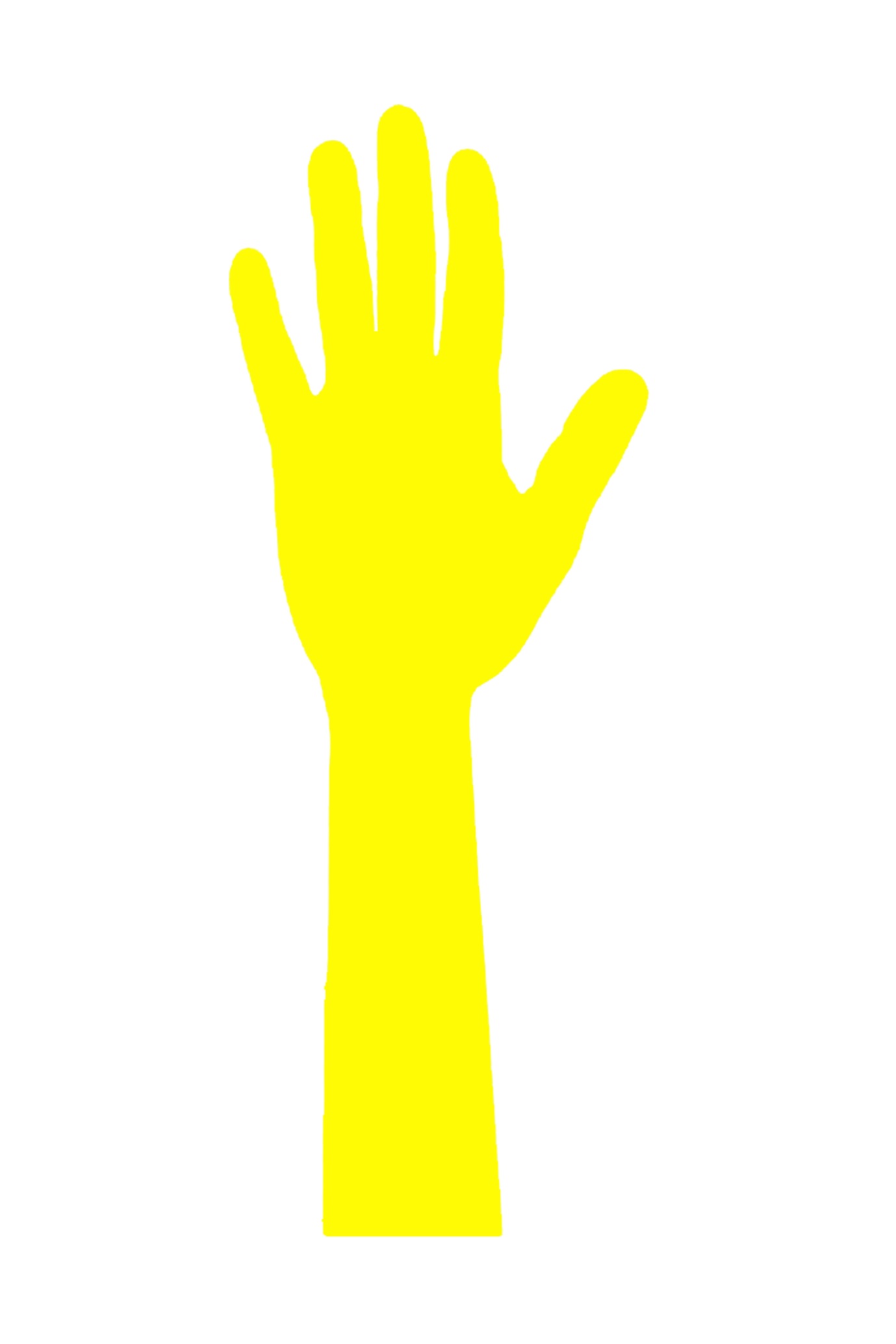
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**Gifted Children are**

**Priority Learners Too.**

**A position statement supported by**

giftEDnz – The Professional Association for Gifted Education

NZAGC – The New Zealand Association for Gifted Children

New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education

**2014**

**Position Statement on Gifted Students**

**as Priority Learners**

**Position Paper:**

**Gifted Students as Priority Learners**

**Introduction**

Priority learners are groups of students who have been identified as historically not experiencing success in the New Zealand schooling system, and these include many Maori and Pacific learners, those from low socio-economic backgrounds and students with **special education needs** ([Education Review Office, 2012](http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Evaluation-at-a-Glance-Priority-Learners-in-New-Zealand-Schools-August-2012); [Ministry of Education, 2013](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PublicationsAndResources/StatementOfIntent/~/media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/2013SOI/StatementOfIntent2013.pdf)).

The New Zealand Ministry of Education recognises that gifted and talented students have special needs through the [National Administration Guidelines](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/EducationInNewZealand/EducationLegislation/TheNationalAdministrationGuidelinesNAGs.aspx). Every Board of Trustees in New Zealand state schools has obligations to identify gifted and talented students, and to develop and implement strategies for addressing their needs, under National Administration Guideline 1:

*Each board, through the principal and staff, is required to:*

*(c) on the basis of good quality assessment information, identify students and groups of students:*

* 1. *who are not achieving;*
  2. *who are at risk of not achieving;*
  3. *who have special needs (****including gifted and talented students****); and*
  4. *aspects of the curriculum which require particular attention;*

*(d) develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum identified in (c) above;*

Gifted and talented students have special learning, social and emotional needs which arise as a result of their exceptional abilities and qualities. Gifted and talented learners are also found amongst all priority learner groups. “For priority students, education acknowledges, supports and incorporates their identity, language and culture in their learning experience” ([Ministry of Education Statement of Intent, 2013](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PublicationsAndResources/StatementOfIntent/~/media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/2013SOI/StatementOfIntent2013.pdf)).

This position paper supports the proposition that gifted and talented children and youth must be recognised as priority learners by the New Zealand Government and Ministry of Education. Priority learner status requires Ministry of Education funding, resources and support to ensure that all Boards of Trustees provide and monitor identification and provisions for gifted and talented learners.

**Discussion**

*Gifted and talented learners are recognised, valued, and empowered to develop their exceptional abilities and qualities through equitable access to differentiated and culturally responsive provisions (*[*Ministry of Education, 2012*](http://gifted.tki.org.nz/content/download/2358/13915/file/Gifted%20and%20talented%20students%20-%20meeting%20their%20needs%20in%20New%20Zealand%20Schools.pdf)*).*

The identification of giftedness and subsequent provision of appropriate services and support within schools is variable, and research into effectiveness is lacking. However, the evidence shows that currently gifted students tend to be underserved by many schools in the education system, with priority learner groups, including Māori, often overlooked ([Ministry of Education, 2012](http://gifted.tki.org.nz/content/download/2358/13915/file/Gifted%20and%20talented%20students%20-%20meeting%20their%20needs%20in%20New%20Zealand%20Schools.pdf)).

Recent [PISA](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2543/pisa-2012) (Programme for International Student Assessment) results show New Zealand’s top students are falling behind with “a decrease over time in the proportion of New Zealand students achieving at the highest levels” ([Education Gazette, 10 Feb 2014](http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8898)). Many of these students will be gifted and talented students whose needs have not been met within the school system.

Failure by the education system to identify and address the unique learning needs of gifted and talented students creates a ‘[delivery gap](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED1406/S00036/gaps-in-education-for-gifted-report-finds.htm)’ that may result in underachievement (even though the standard required may be met). There is evidence in New Zealand that meeting the standard required may not truly demonstrate a gifted learners’ abilities: [National Standards](http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Key-information/Fact-sheets/Overall-teacher-judgment) for primary students do not acknowledge achievement that is more than one year or ‘well above’ the standard. Gifted learners have the right to teaching that meets them at their level – wherever that might be – and takes them beyond it.

Higher levels of education and ability positively correlate with economic performance ([Martin-Jenkins, 2014](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED1406/S00036/gaps-in-education-for-gifted-report-finds.htm)). Regardless of economic growth for our nation, gifted and talented students’ needs must be identified and addressed in schools for the students’ own sake, to develop their own gifts and talents, and create confident, connected, competent citizens. This is in keeping with New Zealand’s educational vision, as outlined in the [Statement of Intent](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PublicationsAndResources/StatementOfIntent/~/media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/2013SOI/StatementOfIntent2013.pdf):

*A world-leading education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21st-century*

The [Ministry of Education (2012)](http://gifted.tki.org.nz/content/download/2358/13915/file/Gifted%20and%20talented%20students%20-%20meeting%20their%20needs%20in%20New%20Zealand%20Schools.pdf) provides an evidence-base for gifted and talented education:

*The increased amount of research in New Zealand means that we can now confidently identify the core principles of effective practice. Those principles provide a platform on which schools can build their approach to supporting their gifted and talented students more effectively. There are five interrelated components of providing effective support for gifted and talented students: concept, characteristics, identification, programmes, and self-review.*

Inadequate funding, support and services prevent these principles of effective practice and components of effective support from identifying and providing for the needs of gifted and talented learners in New Zealand.

**Action**

The New Zealand Government and Ministry of Education is called upon to formally recognise gifted and talented students as priority learners with special educational needs.

As a group of priority learners, gifted and talented students must be included by the Ministry of Education in Special and Inclusive Education, which provides funding, services and support for children with special education needs in New Zealand.

The Ministry of Education should increase funding to support the identification and provisions for gifted and talented students through direct funding to schools, increased opportunities for professional learning and development, and an increase in the development of an evidence-base of effective practices, thereby supporting schools in meeting their obligations under the National Administration Guidelines.

Boards of Trustees are reminded of their responsibilities under the National Administration Guidelines to identify gifted learners and provide for their special learning needs. The needs of gifted and talented students should form part of each school’s strategic plan, as with other learners with special needs.

The Education Review Office is called upon to report on schools’ compliance with National Administration Guidelines by way of a national review of gifted and talented education.

**Conclusion**

Evidence shows that gifted and talented students are currently underserved in New Zealand’s school system, and, as a result their performance is declining. This position paper asserts that gifted and talented students should be recognised as priority learners by the New Zealand Government and Ministry of Education. Recognition as priority learners requires the appropriation of additional funding, services and support to identify and meet the special learning needs of gifted and talented students.

**A position statement supported by**

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New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education – www.nzcge.co.nz

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