in Hamilton New Zealand, during Reflections of special education: The child in the looking glass conference.
REVIEWER PROFILE
Dr Bruce Kent
Bruce is a psychologist working for the Ministry of Education, Special Education in Manukau. In recent years he has been a Senior Advisor, Professional Practice with particular involvement in research projects relating to effective teaching practice in special education.

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AT THE CUTTING EDGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF PHONEMIC AWARENESS IN LEARNING TO READ AND SPELL (2ND ED.)
Tom Nicholson
In this book Professor Nicholson encourages parents to prepare children for school with some informal study of phonemes, phonics and alphabet. This is fine if the child is ready and enjoys the study. I believe that a good start for some new entrants is clear speech, a good vocabulary and a love of books. Clear speech is helpful in phonemic awareness and later phonic studies. I do agree with Tom Nicholson that it is most important that parents read to their children.

At the Cutting Edge makes a very good case for teaching phonemic awareness as a basis for reading and spelling. As well as teaching children to listen and perceive sounds it would also teach them to pronounce sounds clearly. The teaching of phonemic awareness is well presented. I like the pictures provided in worksheet one and the method of using them. The Gough-Kastler-Roper Phoneme Awareness Test would be a useful diagnostic test for any child who was having difficulty with reading. Some children with strong visual skills might learn easily once the letter is introduced with the corresponding phoneme.

In Chapter Five, studies of the English language by Calfee and Patrick (1995), Henry (2003) and Moat (2000) explain the difference in spelling of Anglo Saxon words, and words that come from Latin, French and Greek. This chapter then describes a complete phonic programme for Anglo Saxon words. It is good to see that the teaching of phonics and spelling are recommended for all classes in the primary school. The worksheets at the back of the book (Page 110 - 119) are clear and useful. The rules for syllabification are well and simply explained.

The study of different teaching methods by Forman, Francis, Schatschneider and Mentor (1998) shows more decoding progress made by those children using direct phonic based instruction. However, those children who were decoding at an improved level showed no comparable improvement in comprehension. It also showed ‘that the attitudes to reading were more positive in the whole language class’ (p. 74).

What recommends this book to me is that it does not claim that teaching phonics alone will teach every child to read. It does not exclude other methods of teaching reading and spelling. This is good because all children do not learn to read in the same way. They have different strengths and weaknesses.

There are some children, even very intelligent children, with learning disabilities, who fail to learn. They will need careful assessment to find the underlying cause of their difficulty. A one to one remedial teaching programme will help these children to learn.

Professor Nicholson believes that more children would succeed in reading if the study of phonics was added to the existing reading programme. I agree with him.

REVIEWER PROFILE
Margaret Mitchell
Margaret is a retired primary teacher & SPELD teacher. She lives on Auckland’s North Shore where she has worked for many years teaching students with specific learning difficulties.

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Author: Tom Nicholson
Publisher: NZCER Press – www.nzcer.org.nz
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RRP: $29.70

GIFTED EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS 1878 – 2005
Danny Knudson
A new book on the theme of giftedness is a welcome addition to the relatively small number of New Zealand books in this field. It is written by an educator with long time experience and interest in gifted children and is based on his PhD research.

In a sense it delivers more than the title suggests. A key goal of Knudson’s research was to identify factors which enhance or inhibit prospects for gifted children. The book provides both an historical review and an evaluative study to critique impressions gathered from the historical information. It includes case studies of gifted individuals and also offers some of the author’s personal views, for example on terminology, definitions and identification.
The first chapters provide a chronological history, followed by the case studies and implications of these. The final chapter contains a comprehensive summary and discussion of issues which could be read alone.

Knudson sets the history in the context of general educational system changes, divided into eras, showing periods of official encouragement where programmes for gifted children and professional development for teachers thrived and periods of no official support where there was a lack of coordinated commitment. He notes a few enlightened lone voices who either advocated for gifted children or paved the way to more indirectly allow for initiatives for gifted children to flourish, with Dr Clarence Beeby and Dr George Parkyn being especially influential. Beeby made syllabus revisions which required individualisation of pace and flexibility of teaching and made specific references to differences in ability. In this receptive atmosphere toward innovation, Parkyn published research findings regarding gifted children in New Zealand schools and, in Knudson’s words, ‘was remarkable in advancing the idea that highly intelligent children have particular educational needs and warrant special consideration in terms of grouping, teaching and programmes’ (p. 57).

Knudson brings the historical review up to date with Ministry of Education initiatives occurring since 2000, including an important addition to the wording in a National Administration Guideline requiring students to be identified and provided for.

It is not a completely comprehensive history. There is no mention, for example, of two resource and advisory centres established in the Auckland and Wellington regions in the 1980s by departmental liaison inspectors with responsibility for children with special abilities, which each existed for a decade. There is also only a fleeting mention of the Correspondence School, whose dual enrolment system has catered for a significant number of gifted pupils over time. However, no one volume or one researcher could cover everything that has happened for gifted students, especially as some earlier ventures have not been well documented. The book does include some insights, especially from a South Island perspective, into local initiatives which many would otherwise be unaware of.

The case studies are of eleven adults, who reflect on their school experiences. Each of them was identified as a gifted child at primary school in the 1960s. They present varying profiles in terms of types of abilities, interests and academic achievement. Interestingly, most of them were unaware of their own abilities while at primary school. Drawing from these reflections, the author makes comments about social issues, accepting each gifted child as a unique individual, parental support, the importance of subjects chosen at secondary school, the effects of peer relationships, and the implications of being accelerated, in a separate class, or having enrichment opportunities.

Knudson goes on to outline promoters and inhibitors of prospects for gifted children in schools. Inhibitors have included official attitudes, anti-intellectualism in New Zealand society, funding and class sizes. Promoters include parental encouragement, early fostering of abilities and interests, teachers providing support and challenge and qualitative differentiation of curriculum.

The debates, issues and challenges which Knudson discusses have existed throughout the history and are still around today. These include debate about whether it is elitist or socially unacceptable to have separate education for gifted students; the issues of identification procedures often being inadequate; and the challenge of how to coordinate special programmes with the regular classroom programme.

Knudson poses the question: Gifted education in New Zealand — embarrassment of riches or embarrassment? His answer is: both an embarrassment and a degree of richness, with a history of haphazard provision, periods of enlightenment and outstanding contributions from some individuals. He says there is reason to be optimistic due to recent official recognition from Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office and a lessening of the anti-intellectualism of the past.

Whilst this book has to be viewed as a selective history, it is a worthwhile contribution to the field. For those really interested in filling in more of the gaps or gaining other perspectives on the history, reading Moltzen’s chapter in McAlpine and Moltzen’s (2004) New Zealand book, back issues of Apex and Tall Poppies journals, and chapters in international handbooks of giftedness and talent, is recommended.

No doubt students taking papers on giftedness will consult this text. There is also plenty of interest for teachers and parents.

FURTHER READING


REVIEWER PROFILE

Shirley Taylor

Shirley's work in the area of giftedness has included being Director of the Programme Enrichment Centre, an advisor on gifted students and a member of the Ministerial Working Party. She currently works as an educational psychologist in private practice and also oversees the Talent Development Initiatives for the Ministry of Education.
Michael Absolum

The thesis of this book is ‘that students need to be active managers, regulators and directors of their own learning if they are to learn to the stage where they genuinely own the learning. All classroom processes need to be directed towards supporting and enabling students to be the best managers of their own learning they can be. The role of the teacher is to model and scaffold the processes of learning in order to support students as managers – at all times’ (p. 14).

To illustrate a learning-focused relationship, Absolum uses the analogy of an outdoor education teacher instructing a group of learners on how to abseil down a cliff. He uses it as an example of a learning-focused and mutually respectful relationship as both parties are motivated to ensure high-quality learning. At the beginning of the lesson, each student agrees to go down the cliff before the end of the lesson. Both teacher and students are motivated as lives are at stake. All students attend closely to the instruction; they question and ask for repeat demonstrations and clarification. They check they are using the equipment correctly, practise, check with their peers, and ask for the demonstration to be broken down into sections. They watch their peers and learn from those who seem to have mastered the task. They request a final check from the teacher. The teacher works just as hard, ensuring that instructions and demonstrations are precise, correct and understood. The teacher works to provide the necessary scaffolding when students struggle.

The above example of a quality learning-focused relationship is based on mutual respect, openness and honesty as well as high motivation on the part of both teacher and students. The students are clear about what they have to learn and why they need to learn. In their engagement with the task they assess their own progress; enlist support from peers as well as the teacher. They demonstrate openness and honesty through the way they confidently question what they are unsure of. The teacher’s role as the students practise is to provide expertise and support through repeated explanation, modelling, prompting and giving appropriate feedback. Thus the needs of each diverse learner in the class are catered for.

Absolum goes on to provide in precise detail, the processes and the strategies for nurturing and maintaining learning-focused classroom relationships. For example, on how to ensure students understand what they have to learn, he says, ‘a well-constructed learning intention uses appropriate language so that it is accessible and meaningful for the student’ (p. 88). As a typical example of the attention to detail necessary for effective teaching, he explains that a good learning intention could be misconstrued if the teacher doesn’t show the children the relevance of the teaching/learning task. For example, ‘we use capital letters and full stops so that others can understand all of our ideas in our writing’ (p. 91). Absolum’s book gives us the know-how for developing a learning-focused classroom environment. For example, the details of what a learning-focused teacher / student / classroom looks like; how to shape a learning environment at the beginning of the year; questionnaires for the children; questionnaires for the teacher; how to help students to self-assess; the importance and skills for effective feedback; how to scaffold learning; how to structure a learning conversation – all this and much more. There is a whole chapter on active reflection - reflection with students, self and colleagues. Cooperative learning and reciprocal teaching are also included as effective learning-centred strategies.

Absolum discusses the use of formative assessment versus standardised assessment tools. Black and William’s (1998) definition of formative assessment: ‘The process used by teachers and students to recognise and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning during the learning’ (p. 20), is explored, explained and extended. The reader emerges at the end of the book feeling as though they have the knowledge to effectively use formative assessment to enhance student learning and improve their teaching.

The final chapters cover planning for learning and building partnerships with family. The appendix contains examples of assessment sheets for children and teachers.

This is a most useful and practical text book for teachers at any stage in their teaching. Well researched and scholarly, but not heavy in its presentation. It is user-friendly, with lots of variation in the way it is presented so that the numerous teaching tips are easily accessible to the reader. I can see a busy teacher skimming through the book in one sitting then going back time after time to use the individual chapters to improve their micro teaching skills.

Highly recommended.

Kay Hunter

Kay Hunter is currently an RTLB based in the Eastern Suburbs, Wellington. She has spent a lifetime involved in education, as teacher, mother and learner.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Title: Clarity in the classroom. Using formative assessment: Building learning-focused relationships

Author: Michael Absolum

Publisher: Hodder Education

Date of Publication: 2006


RRP: $49.99
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