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Searching for a place to belong: A narrative study of parental perspectives of gifted  
children's learning environments

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## **Abstract**

Gifted children have unique social, emotional and learning needs, which if not met may result in negative effects on their emotional well-being. The aim of this study was to understand the experiences of nine primary school age gifted children within their New Zealand learning environments and to examine how these experiences affected their emotional well-being. A narrative research design was used to generate stories, based on interviews with their parents, of the children's experiences in their learning environments. The overarching theme, present in all the parents' accounts, was that a sense of belonging within the learning environment was vital to the well-being of their children. On the occasions when the children felt that they did not belong within their learning environment their emotional well-being suffered. A sense of belonging was found to occur when the children's social, emotional and learning needs were catered for. Advocacy by the parents and appropriate pedagogy of the classroom teachers were fundamental to ensuring that this sense of belonging was nurtured. Recommendations stemming from this study include the provision for the training of pre-service and in-service teachers in recognising and responding to the needs of gifted children.

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