A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in New Zealand Primary Schools:

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Abstract

Gifted and talented students have a voice and their own perceptions of their involvement in programmes aimed at catering for their unique abilities. This study examines withdrawal programmes within New Zealand primary schools from the participating students' perspectives.

This research makes a valuable contribution to this limited research in this field and provides useful information and recommendations for teachers of primary schools when planning to implement withdrawal programmes aimed at catering for the needs of our gifted and talented children.

The study concluded that:

- In the schools studied for the purposes of this research the teachers had a crucial role to play in identifying these gifted and talented children. While all three schools identified with a broad notion of giftedness and talent their identification procedures were not consistent with this broad notion, incorporating teacher nomination as a primary means.

- Each withdrawal programme was very unique to each particular school and the majority of all children interviewed spoke in very positive terms about their involvement in the withdrawal programmes. The majority of the children found the withdrawal programme fun and commented on the provision of choice and opportunities that weren't offered back in the regular classroom.

- It can not be concluded from this research that withdrawal programmes are a viable and valuable tool in relation to meeting the educational needs of these children. The question remains that while one can plan for enrichment in a withdrawal programme, one must question whether the programme is actually challenging and extending the abilities of these children.

Unless we provide rigorous programmes for our gifted and talented students the talents and abilities of these children will be wasted. These children are our future and we need to be providing programmes that challenge and extend their current abilities so that these children can realise and achieve to their full potential in our society. These children have special gifts and talents and deserve the right to an education that meets their needs and challenges their abilities to allow them to achieve to this full potential, and be successful members of our society in the future.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Much of past and present research about current educational programmes for gifted and talented students, particularly that of withdrawal programmes, has focused on the effects and benefits of such a programme. Too often we as adults assume we know educationally, what is best for our children, but research rarely suggests we have actually discussed the students' perspectives and what they believe. If these programmes are aimed at meeting the educational needs of gifted children, then surely it would be beneficial for the success of future programmes to discuss and analyse the programme from the student's point of view. This study aims to understand the participant students' perspectives of current withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools, to aid in a deepened understanding for future direction in catering for the needs of our gifted and talented students.

In New Zealand there is a growing awareness of the need to provide our gifted and talented students with educational opportunities aimed at developing their abilities and talents. Enrichment and acceleration are two commonly used terms in discussing educational programmes for our gifted and talented students. Much research suggests the need to blend the two in providing the necessary balance for effectively catering for the educational needs of these children. Within New Zealand, the Ministry of Education (2000) suspected that enrichment was the preferred provisional strategy for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students, however, in Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind, and Kearney (2004) educators reported a preference for the integration of enrichment and acceleration which the literature supports. Of schools that didn't have a preference for a combination of the two, enrichment was viewed more favourably, with planned enrichment being more likely than planned acceleration. One such programme that traditionally incorporates and follows the principles behind enrichment is that of the withdrawal or pull out programme. Research suggests that withdrawal programmes are flexible with the possibility of incorporating the provision of acceleration with the previous enrichment, as is ideally suggested (Townsend, 2004). It is this flexibility, and this need to promote a merging of the

two for effectively meeting the needs of our gifted and talented students, that provides reason to examine the current structure of withdrawal programmes in New Zealand. More specifically, and an often neglected area within this provision for gifted and talented children, is the need to relate the school's interpretation of the programme, to the perspective of the participants involved (Braggett, 1994).

1.2 Research Objectives:

The purpose of this study was to examine withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools taking the form of a study in two parts. Firstly, seeking to gather information about the structure of current withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools and secondly exploring the participating students' experiences and perceptions of their involvement in such a programme.

PART ONE: The objective for the first part of the study was to examine the identification of these gifted and talented students and develop an understanding of the withdrawal programme that they are currently involved in. One to one interviews and document analysis were used to gather such data. The teachers of the withdrawal programme were given the opportunity to voice their perceptions about the programmes, such as its structure, procedures, curriculum content etc.

PART TWO: The objective for the second part of the study was to understand the students' perceptions of their involvement in the withdrawal programme offered at their school. Focus group interviews were used to gather such perceptions.

1.3 The nature of gifted and talented:

The defining of what it is to be gifted has had little consensus within the field of gifted and talented education. Early definitions of giftedness focused solely on those children exhibiting high general intelligence, with IQ testing being a form of identifying and assessing these children. The concept of intelligence is more modernly recognised as a

more complex notion than was first thought. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is one such theory that looks at this intricate notion of intelligence, as a way to characterise gifted individuals (Sternberg, 2000). Gardner describes eight dimensions of intelligence, being linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, musical, spatial, bodily kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist intelligence (McAlpine, Moltzen & Riley, 2000). Renzulli (1977) proposed a widely accepted view of giftedness. He views gifted and talented behaviours as a combination of above average intellectual ability, high task motivation and high level of creativity. A contemporary view of giftedness incorporates a broader definition of what it is to be gifted, having moved away from the notion of high intelligence being equivalent to giftedness. Such a definition now encompasses a more multidimensional set of characteristics, with the inclusion of areas such as creativity, leadership, artistic ability, intelligence, cultural abilities and qualities or it may be ones' giftedness in a specific academic field, such as mathematics or reading. Such definitions have generated categories with which to identify children who maybe gifted and talented. There are a number of definitions and models that try to define the concept of giftedness, but there is no specific one that is agreed upon by all people, due to the fact that the term giftedness has different meanings for different people. Bailey, Knight, and Riley (2001) note "that while there is no universally agreed upon definition, most recognise that, with children, we are talking about high achievement, or high potential, in comparison with others of the same age" (p. 1).

Another such difficulty with understanding what it is to be gifted is understanding the terminology particularly the terms gifted and talented. Much research incorporates both words as meaning the same, in that to be talented is to be gifted. However, Gagne' (1991) proposed the differentiated giftedness-talent model, which dismissed the idea that these two ideas were interchangeable. Unlike much literature that interchanges the terms gifted and talented, Gagne' (1985, 1992) has argued for a distinction between the two concepts. "According to Gagne' giftedness relates to natural abilities, aptitudes or intelligence's, while talent relates more to outstanding achievements in the field of human endeavours" (McAlpine, 1996, p. 35). According to Gagne's model, giftedness occurs within the domains of intellect, creativity, socioaffective and sensorimotor. Central to this model are

the environment, intrapersonal, and motivational catalysts, which nurture or impair an individual's attainment. It is these catalysts that Gagne' suggests allow for the changeover from giftedness to talent. Such fields of talent include physical sciences, health, social sciences, communication, arts, administration, athletics and many other areas. Gagne' looked at giftedness as applying to the characteristics of a specific individual, such as one's intellect, and the process of acquiring a talent. On the other hand he looked at talents, as being specific to a field of study such as music, hence the final product that has been accomplished. Sternberg (2000) states with reference to Gagne', "He has suggested that gifted individuals are those who come into the world with the potential for extraordinary contributions, whereas talented individuals are those who develop their potential for contributions" (p. 231). Gagne' also proposes two groups of catalysts. The first group is intrapersonal, such as one's motivation or self-confidence, and the second group being environmental, being significant persons or environments. The idea of chance is also built into the model in the environmental factors. Such chance may include simply being in the right place at the right time. From looking at the model, it can therefore be implied that such factors as one's home environment or level of motivation, can either hinder or enhance the potential of that individual. Gagne's model recognises and takes these factors into consideration when looking at children who are either gifted or talented (McAlpine, 2004).

"Further complicating the picture is the fact that the concepts of giftedness and talent differ from culture to culture. This is because a culture's perception of special abilities is shaped by its beliefs, customs, needs, values, concepts and attitudes" (Bevan-Brown, 2004, p. 91). The work of Bevan-Brown (2004) highlights the difficulty of applying a single, defining concept of gifted and talented students within our New Zealand education system. Accordingly we must be aware of the different conceptualisations from both within and between cultures, toward our gifted and talented students.

With the development of a multi-categorical concept of intelligence and the broader definition of gifted and talented, identification procedures also need to be developed. All identification methods have their own strengths and weaknesses, therefore it is important to

refrain from reliance on one single method (McAlpine, 2004). The aim of identification procedures should be to identify our gifted and talented students for a purpose, and needs to conform to the definition of the school or culture concerned. Such a purpose should be to identify the needs of our gifted and talented students in order to develop appropriate educational programmes aimed at benefiting the individual students it serves (Riley, 2000).

New Zealand is a multicultural society and it is important to understand the variation of conceptual understanding between cultures toward the concept of giftedness and talent. It is important for each school to negotiate their perception of the concept of giftedness and talented, with their student body, parents and the wider community, relevant to the underlying culture of the school, hence respecting and valuing those it serves (McAlpine & Reid, 1987). Upon achieving that goal, schools must then seek to develop and implement appropriate differentiated programmes across a continuum of provisions.

1.4 Conclusion:

This research specifically examines the perceptions of withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools and understand the participant student's point of view. "There is a growing awareness of the special needs of gifted and talented students and of the importance of providing them with an educational environment that offers maximum opportunities to develop their special abilities" (McAlpine, Moltzen & Riley, 2000, p. 6). It is this appreciation, and the establishment of withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools, that provides purpose for this research. If withdrawal programmes are put in place as a means to acknowledge the need to create an educational environment that aims to develop the abilities of these children, then examining current programmes in place and hearing the voices of the participating students can only heighten this understanding. This research adds new perspectives to current research, namely the students' voice. In order for educators to effectively provide educational practices specific to meeting the needs of gifted and talented students, we must conduct research in order to understand the participating students' experiences and perceptions of current existing withdrawal

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programmes.

1.5 Overview:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the thesis by explaining the rationale that underpins this study. It briefly explains the notion of gifted and talented and outlines the objectives of this research study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature both from an international and New Zealand perspective. It summarises relevant research for the use of withdrawal programmes in meeting the needs of gifted and talented students.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter reviews the research methodology used for this research. A justification discussion is presented about the specific data collection methods used and relevant methodology employed. Ethical considerations for this study are also examined here.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the findings from each of the three participating schools, in the form of a case study on each school's programme and the results obtained from the data gathering procedures employed. Each school is presented from the teacher's perspective then the children's perspective.

Chapter Five: Discussions and Conclusions

This chapter reviews the conclusions made from the data collected and analyses these results in relation to current literature in the area of study. It also discusses the implications and limitations of this study, and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

This comment came from an eleven-year-old girl, which arose from a study carried out by Galbraith (1992) in the United States.

"Finally someone is asking what we think about all this gifted stuff. What took you so long?" (p.15).

If we are willing to explore the needs of gifted children from their point of view, we are creating a deeper understanding of their needs, enabling us to be better informed in leading them to succeed and cope with the challenges that come in being labelled as gifted.

This review examines current definitions of giftedness and talent and characteristics exhibited by gifted and talented children as well as identification procedures utilised, particularly in a New Zealand context. Provisions for catering for these individuals such as a differentiated curriculum of acceleration and enrichment, with a particular focus on withdrawal programmes will also be covered. Finally, it examines student perceptions of their involvement in programmes aimed at catering for their gifts and talents.

2.1 Characteristics exhibited by our Gifted and Talented Students

The notion of giftedness and talent is one of constant change and debate, due to the fact that there is no universally accepted definition (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind, and Kearney, 2004). The shift from viewing giftedness and talent as that of an intellectual ability, to one encompassing a more multidimensional view, is cause for debate with the defining of the concept.

In looking at the concept from a New Zealand perspective, we see a broad definition that is reflective and encompassing of the multicultural society we live in. "The concept of giftedness and talent that belongs to a particular cultural group is shaped by its values,

attitudes and customs. The concept varies from culture to culture" (Riley et al., 2004, p.12). With this in mind, the Ministry of Education (2000) have highlighted the need for individual schools to create their own multi-categorical definition of giftedness and talent, encompassing their own culture, values and beliefs. George (1997) states the importance for schools to define giftedness and talent, due to it being a determining factor in identifying children for special provisions. Such factors that underpin one's view of this concept, adds to the constraints of a set definition for all. McAlpine (2004) highlights the interrelationship between the concept or definition of giftedness and talent, and identification and provisions. "In fact, definition, identification and programming should all be seen as dynamically interrelated" (p.94). Understanding giftedness and talent, and what this means to each individual school allows one to better understand behavioural characteristics.

If a schools' cultural values and beliefs shape and define their understanding of giftedness and talent, this inturn affects the indicative characteristics of such children. One such example of this is the work of Bevan-Brown (2004) focusing on children with special abilities from a Maori perspective. Such work highlights the differences between Maori values and the effects this has on identifying and understanding Maori children with special abilities. "Many different abilities and qualities are valued. These include spiritual, cognitive, affective, aesthetic, music, psychomotor, social, intuitive, creative, leadership and cultural abilities and qualities" (Bevan-Brown, 2004, p 175). Within the Maori culture, strong importance is placed on affective qualities. In identifying Maori children with special abilities, educators need to have an understanding and an appreciation of things Maori, in order to incorporate the values and beliefs that are important to and encompassing of that culture (Bevan-Brown, 2004). This highlights the imperative need for educators to take into consideration the values of their school when defining the concept and characteristics specific to the culture of the school. Bevan-Brown's work has strengthened, and provided validity to the broad notion of giftedness and talent for New Zealand education (McAlpine, 1996). To better help us understand this notion of giftedness and talent, one needs to understand who these children are, before we can begin to cater for their unique gifts and talents.

The Ministry of Education (2000) have highlighted that individual behaviours help clarify one's understanding of giftedness and talent. With a growing awareness of the need to recognise and provide opportunities to develop the abilities of our gifted and talented children, we need to have an understanding of who these children are. The Ministry of Education (2002) state that gifted and talented students "have certain learning characteristics that give them the potential to achieve outstanding performance" (p.2). McAlpine (2004) states that the concept of giftedness and talent can be represented by exceptional behaviours and characteristics specific to this notion. The Ministry of Education (2000) describe these learning characteristics as being cognitive, creative and affective. Gifted and talented students may exhibit a wide range of abilities including general intellectual abilities, academic aptitudes, creativity, leadership, physical abilities and visual and performing arts. The Ministry of Education (2000) have outlined specific characteristics often associated with giftedness that relate specifically to the children's learning, through their creative thinking, motivation, social leadership, and self determination. Such behaviour characteristics specific to these domains include: an ability to see patterns and relationships, a keen sense of humour, persistence to follow tasks through to completion, adaptable and flexible to new situations, prefers to work independently, and a precocious interest in adult problems. Despite these similarities, it is important to understand that gifted and talented students are not a homogeneous group. "They do not share the same traits or characteristics, but rather they exhibit a wide range of individual differences. No single trait constitutes giftedness" (George, 1997, p. 18). The interactive process of the concept of giftedness and talent and associated behaviours, can be signified by this dictum: "gifted is as gifted does" (Hill, 1997, in McAlpine, 2004, p. 36). 'Gifted is', reflects the notion of giftedness and 'gifted does' reflects the behavioural characteristics of these children.

Children who are gifted in a more specific academic area would be seen to display behaviours such as significant knowledge and skills in relation to the area of talent, a good grasp on underlying principles for the subject, intrinsic motivation and persistence for the subject, a preference for independent learning, and a pursuit for the topic outside school

time. Such academic areas may include that of reading, mathematics, science, history, and so on (Moltzen, 2004).

As far as motivating characteristics of our gifted and talented students goes, Khatena (1992) suggests that while certain extrinsic factors such as praise or reward do have some positive effects, the major positive effect appears to lie with intrinsic motivational factors. Khatena (1992) suggests that the major positive effect appears to remain within these intrinsic factors that relate to cognitive-affective processes which he suggests is brought about and developed by parents, peers, teachers and significant others. The influences from these significant others are internalised by the children, and their interaction with the internal environment relative to factors such as their abilities, needs and desires, creates positive effects for these gifted and talented students.

The level of social and emotional development of these gifted children is another trait. Gifted children have an unmatched balance between their rather advanced intellectual ability or creative talent and their emotional level that has not developed to the same degree (Greenspon, 2000). The construct of giftedness as asynchronous development is an attempt to understand the phenomena of giftedness through the experiences of the gifted individual and the impact this has on one's self. Asynchrony involves such a situation where one has advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine and differ from that of societal norms. Such asynchrony renders vulnerability to the individual's sense of self. It allows us as educators to understand the inner experience of these gifted individuals, reminding us that these children are vulnerable and at risk through heightened sensitivity, pressures of the need to live up to expectations and so forth (Silverman, 1998).

Furthermore, problems can occur when these gifted children have a cognitive understanding of knowledge, but are not emotionally equipped to deal with it. The sensitivity of these gifted children, in combination with the emotional overreaction and frustration faced by these children, can have an affect on their achievement and self-esteem, and such difficulties encountered by these children, are life long concerns for these gifted individuals. In a situation in which children are bored, or where work is seen as un-

meaningful, the more negative behaviours may take over as a result of the frustration they are feeling (Silverman, 1998).

"The characteristics and needs of gifted children have also played an important role in defining interventions for gifted learners in school" (Van Tassel-Baska, 1998, p. 173). Having an understanding of such characteristics can allow one to match these with the child's strength area and provide a basis for curriculum opportunity and experiences. Van Tassel-Baska (1998) looks at the most significant characteristics and needs of gifted children, that cross over to implications for the curriculum and meeting these gifted and talented children's educational needs. For example, one such characteristic of these gifted children is their tendency to have a large vocabulary. Such curriculum implications may include introducing children to foreign languages, developing vocabulary to challenge their previous language, and to develop word relationship skills such as antonyms and synonyms. Many gifted children have the ability to read early and widely. The implications for curriculum here make up a programme that should be based on an accurate diagnosis of the child's reading level, with material being prescribed for that level. It requires mixing children with others of the same ability for group discussion, and a need to develop critical reading skills.

For the purpose of this research, a multi-categorical view of giftedness and talent was adopted. The following areas of giftedness and talent were used: intellectual/academic such as that of a special academic field, creativity, artistic ability, social/leadership abilities, physical abilities, and cultural specific abilities.

With the development and broadening of a multi-categorical definition of giftedness and talent, understanding associated behavioural characteristics is critical in identifying these children, with the aim of providing appropriate provisions to meet their needs and cater for their abilities. We have already looked at the common clusters of characteristics exhibited by these children in relation to their learning, and such characteristics can provide teachers with an understanding of what, where and how to develop a programme that aims to build on the present characteristics displayed by these children. It is such attributes that are likely

to be present in the identification of the children, leading to challenging and extending their precious gifts and talents. It is here we turn, to understand how these children are identified, with particular reference to New Zealand.

2.2 Identification of our Gifted and Talented Students

The fact that gifted and talented is now perceived from a more multidimensional view than previous more narrow definitions, creates issues in the identification of our gifted and talented students. "Older definitions of giftedness stress the idea of an absolute 'intelligence quotient'; more recent ones focus on multiple aptitudes and behaviours as they relate to home and environmental influences and specific learning context" (Franklin Smutny, 2003, p.22). Previously one could just administer a single test to assess intelligence separating the gifted from the non-gifted, but now with the broadening of the definition to include many other categories, a student's capacity to manifest abilities in different situations and at any given time needs to be taken into consideration (Franklin Smutny, 2003). Brody and Mills (1997) note that finding a match for such a procedure across all gifted children would be futile, due to the varying areas of giftedness. We have already seen the importance for schools to define giftedness and talent within their school, thus incorporating the values and culture of the children they are catering for. The Ministry of Education (2000) further states that "identification is the mediating link between definition and programmes" (p.26). With this in mind, identification procedures may vary from school to school, as identification reflects one's notion of giftedness and talent.

"Identification has as its ultimate goal the collection of a wide range of information about gifted and talented students learning, interests, qualities, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses to be used in the formation and implementation of a differentiated educational programme" (Riley et al., 2004, p. 13). Within New Zealand, there are two different philosophies of identification, a formal data gathering approach and the responsive environment approach. A formal data gathering approach involves a school wide, methodical collection of tests and rating scales, focusing on intensive data collection to identify gifts and talents. Such comprehensive assessment procedures can be costly due to

the necessary materials required and the expert advice needed from professionals. Care also needs to be taken to ensure that the test procedures chosen are a good measure of the skills and abilities sought (Clark, 1992). A responsive environment approach is embedded in the classroom context relying heavily upon teacher input, in which gift and talents arise naturally through teachers creating challenging learning environments. With this approach, the teacher becomes involved in the identification process and as a result, teachers are more likely to show interest and support for a gifted and talented programme (McAlpine, 2004). Identification is also embedded in the regular activities of the classroom environment, hence not an isolated one off assessment. On the other hand, teachers may miss particular children who are seen as not conforming to acceptable standards of work and behaviour, those with motivational or emotional issues, or children whose home environment may not share the same expectations as the school (George, 1997).

Bevan-Brown (2004) highlights that methods of identification are not always appropriate for identifying Maori students with special abilities. She advocates for a responsive environment approach to identifying Maori children with special abilities. Teachers should carefully observe children in a range of challenging learning environments whereby children's natural gifts and talents are able to be manifested (Bevan-Brown, 2004). She also points out that these responsive learning environments are not just limited to a classroom, but may also take the form of a marae, park, etc. Her research highlights recommendations when identifying Maori students. Strong communication and partnerships between school and whanau should be developed and utilised to support these children. It is also important to consult with Maori in the identification procedures aimed to develop the talent of these children. It is important to take into account the cultural values and beliefs of Maori when seeking to identify and cater for Maori children with special abilities.

The Ministry of Education (2000) outline some additional underlying principles for identifying gifted and talented children. Such principles include the importance of embedding identification within the classroom environment, the use of multiple methods of identification, identification should be seen as a means to an end, early and ongoing

identification, open communication between teachers, students, parents and schools, a school wide approach, and ensuring the identification of under-represented groups of students such as minority groups, underachievers, and students with disabilities. The use of multiple methods provides opportunity to identify a range of different groups of gifted and talented children, being cohesive with a multidimensional view of giftedness and talent. Franklin Smutny (2003) notes the importance of using a comprehensive approach to identification that allows teachers to include a wide range of talent. Using identification as a means to an end sees reliance upon collected identification data to create an educational provision to cater for these gifted and talented children. Early identification may help prevent the underachievement of such children through boredom, hence wasting their gifts and talents (McAlpine, 2004). Ongoing identification allows educators to continually identify gifts and talents of all children through reassessing and evaluating abilities and interests, as their experiences and development change. A school wide approach to identification provides for a reduction of bias, and the ruling out of under-represented groups of gifted and talented students. Ensuring the identification of under-represented groups of students allows educators to take into account an inclusive notion of giftedness and talent (Riley et al., 2004). McAlpine (2004) highlights the idea of identification procedures being encompassing of different groups of children to provide 'fair' and equal opportunity for all groups of children within gifted and talented education.

There are a number of methods commonly used for identification, which again will depend on the area the child is gifted in, taking into account the expected characteristics one would display in that particular area. Such methods in a New Zealand context may include teacher observation and nomination; standardised tests: intelligence tests, achievement tests and other assessment procedures; rating scales; self and peer nominations; parent, caregiver, whanau nomination; and identification through products and portfolios (McAlpine, 2004). In New Zealand, teacher observation and nomination is the most common method of identification across all areas and facets (Riley et al., 2004). McAlpine (2004) notes that the effectiveness of this method is reliant on the teachers identifying such children, through the attitudes they have about giftedness and talent. Teachers with positive attitudes can be a reliable method for identifying these children; however, teachers with negative attitudes can create difficulty to such procedures. Bias may also be reflected from teachers' attitudes,

particularly in relation to certain groups of children such as those from diverse ethnic groups. Identification via this method is most effective when the teacher is fully informed of the purpose of identification and has an understanding of the programme aimed at meeting the specific abilities and strengths of these children (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Tools such as checklists and teacher observation scales can help the teacher have a clearer focus for the children they are seeking to identify through providing specific criteria which to observe (Ministry of Education, 2000). Rating scales are a tool aimed at helping teachers identify gifted and talented students through focusing on behavioural characteristics. Such characteristics include learning characteristics, social-leadership, creative thinking, self-determination, and motivational characteristics. "Without rating scales some of these characteristics might otherwise be overlooked" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p.28). McAlpine (2004) notes the need for New Zealand schools to develop scales of behaviours that reflect the values of different cultural groups as well as their own school-based definition, which needs to be taken into consideration when using this approach to identify our gifted and talented students.

Standardised testing is the second most common method for identifying gifted and talented students (Riley et al., 2004). Such testing is based on a representative sample, with specific directions for administration, scoring, and norms. "Sometimes norms allow for comparing individual's test score with those of other special norm groups, such as gifted and talented" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p.28). Such tests include intelligence tests or tests of scholastic ability, and tests of achievement, such as Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT). McAlpine (2004) highlights some disadvantages of this method in that it may lack challenges and opportunities for children to display some areas of ability, and it can be inappropriate for specific ethnic groups, and those children with reading and learning difficulties.

Other methods of identification include portfolio assessment, self-nominations, peer nomination and parent and whanau nomination. Portfolio assessment focuses specifically on individual children's performance and includes a sample of work across the curriculum. Self-nomination is a useful method in identifying areas of interest and special ability in

children, such as computers, poetry and musical ability. Self-nomination can be facilitated through questionnaires, interviews and interest inventories. "Self-nominations may be subject to bias whereby some students lack a realistic evaluation of their abilities.....This is particularly the case with Maori and Pacific Island cultures" (McAlpine, 2004, p.79). Peer-nomination is a useful method for identifying abilities within and outside the classroom. Relevant behaviours should relate to giftedness and talent for the basis of peer-nomination. "It is important that peer nomination forms consider the key areas of behaviour that closely relate to giftedness and talent, including values that are relevant to different cultural and ethnic groups" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 30). McAlpine (2004) highlights the importance of including parents in the identification process. Parents and whanau can provide valuable information about the child in regard to their interests, personalities and abilities, as they know their children better than anyone (McAlpine, 2004). The Riley et al. (2004) study found that all these methods were underutilised in New Zealand schools.

Each of these methods carries their own advantages and disadvantages. McAlpine (2004) highlights the importance of taking a multi method approach when identifying gifted and talented students rather than relying on one method alone. Riley et al. (2004) reported that most schools in New Zealand had a preference for multiple methods, however it is not clear if these are used in conjunction with one another or separately. It is also important to ensure that methods are encompassing and fair to all groups, particularly in a multicultural New Zealand setting. It is important for schools to look at their definition of giftedness and talent, and programmes, and select the best methods for identifying students in their school and from the varying areas of giftedness and talent.

Riley et al. (2004) highlight recommendations based upon the underlying principles mentioned previously in order to allow identification to be effective and encompassing of a multidimensional view of giftedness and talent. Such recommendations include:

- a school-wide approach encompassing of a clear well defined, multi-categorical definition of giftedness and talent;
- the use of multiple methods of identification allowing one to obtain the whole picture of these gifted and talented students and incorporate many areas of talent;

- the importance of matching identification methods to the varying areas of giftedness and talent;

- identification based within a responsive environment incorporating cultural factors and the cultural context of the school with which it lies;

- professional development for staff in the development and implementation of such procedures; and

- continual evaluation of methods and procedures for ongoing improvements and the guiding of future directions in catering for these gifted and talented students.

It is through the understanding and implementation of such principles when identifying gifted and talented students, which allows this identification process to be effective in seeking out the children we are trying to meet the needs of.

"Identification should be seen as a means to an end and not an end in itself" (McAlpine, 2004, p. 98). It is through such identification that educators will be provided with the necessary data to give these gifted and talented children an opportunity that will challenge and extend their current abilities. Identification is only the start, and from here one can build on and extend the abilities of these children through an array of provisions to benefit their future.

2.3 Educating the Gifted and Talented: Acceleration and Enrichment

All students are entitled to an education that provides for their particular needs, and those of gifted and talented children vary greatly compared to their age peers. Providing the appropriate educational provisions in their education is vital for development academically, socially, and emotionally. "The first step in educating our gifted and talented students in New Zealand is to acknowledge and cater for individual differences" (Riley, 2000, p. 1). Each child has his or her own unique abilities, strengths and interests and the first step in educating them is to recognise these children as individuals and value their uniqueness. McAlpine (2004) has recognised the need for identification to be seen as a means to an end, thus ensuring that educational provisions are customised to meet and challenge these needs.

At this point identification will have uncovered the individual abilities and interests of these gifted and talented students, now it is one's aim to tailor a programme to raise expectations, and open doors to further develop these abilities and interests and strive for excellence (Ministry of Education, 2000).

"The purpose of defining and identifying giftedness is to uncover individual abilities, qualities, and interests, and the objective of differentiation is to further develop them" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 35). Differentiation is an approach used to respond to the needs, interests and abilities of gifted and talented students. "Differentiation recognises, respects and celebrates diversity, and in doing so more appropriately provides for the unique abilities, strengths, interests and qualities of gifted and talented students" (Riley, 2004, p. 345). Differentiation ensures that children are seen as individuals with individual strengths and their needs and abilities are capitalised on. It is not about providing more of the same work but rather providing meaningful learning experiences that develop the student's abilities and strength areas (Ministry of Education, 2000). Such programmes require qualitative modifications to teaching and learning in relation to the needs, interests and abilities of these children, through adapting content, processes, and products of learning, in a differentiated learning environment (Riley, 2004).

Content differentiation refers to what the children are taught and what they learn. Content should be abstract and centred around broad based themes and issues, and should be integrated to allow children to make meaningful connections. Providing opportunities for self-selection of content allows one to capitalise on the student's strengths and abilities, and providing breadth and advanced complexity of content will also facilitate meeting the needs of these gifted and talented students (Riley, 2004). Differentiation of process refers to how the children are taught and how they learn. Process differentiation should provide opportunities for creative and higher level thinking. Involving children in the decision making process and personal goal setting, allows one to cater for the more specific individual needs of these gifted and talented students. Providing children with opportunity to reflect upon their thought processes through developing metacognitive skills can assist these gifted children in applying these skills in new and unfamiliar contexts, and using the

knowledge they have (Riley et al., 2004). Process differentiation should equip children with skills that are taught in a meaningful and relevant context (Riley, 2004). Product differentiation refers to ways in which the children display what they have learnt. "The pinnacle of differentiation, student products, is the outcome of integrating advanced level content with appropriate process skills" (Riley, 2004, p.361). Products should reflect and share the unique thinking and learning these children have undertaken. The Ministry of Education (2000) note that as a natural response to the differentiation of these three elements, the learning environment is also altered. Riley (2000) suggests that while this individual recognition of ability and interest is important, there is a need for acknowledgment of physical, intellectual, cultural, and social and emotional uniqueness. Out of a need for this acknowledgement, differentiation should take into account the unique behaviours related to giftedness and talent.

This suggestion for a differentiated curriculum means moving the original curriculum both vertically and horizontally. Part of removing the ceiling and raising expectations for these gifted and talented children is expanding their horizons, through acceleration and enrichment (Ministry of Education, 2000). Acceleration and enrichment are two common approaches to providing differentiated learning experiences preferably used in tandem rather than isolation (Townsend, 2004, Ministry of Education, 2000, Riley et al., 2004). The term enrichment refers to the horizontal extension of the curriculum that takes into account the abilities and needs of the children it serves (Townsend, 2004). Acceleration refers to instruction that correlates to the needs and abilities of these gifted and talented children. Acceleration incorporates exposure of new content at an earlier age than other children, or where content is covered in a shorter time span (Townsend, 2004). This section of the literature review will look at these two methods of differentiation in the efforts of meeting the needs of our gifted and talented individuals. Both strategies of acceleration and enrichment accommodate the individual needs and abilities of gifted and talented learners, and both provide for deeper knowledge, skills and develop creativity and other thinking skills (Davis & Rimm, 2004).

Enriched curriculum refers to a curriculum that has been modified in some way to provide richer and more varied educational experiences that are normally in addition to, and different from that of regular classroom activities. Enrichment refers to the horizontal extension of the curriculum and would therefore provide a greater coverage, covering more breadth and depth than that of the regular curriculum. Providing a curriculum that has breadth and depth to the curriculum, presents children with a more complete understanding that can be gained through "digging deeper and stretching wider" (Riley et al., 2004, p.40). Furthermore is the differentiation of content, process and product from that of the regular curriculum to cater for the needs of these gifted and talented students. Enrichment activities are usually in addition to that of the regular classroom, as a means of extending and challenging these learners (Ministry of Education, 2000). Schiever and Maker (1997) suggest that after-school or Saturday classes, withdrawal or extension programmes, additions to regular class work, or special interest clubs, are some ideas that may be implemented as part of an enrichment programme. Enrichment occurs when gifted and talented children are given more demanding activities than their peers and classmates within a particular curriculum area, according to the abilities of these gifted and talented students (Townsend, 2004).

Enrichment strategies are fundamentally delivery methods involving the targeting of process and content goals. Process goals include the developing of process skills such as creative thinking, problem solving and critical thinking skills (Davis & Rimm, 2004). "Process skills such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, small group or independent study, and so on are part of the enrichment philosophy, based upon the belief that gifted and talented students should be producers of knowledge, as opposed to consumers of knowledge" (Riley et al., 2004, p. 41). Content goals refer to the subject or content with which these process skills are embedded. There are many forms of enrichment strategies such as, projects, mentoring, learning centres, field trips, opportunities to use higher level thinking skills, and extension activities. Enrichment is seen as holistic and student centred, through the differentiation of process and content, based upon the needs and abilities of the students, as well as taking into consideration their affective needs and qualities (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The term enrichment provides some issues for educational provision as the term itself does not possess an agreed upon definition, and the fact that the term is applied to almost anything, provides more problems for the provision and practice of such a strategy (Townsend, 2004). As a result of this, enrichment strategies vary greatly amongst schools. The Ministry of Education (2000) state the idea that there is a common view that enrichment is good for all children, thus the suggestion that this provision may not be a suitable solution to the learning needs of our gifted and talented. In this case, enrichment may be a homogeneous answer that neglects the needs and strengths of these gifted learners (Ministry of Education, 2000). George (2003) suggests that an effective enrichment programme should be based on set objectives that provide for the excitement of learning and lead to more advanced thinking, so that our able children are provided with appropriate curriculum and not more of the same. Townsend (2004) highlights problems associated with the way in which enrichment is used in classrooms, in that "activities are often little more than busy work where children get more of the same mundane content" (p.298). Enrichment should provide these gifted and talented children with extension, within their area of need, not just providing more of the same.

Within New Zealand, the Ministry of Education (2000) suspected that enrichment was the preferred provisional strategy for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students; however, in Riley et al. (2004) educators reported a preference for the integration of enrichment and acceleration, which the literature supports. Of schools that did not have a preference for a combination of the two, enrichment was viewed more favourably, with planned enrichment being more likely than planned acceleration. Enrichment allows one to cater for the specific interests and abilities of these gifted and talented children, and because it requires careful monitoring and an understanding of these needs, problems of identification are lessened, through the promoting of a more inclusive notion of giftedness and talent. As a result, this provision avoids problems with the labelling of those who are gifted and talented. "Effective enrichment should also avoid problems of underachievement and intellectual frustration in gifted children" (Townsend, 2004, p. 297). Enrichment may reduce problems with the intellectual frustration and boredom these children may display within the regular classroom (Ministry of Education, 2000). This may be as a result of

enrichment allowing for the grouping of like-minded children with similar abilities and interests, allowing for positive social interactions, where enrichment is provided outside that of the regular classroom. On the other side to this matter, such enriched programmes may be seen as a patchy one-off programme that may be short in duration and lacking clear goals without carefully planned teaching strategies, where emphasis is placed heavily on process development, sacrificing content development. This perception of an add on provision may be as a result of limited funding hence being categorised as "part-time enrichment solutions to full-time student needs" (Riley et al., 2004, p.43).

Kulik and Kulik (1992) carried out a controlled research of enrichment where gifted and talented children were provided with more challenging learning experiences than offered in the regular classroom. These children achieved more in these enriched programmes than their gifted and talented peers not involved in such programmes. They suggest that enriched programmes proved a positive benefit to gifted students commenting that this may result from a number of factors, such as the adjustment of curriculum; and/or special resources that are usually available for these classes; and/or that such classes are usually taught by a specialist teacher with a background in gifted education; and/or the fact that parents of gifted students sometimes form informal networks to support their children outside of school.

Renzulli (1977) and other authors (such as Kolloff & Feldhusen, 1978) have developed enrichment models that help with the planning process in catering for gifted and talented learners. Enrichment models are aimed at stimulating curiosity about a particular topic, problem, or area of study. The use of such a model encourages students to adopt a problem solving approach aimed at developing higher level thinking processes, research and reference skills, and ideas related to personal and social development (Renzulli, 1986). Riley et al. (2004) note that educators can adapt these models to suit the individual school in approaching curriculum development for meeting the needs of our gifted and talented students, however less than 20% of schools reported a curriculum or programme model. Of those that did Renzulli's Enrichment Triad (1977) model was highly favoured. Because

these children are receiving additional work that is placing higher demands on their skills, enrichment is concerned with extending the curriculum horizontally.

Acceleration refers to instruction that more closely matches the abilities and needs of these gifted and talented children to the curriculum, through offering stimulating intellectual challenges more suited to their abilities. Acceleration therefore looks at the vertical development of the children's abilities as discussed earlier. Acceleration is used to refer to both service delivery and curriculum delivery models of acceleration. The service delivery model refers to the introduction of curriculum material at an early age, such as grade skipping, early entrance to school or university, and skipping classes to receive advanced instruction in one or more areas of the curriculum. Grade skipping or full acceleration involves accelerating learners through skipping grades, allowing one to more closely match the needs and abilities of these learners (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Subject skipping or part time enrichment involves children being accelerated in their particular area of strength, and is therefore suited best to children with strengths in one particular area. This strategy allows children to remain with their same age peers for the majority of the time, whilst still being challenged in their strength area (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Acceleration as a curriculum model, involves increasing the pace at which content material is provided, and the expectation set for completion and mastery. This may be as part of the regular classroom or within a special class. With this model, children are grouped with their same age peers, whereas with the delivery model they are placed with children above their age range (Ministry of Education, 2000). In New Zealand schools there is no national policy on acceleration, so many programmes occur in only some schools, where children are put forward skipping a level, usually during the junior school years or moving to an older cohort for specific subjects such as mathematics or science. Acceleration occurs when children are introduced to new content at an earlier age than their peers or when the same content is covered in less time than their peers (Townsend, 2004).

While supporters of acceleration argue for the benefit of enabling gifted students to work with their mental peers on learning tasks that match their abilities, critics have argued that acceleration has negative effects. While there is significant positive effect of acceleration

for the academic learning of gifted children the major concern is that it may be at the expense of the child's social and emotional development, through being put in with children above their chronological age (Kulik & Kulik, 1984). Acceleration in New Zealand is not the preferred approach in catering for gifted and talented learners in response to reservations with such negative social and emotional connotations (Townsend, 2004). Such negative concerns however have not been confirmed through research (Townsend, 2004; Moltzen, 2004; Riley et al., 2004). Studies of acceleration have shown that there are no negative effects toward aspects of social and emotional development. Davis and Rimm (2004) advocate that grade skipping can improve social relations, self-esteem, and motivation for learning for these gifted and talented learners. Schiever and Maker (1997) suggest that various studies of acceleration have generally reported higher academic achievement and social adjustment than non-accelerated, similar ability peers. The Ministry of Education (2000) note that when a programme is well planned and targeted to individual needs, acceleration can provide mental stimulation and opportunities for these children to interact with like minded children who share similar academic interests. Along with the concern of social and emotional development of gifted children in accelerated programmes is the concern of academic pressure in that the child may not cope with such high demands. However, this concern is viewed from a far more positive view of these children's abilities, as opposed to the concern of social and emotional development.

On the other hand to this issue, children may feel isolated as a result of acceleration through being removed from a well-established classroom environment. Feldhusen (1992) highlighted evidence that children who are gifted but were not accelerated exhibited more behavioural problems, felt less comfortable and had poorer attitudes towards school. Such problems may come from that of intellectual frustration, underachievement, boredom, lack of motivation and social frustration of age-peer rejection. Acceleration may alleviate such problems through providing a more stimulating curriculum aimed more specifically at their level of ability, thus a more advanced understanding of the curriculum is achieved (Ministry of Education, 2000). Kulik and Kulik (1984) highlight the undemocratic nature of acceleration through promoting elitism and a sense of inadequacy to those children who may be left behind.

Some opposers of acceleration have suggested that advancing the pace of the curriculum, such as teaching two years of mathematics in one will not give children the time to consolidate their knowledge, thus resulting in an inadequate understanding of the curriculum. However, current research does not support this argument (Townsend, 2004). Kulik and Kulik (1992) found that gifted children who were accelerated achieved a full grade higher than other gifted children who were not accelerated. On the other hand, with acceleration programmes that are outside that of the regular classroom, children may experience gaps in the learning of new concepts introduced in the regular classroom during pull-out time, as well as resulting in feelings of isolation and difference from their peers (Ministry of Education, 2000).

It is suggested that acceleration may not be appropriate for every gifted child, however; Benbow (1991) outlines factors to take into account when contemplating such action to allow for the full benefit of acceleration. Such factors include:

- that no pressure be placed on the child to accelerate;
- that students in the top 2% of intelligence be offered the opportunity to accelerate;
- that the student has positive teacher and parent support; that the student is advanced in that subject area; and
- that the student is emotionally stable and understands what is involved and that the student wants to be accelerated (p. 31).

While these are concerns of acceleration, no approach goes without criticism, but the benefits are plenty and may be an effective option within a particular school.

2.3.1 Enrichment and Acceleration: Used in tandem

We have looked at enrichment and acceleration as the two basic approaches to meeting the needs of our gifted and talented children, however research suggests that ideally we should integrate both the approaches of acceleration and enrichment, and abandon the notion that these approaches are opposites or choices to be made (Kirsheabaum, 1992; Ministry of Education, 2000; Townsend, 2004; Riley et al., 2004). We have seen that there are many

forms of acceleration and enrichment, which are designed to match the curriculum goals with the child's interest and abilities. Townsend (2004) suggests that "good acceleration is good enrichment, and effective enrichment demands acceleration" (p. 303). It is therefore suggested that to gain the strengths that acceleration and enrichment have to offer, there is a need to provide an integrated programme combining the two. It is recognised that there is no single way that best meets the needs of all gifted and talented children. Meeting these needs requires programmes to be flexible for the incorporation of different teaching strategies specific to the individual needs, abilities and interests of those involved (Townsend, 2004).

There are many different provisions aimed at meeting the needs of gifted and talented children, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. Research suggests that such provisions need to incorporate qualitative differentiation and:

- should allow for acceleration and enrichment opportunities;
- should be based upon the needs of the students as defined through the identification process;
- should be culturally inclusive;
- should be supported by professional development opportunities for staff; and
- should be continuously evaluated in relation to student outcomes.

(Riley et al., 2004)

The fact that gifted learners' educational needs differ from those of the norm, provides valid reason for the need to adapt the current curriculum. The Ministry of Education (2000) and Riley et al. (2004) recommend that schools need to provide a continuum of approaches in educating our gifted and talented students. One of these approaches is the withdrawal programme option which is heavily relied on in New Zealand schools, however they emphasise that whatever approach is taken, it should be qualitatively differentiated, enriched and accelerated, and "developed to match the individual learning needs of gifted and talented students" (Riley et al., 2004, p.64). It is from here we turn to look at the

specific curriculum provision of withdrawal programmes, the area with which this research is based around.

2.4 Withdrawal Programmes

2.4.1   Defining Withdrawal Programmes

The withdrawal or pull-out programme option is a provision for meeting the needs of gifted and talented learners whereby children are withdrawn from the regular classroom to attend special classes with other gifted and talented students. This provision is often referred to in New Zealand as an extension programme. Such a programme may be individualised in each school, where time may vary from a few hours a week to one day per week, term or year (Riley et al., 2004). Such programmes offer topics that may build upon, extend beyond, or be completely different to the regular classroom curriculum (Riley et al., 2004). This withdrawal option is the most common provision in catering for gifted and talented learners outside of the regular classroom in New Zealand (Riley et al., 2004). These programmes may provide a form of accelerated or enriched curriculum differentiation, however, Rogers (2002) notes that the most common practice within withdrawal options is an enriched programme. We have already looked at enrichment as a means to providing breadth and depth to the regular curriculum, hence conforming to the abilities and needs of gifted and talented learners. Such enriched curriculum and learning experiences are the focus for extending the abilities of gifted and talented students, which provides this option with an alternative educational provision to that of the regular classroom.

The type of gifted and talented students who will be involved in such a programme is often pre- determined. For example, if the school wanted to provide a programme focusing on extending mathematical abilities, then the target group of students would include those with mathematical abilities. Once the target group has been decided, teachers within the school have to identify the gifted and talented children who meet the set criteria. Braggett (1994) notes that often teachers have little difficulty nominating those who perform well and live up to their expectations but have less success choosing the full range of gifted and talented

students basing their identification on their current conceptions, thus providing a limitation to this option. Davis and Rimm (2004) also highlight this point through teachers' ability to identify well-behaved, conforming 'teacher pleasers' who may or may not be gifted, overlooking gifted students who may display negative classroom behaviours or those underachieving. However, as discussed previously, teachers should not rely on one single assessment method alone to identify these gifted and talented children, but use multiple methods of assessment.

Rogers (2002) provides a list of characteristics for gifted students who are most likely to benefit from a pullout or withdrawal programme. As far as cognitive functioning goes, candidates should be achieving well above others of the same level, hence advanced in their particular area of specific ability. Someone who is frustrated with the slow pace of instruction in the regular classroom is also exhibiting the desired characteristics to benefit from such a programme. Such personal characteristics include those who enjoy school and are motivated to learn, academically motivated, independent in thought and accepting of others. Learning preferences of those students most likely to benefit from a withdrawal programme include those that prefer fast paced challenging learning experiences, and enjoy working with small groups of like ability. Interests specific to such candidates consist of those with a wide range of interests, someone that is actively involved in a variety of activities and hobbies outside of school, and has a high interest in the domain covered in the programme (Rogers, 2002).

Programmes within schools may vary through schools designing their own programme or borrowing some from other schools; again, it is aimed specifically at the pre-determined target group, hence specific to their needs. A model that may be employed by schools to provide a framework for such a programme is that of Renzulli's Enrichment Triad model (1977), which is perhaps the most widely used curriculum model in gifted education (Ministry of Education, 2000). This model consists of three interrelated types of enrichment. Type I enrichment offers students a range of activities and experiences across a variety of topics, moving beyond that of the regular curriculum. Type II enrichment develops the necessary skills needed to carry out investigations, and develops thinking and

feeling processes, and skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, research skills, and affective processes. These two types of enrichment can be offered to all students. Type III enrichment is more suited for gifted and talented students, where they investigate real problems either individually or in small groups. "They become producers of knowledge rather than consumers, actively formulating a problem, designing research, and presenting a product" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 50). In spite of the fact that this model provides a firm base for a programme such as withdrawal, one criticism arises as discussed earlier. The main focus here is enrichment, and as we have already discussed, research suggests that ideally we should combine both enrichment and acceleration in catering for the needs of our gifted and talented students. This model however is flexible where acceleration opportunities can also be offered in combination with such enriched curricula.

2.4.2 Potential Advantages and Disadvantages of Withdrawal Programmes

Kulik and Kulik (1992) have analysed many grouping studies and have come to the conclusion that when grouping is accompanied by advanced conceptual curriculum, the ability group programmes show a clear advantage over the heterogeneous classroom. Activities provided within such a programme generally focus on acquisition of knowledge and skills that strengthen creativity, thinking skills, communication skills, self-concept development as well as understanding values (Davis & Rimm, 2004). These withdrawal programmes provide students with enrichment that differs from that of the regular classroom programme. Obviously there is little point in providing a separate programme if it is not noticeably different from regular classroom activities.

"Research tells us that placing gifted children together with other children of similar abilities and subsequently making instruction more complex improves the children's achievement, attitude to learning, social skills, and self-esteem" (Porter, 1999, p. 177). The fact that the students who are selected for such programmes have similar needs and abilities, allows the programme to be designed specifically to meet their needs. Thus in turn pertaining to the purpose of providing a specific programme for gifted and talented individuals. Curriculum developed within such a programme should be differentiated from

that of the regular classroom, hence providing more stimulation and more of a challenge for these able children. In being withdrawn, the number of students involved is often limited, where students can carry out small projects that perhaps would not be possible back in the regular classroom. This may provide more choices for the students, allowing one to capitalise on individual strengths and abilities, thus inturn may alleviate problems with boredom as discussed earlier as a negative behaviour associated with giftedness (Moltzen, 2004). Placing these students with others of similar abilities also allows them to interact with like minded peers while still being in the regular classroom the majority of the time (Braggett, 1994). It could also allow them a chance to access older friends and peers with a similar developmental level that matches their own, depending on the type of withdrawal programme offered. In turn providing stimulation and a sense of self-confidence in not feeling 'different', therefore more a part of the group than perhaps in the regular classroom (Piirto, 1999). With the issues around such programmes resulting in possible elitism, the use of pullout programmes, allows schools to label the programme rather than the child as gifted (Renzulli, 1987). While this withdrawal option has many benefits for these gifted and talented students, children left back in the regular classroom may also benefit. Riley et al. (2004) note that this option provides opportunity for other children to shine in the regular classroom, through the removal of these gifted and talented students.

While the research so far seems positive for withdrawal programmes, it does not go without criticism. Teachers and parents may not agree with separate activities for selected students, in that not all children are being offered equal opportunities. Not surprisingly, issues of elitism may arise for those students being offered participation into the programme. Davis and Rimm (2004) commented that regular classroom teachers often oppose pullout programmes due to the fact that they are confronted with the dilemma of permitting students to miss important content or else forcing them to make up missed work, thus punishing them for their participation in such a programme. This assumption suggests that the activities done during the withdrawal time are perceived as secondary to that of the regular classroom. This provides a problem for these gifted and talented children who may be expected to catch up on missed work, hence being punished for their giftedness. In such an instance, the withdrawal programme may be seen as isolated from the regular classroom

teaching, and while this may lift the profile of the school, one has to question whether one programme is adequate, or superficial. The Ministry of Education (2000) advise that such differentiation should not be 'more of the same' but should be based on well thought lessons capitalising on the strengths and abilities of the children it serves.

Townsend (2004) also highlights this point in that if such a provision is enrichment based, there is a danger in providing busy work which is often 'more of the same' as is in the regular classroom. The point here is that these students are gifted all the time not just during pullout time, and that perhaps such a programme is seen as a "...part time solution to a full time problem..." (Piirto, 1999, p. 71). Rogers (2002) highlights that such programmes may create the perception from parents that this is the gifted programme, hence not taking into account the majority of the time back in the regular classroom, assuming that these children are just gifted during this pull-out time. This however, may not always be the case, where instances see the regular classroom teacher working in close collaboration with the withdrawal teacher, integrating their programmes and further developing the skills of the gifted individuals (Braggett, 1994). Braggett (1994) suggests that withdrawal programmes should be integrated with regular classroom practice, where the regular classroom teacher can build on and develop skills taught in the programme, hence catering more so to the needs of these gifted and talented learners. One other concern for this approach is the singling out of these students and the labelling of gifted may create resentment amongst peers back in the regular classroom (Carter & Kuechenmeister, 1986).

"There is little realisation that giftedness is culturally based, that talent is developmental in nature, and that both are intrinsically related to motivation, self-confidence, interest and sustained effort" (Braggett & Moltzen, 2000, p. 780). We have already discussed the fact that giftedness is and should be recognised as a culturally based concept relevant to the individual culture of the schools' participants it serves. From a cultural perspective, Bevan-Brown's (2004) research shares some insight into the appropriateness of the pull-out programme option for gifted and talented Maori learners. She suggests that programmes aimed at catering for Maori children with special abilities should provide content that is relevant and interesting to Maori, and be encompassing of Maori beliefs. Her research

suggests that Maori students may experience cultural isolation and may be vulnerable to further isolation in being removed from their familiar classroom whanau context, when placed in pull-out programmes outside of the regular classroom. These factors need to be taken into account when considering the pull-out programme option for gifted Maori students.

2.4.3   Research related to the effectiveness of withdrawal programmes

In having looked at the advantages and disadvantages to withdrawal programmes for gifted and talented learners, it is important to look at what research has to say about the effects of these programmes, and the benefits they provide to enhance the gifts and talents of the students it serves. "Despite the fact that pull-out programmes are the most common provision worldwide, the research related to the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing cognitive and affective outcomes for gifted and talented students is rather limited" (Riley et al., 2004, p.94). They go on to highlight the fact that while much research has been done on this common provision for meeting the needs of gifted and talented learners, little research has looked specifically at the outcomes of such a provision.

A study in an elementary school within a withdrawal programme called PACE (Programme for Academic and Creative Enrichment), was carried out to examine the long-term effects of such a programme. This multiple case study used questionnaires and interviews with ten families whose children have been participating in a withdrawal programme for at least three years. The results showed that the students felt that they had learned to think and to problem solve, and felt that there were many personal and emotional gains from such a programme with very few criticisms. "The students felt that being in the pull-out programme gave them more self-confidence, self-esteem, and 'the courage to be different' " (Moon & Feldhusen, 1991, p. 2)

Vaughn, Feldhusen, and Asher (1991) carried out a meta-analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of pull-out programmes in gifted education. They concluded that enriched pull-out programmes for gifted and talented learners, showed small to medium

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improvements in achievement, critical thinking, and creative thinking. They go on to say that the greatest gains in achievement came from pull-out programmes that apply extension to that of the regular classroom curriculum. This research also noted slight improvement in the self-esteem of these gifted and talented learners. Riley et al. (2004) state that in light of this research such effects in achievement are dependent upon the emphasis of critical thinking skills within any such pull-out programme.

Delcourt, Loyd, Cornell, and Goldberg (1994, cited in Riley et al., 2004) carried out research that looked at the outcomes for primary school students in pull-out programmes. The pull-out programmes studied, consisted of units of work that would not normally be found in regular classroom. These studies had a strong element on individual investigation within the area of science. Their study concluded that the students involved in these pull-out programmes exhibited higher academic achievement when compared to their gifted peers not involved in these programmes. Such academic achievement was prominent in the areas of reading comprehension, science, and social studies; however, academic achievement in mathematics was lower than their gifted peers who were not included in these programmes. The study also found that the perceived social acceptance of these students by their peers was not negatively affected by their participation in these programmes, but in fact, their social acceptance was greater than their gifted peers in separate classes.

Moon, Feldhusen, and Dillon (1994) carried out research to look at the long-term effects of a pull-out enriched programme based on the Purdue Three-Stage Model. This model provides students with learning experiences in creative and critical thinking, problem solving, independent learning and creative productivity. Their research concluded that enriched pull-out programmes could have positive long term effects on students academically, through improving thinking skills and problem solving abilities. The study suggests that such skills taught in elementary school may help students' task commitment and learning in secondary school. They acknowledge that it is important to examine the long-term effects of programmes for gifted and talented and that this "Study adds a long-term perspective to the growing body of evidence suggesting that enrichment programmes

have moderately positive effects on participating gifted students" (Moon, Feldhusen, & Dillon, 1994, p. 38). They go on to suggest that much more research is needed in this area before one can fully understand the effects of various types of gifted programmes.

Every option has its advantages and criticisms. Obviously there are many options within a withdrawal programme, where different schools may provide different activities and maybe based on different models. While enrichment is generally the focus for withdrawal programmes, it is suggested that acceleration may also be incorporated which research suggests is the ideal for catering for our gifted and talented students. Having reviewed the research for and against enrichment and/or acceleration within a withdrawal programming option, we perhaps too often assume we know what is best for our students. This study will pull out the students' voices, allowing them to share their perspectives. These children are involved in a programme that is designed to meet their educational needs. If we as educators are to effectively provide educational strategies to meet the needs of our gifted and talented students then we need to conduct research on the participating students' experiences and perceptions of our current and existing programmes.

2.5 Research on Student Perceptions

In having reviewed the literature around the education of our gifted and talented students, we turn to look at the students' perceptions in relation to the provisions aimed at catering for their gifts and talents. In order to more effectively provide for the needs of these children, we need to take a step back and look at things from their side, in order to guide them towards a brighter future where their precious gifts and talents are nurtured and developed and not wasted.

Galbraith's (1985) study surveyed and interviewed over four hundred gifted children and adolescents (ages 7-18) in gifted programmes across six states. Galbraith grouped gifted students' responses along eight dimensions, hence identifying "eight great gripes of gifted kids". Such groups of responses included:

- being gifted is kept a secret in that no one explains what being gifted is all about;
- school work is easy and boring;
- they felt an overwhelming expectation from parents, teachers, peers and ultimately themselves;
- they felt that they should be perfect and do their best all the time;
- that teasing often occurs about being smart;
- few people really understand them;
- they have an overpowering sense by the number of things they can do in life; and
- they worry about world problems with a sense of helplessness in not being able to do anything.

(Galbraith, 1985)

Yewchuk (1999) summarises that some of these gripes arose from a curriculum that is out of sync with the cognitive and intellectual capabilities of these gifted and talented students, resulting in a lack of challenge these students are provided with. This really stresses the importance of the need to provide an appropriate curriculum for these children to bring out their full potential and provide them with the education they deserve.

Kunkel and Chapa (1992) looked at qualitative perspectives of giftedness among predominately seventh and eighth grade students attending a summer enrichment programme in the United States, building on the foundation of this previous study conducted by Galbraith (1985). These studies are two of the few to actually consider student perceptions, and while it is not conducted in the context of withdrawal programmes as such, it would be of relevance to look at what arose from this study. Kunkel and Chapa (1992) defined Galbraith's (1985) eight gripes into the following headings in response to the findings from their research: confusion, boredom, ridicule, loneliness, uniqueness, burdened, and altruistic. The headings from this study can easily be seen to correspond to that of Galbraith's study six years earlier. This study did differ from Galbraith's in several respects. Kunkel and Chapa (1992) had some difficulty in distinguishing among students'

sense of loneliness, uniqueness and ridicule, and without particular probes, such responses maybe reduced to isolation and shame. Galbraith's study also mentioned that eighty percent of students interviewed were concerned about world issues, which this study showed fewer students mentioning. This study most significantly differed in that they chose to refrain from probing for further information from the students, which they feel resulted in some of the differences between their study and that of Galbraith's. Despite the differences between these two studies, both studies indicated that when students are given the opportunity to talk about their experiences, they do so freely and in both positive and negative ways.

A study carried out by Shields (1995) looked at grouping options for gifted children, looking particularly at students' perceptions of themselves as learners as well as student achievement from two perspectives. Firstly from a mainstreamed, inclusive and heterogeneous classroom, compared with that of a homogenous classroom whereby students were grouped by ability. Her research clearly shows the benefits of homogenous grouping for gifted students in terms of both academic achievement and attitude concerning themselves as learners and their school experiences.

Kirby and Townsend (1999) carried out voluntary interviews with eight gifted children who were members of the Explorers Club, an organisation affiliated with the New Zealand Associations for Gifted Children. The participating children included both accelerated and non-accelerated gifted students. The interview questions were based around three major themes. The first theme elicited the students' perceptions about their academic acceleration. Overall, the response from the interviews showed a very positive attitude from the students toward acceleration, whether they were accelerated or not. These questions also implied that normal school work did not provide any intellectual challenge. They also found that the children that were accelerated at school spoke positively of their experiences. The second set of questions sought the students' perceptions about the distinctiveness of being gifted. The student's responses showed an emphasis on intellectual ability in relation to being gifted. The students perceived their distinctiveness in very narrow terms in relation to capacity, modes of thought and speed of processing. The third set of questions looked at the students' perceptions of stress, happiness and reaching potential in relation to acceleration.

These questions were put into the context of providing advice to a younger sibling about their experiences being gifted and asking what stressed them out about being gifted. The children reported some stress associated with being gifted particularly around school life. Two themes emerged from this study. The first was the lack of challenge offered to these students and difficulty in meeting the expectations of others. The second theme consisted of problems with acceptance and teasing from their peers. Overall, the experience of acceleration appeared to have little influence on the children's beliefs about stress, happiness, and reaching their potential. This study highlights the importance and need for differentiated instruction in order to overcome such concerns as the dissatisfaction with challenges offered at school for our gifted and talented individuals (Kirby & Townsend, 1999).

In knowing how gifted and talented children perceive themselves and how they feel about their involvement in programmes aimed at catering for their gifts and talents, we as educators can utilise this information to better provide for their unique needs. In stepping back and looking at the viewpoint of gifted and talented students, we as educators can make more informed decisions about their education and guiding them through the challenges that come with being gifted. Providing excellence in the education of these children gives hope for the betterment of their future.

2.6 Summary of the Literature Review

Conclusions drawn from this literature review provide a firm basis with which to understand the programming options, and the processes involved in getting to this point for the withdrawal programmes researched in this study.

- Gifted and talented is now viewed from a multi-dimensional perspective encompassing many facets of gifts and talents, reflecting New Zealand's multicultural society.

- Schools should ideally develop their own definition of giftedness and talent incorporating the cultural aspects of the gifted and talented students' it aims to serve.

- Identification of our gifted and talented students should be the mediating link between a school's individual definition and the programme targeted at meeting these needs.

- Gifted and talented students have very unique learning needs, requiring curriculum differentiation aimed at more closely meeting these needs. The research suggests that ideally we should combine both enrichment and acceleration as part of this differentiation.

If we consider only the research on the effects of withdrawal programmes for gifted and talented students, generally research suggests the academic benefit of such a programme through offering a more stimulating and challenging curriculum, which poses no direct risk to the social and emotional development of these children. Generally, research suggests that grouping of gifted and talented students in such a form as that of the withdrawal programme is of benefit to them academically, hence suggesting the positive gains obtained by gifted and talented students in such a programme (e.g., Rogers, 2002; Kulik & Kulik, 1992; Davis & Rimm, 1998; Piirto, 1999; Porter, 1999; Moon & Feldhusen, 1991).

Gifted and talented students have a voice and have their own perceptions of their involvement in programmes aimed at catering for their unique abilities, which is an area that has been overlooked in the past due to limited research in this field. In reviewing the literature, it can be seen that the majority of research in the field of withdrawal programmes for gifted and talented students comes from that of overseas studies. It is this predominant research from overseas that suggests the need for more research in this field from a New Zealand perspective, particularly from a student's point of view.

This study aims to examine withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools. Firstly examining these programmes aimed at meeting the needs of our gifted and talented

students, and secondly understanding the students' perceptions of their involvement in these programmes.

In order to drive the research, the following research questions were planned.

- Do students view their participation in the withdrawal programme in a positive manner?
- Do students view the programme as beneficial to having their educational needs met?
- What do students see as being the social and emotional needs of being involved in the withdrawal programme?
- Do the objectives of the programme cross over to the students' perceptions of the withdrawal programme?

"There is still much to be learned in our understanding of gifted children by simply talking directly with them" (Kirby and Townsend, 1999, p. 7).

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research aimed to explore students' perceptions of their involvement in withdrawal programmes. We have seen in the literature review that there is a limited amount of research in the field of gifted students' perceptions. This research aimed to draw out and understand how these students perceived the programmes that were aimed at catering for their gifts and talents.

At the outset of the research, three schools were approached and teachers of the withdrawal programmes interviewed and relevant documents collected, to help understand the programme offered including identification, gifts and talents held etc. Focus group interviews were then carried out with the students involved in these programmes, after permission and consent were confirmed. These focus group interviews aimed to determine students' perceptions of their involvement in the gifted and talented programme with which they were involved.

3.2 Research Method

This study has been conducted as a qualitative case study research with the purpose to extract the views of the students involved. The features and suitability of this research method are discussed below.

3.2.1 Qualitative Case Study Research

Qualitative research seeks to explain the world around us as it is experienced by individuals in it. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that enables us to understand and explain meaning made of social phenomena in a natural setting (Merriam, 1998). Because qualitative research takes place in a natural setting it enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about that setting, and become more involved in the experiences of the

participants one is studying (Creswell, 2003). With particular reference to this study the setting is that of the schools being studied, and in utilising qualitative research it allows me to be involved in the actual experiences of the participants. Methods used by qualitative researchers represent the common belief that such a method can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena. A consequence of this deeper understanding arises through qualitative researchers' claims to having entered territories such as inner experience, language, cultural meanings, or forms of social interaction (Silverman, 2000). In light of this view, a qualitative research design was chosen for this study to allow students to communicate their perceptions of their own experiences in withdrawal programmes, allowing me as the researcher to understand this social phenomena.

Qualitative case studies are predominant throughout the field of education (Merriam (1998). The decision to focus on qualitative case study was made precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation, rather than assumption testing (Merriam, 1998). Berg (2001) highlights that case study research in education involves gathering sufficient data about a person, school, or programme to successfully understand how it operates. This study sought to understand primary-age gifted and talented students' perceptions of their involvement in withdrawal programmes. This research utilised the qualitative research design of case study, which allowed me as a researcher to gain an in-depth insight into what was going on in relation to these specific individuals, having been identified as gifted. Merriam (1998) states that case study "is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (p.19). In light of this, and the fact that I was wanting to gain an insight into the lives and perceptions of these gifted students, case study as a design method was deemed appropriate for gathering the required data.

There are three kinds of case studies: intrinsic; instrumental; and / or collective case study. Stake (1995) highlights that these case study types are not mutually exclusive of each other. Intrinsic case studies are those undertaken in response to a particular interest of the case by the researcher. Here researchers study a topic because they have a personal interest in the topic being studied. Instrumental case studies are utilised to study a specific issue using the

case to illustrate the issue further. Collective case studies are those that include multiple cases which are compared to provide more insight into an issue (Stake, 1995). The case study research conducted here is that of a collective case with several cases studied in an effort to provide insight into gaining a deeper understanding of how students perceive programmes aimed at catering for their needs, thus enabling one to better understand the effects of such a programme.

"A virtue of case study research, like other qualitative research is that it leads itself to theoretical generation and generalisation" (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991, p. 13). They go on to say that case study research has been important in the generation of new ideas and theories in social science research. On the other hand Stake (1995) expressed concern in that "case study seems a poor basis for generalisation" (p.7). He suggested the label of 'petite generalisation' for general statements made about one such case or cases. Atkinson and Delamont (1985) are concerned with the rejection of generalisation for case study research, stating that "if studies are not explicitly developed into more general frameworks, then they will be doomed to remain isolated one-off affairs, with no sense of cumulative knowledge or developing theoretical insight" (p.39). It is such data gathered through the use of case study that allowed me as the researcher to make empirical and theoretical generalisations relative to a larger whole of withdrawal programmes from the student's perceptions. The use of multiple cases for the purpose of this study strengthens the ability to make appropriate generalisations or concluding statements. The insight gained from such cases can provide useful information for provisional hypotheses for future research, hence "...case study plays an important role in advancing a fields knowledge base" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). In education, this may apply to the improvement of educational practices for the general betterment of the education system, or more specifically with this case, the improvement of current withdrawal programmes for gifted and talented students.

3.3 Data Gathering Instruments

As with any research method, the nature of case study research should determine the methods of data gathering. It was important to find reliable tools to ascertain the students'

perceptions of their involvement in the withdrawal programmes with which they are involved. They include:

- Individual interviews with the teacher involved in organising and running the withdrawal programmes;
- Focus group interviews with the groups of children involved in these withdrawal programmes; and
- Document collection of relevant information to the case.

3.3.1 Individual Interviews

"At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1998, p.3). Patton (1990) goes on to say that the main purpose of interview is to gain a special kind of information that allows one to find out what is on another's mind. The use of an interview allowed me to understand and interpret just what is going on in the minds of those involved. The interviews allowed me to gather data about people's experiences, feelings and opinions about the topic at hand, or the aspect of gifted children. Interview forms a necessary method for collecting data of the unobservable responses to the questions formulated for this study, in understanding the perceptions of those involved, and how these perceptions affect their lives and the lives of those close to them. "It is a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues though understanding the experience of the individual whose lives constitute education" (Seidman, 1998, p. 7).

The type of interview used was semi structured interview. This allowed me to word my questions flexibly so as to allow those involved to voice feelings and experiences unique to them. It also permitted me to hone in and gather more specific data relevant to the topic. In setting up questions within this semi structured interview process, it encouraged the interviewees to talk freely in their own way about the programme they have established and are running aimed at catering for these gifted and talented children (Drever, 1995). I also incorporated some less structured questions that allowed me to respond to the situation at hand and follow the direction of what was occurring at the time that would provide relevant

information, particularly for the educational needs of individual cases (Merriam, 1998). This allowed me to gain stronger information about the student perceptions of the current withdrawal programme they were involved in developing a better understanding of the programme.

In reviewing the information above on the use of interviews, a sound basis for using interview as a primary means of data collection for this particular study was provided.

3.3.2 Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interview is a technique that brings a group of people together to respond to questions on a particular topic that is of interest and relevance to the participants involved (Frey and Fontana, 1993). This technique sways away from the traditional one on one interview where participants are restricted in their response to a set of predetermined questions. Vaughn, Shay-Schumm, and Sinagub (1996) suggest that "focus group interviews are planned and structured, but they are also flexible tools that encourage interaction among participants in discussions about target topics" (p. 15). Such interaction among participants is the crux of this study in understanding the actual perceptions these students hold toward the withdrawal programme. Within this format, the group situation provided the security of being among others whom they are familiar with, and whom many share similar feelings and experiences, hence a solid basis for sharing their current views and perceptions (Anderson, 1990). The provision of a non-threatening environment for focus group interviews fosters a range of opinions from participants and a more complete understanding of their feelings and experiences within the group atmosphere. (Morgan and Krueger, 1993; Vaughn et al., 1996). The use of such an open environment generates participation and response from the students, where the goal here was to elicit their perceptions, feelings and attitudes about the topic. Vaughn et al. (1996) suggest that focus group interview is a technique that is dominant to that of individual interview for obtaining perceptions and feelings.

"Using words that make sense to the interviewee, words that reflect the respondents' world view, will improve the quality of data obtained during the interview" (Patton, 1990, p. 312). Consideration was taken with what questions were asked, particularly when dealing with the children involved. How the questions were worded was carefully considered for the extraction of the required information and that what I was asking was clear to those being interviewed. This was of particular importance in the interview with the children so as to avoid technical jargon that may affect the results.

In conclusion, focus group interview is compliant with the underlying assumptions of qualitative research, hence within the boundaries of this study. Within the interview technique, opinions and perceptions are encouraged, being a major strength for using focus group interviews for this study.

3.3.3 Document Collection

'Documents' is a broad term used when referring to printed and other materials appropriate to the case study which are a ready made source of data that is easily accessible (Merriam, 1998). The type of documents one uses will depend on the purpose and research topic; "…documentary data are particularly good sources for qualitative case studies because they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 126). Because the documents collected were produced by the schools in relation to the withdrawal programme they offered, the documents were grounded in real world context and were unaffected by the research process, hence providing possible data with which to ground this study.

The documents that were of interest to me included school records, notes in relation to the identification of the child's giftedness, policy implementation and the teacher's planning specific to the individual programmes. The collection of such documents allowed for a deeper and more complete understanding of how these children were catered for in the withdrawal programme.

3.4 Sample Population

This study involved three schools that offered a withdrawal programme as a means to cater for the needs of gifted and talented students. The groups of children involved in these programmes were all between 8 to 12 years of age. A total of 21 students were involved in the three focus groups. The students had been identified as gifted and talented by the individual school in relation to the type of programme being offered.

Table 3.1 represents a breakdown of the sample according to the year group with which the individual schools selected as a group to be offered such a programme.

	Girls	Boys
School A: Year 3-4	4	3
School B: Year 4, 5 & 6	2	3
School C: Year 7-8	3	4

Table 3.1: Sample Composition

This sample included the following ethnic groups: Pakeha, Asian, and Maori.

3.5 Procedure and Ethical Considerations

This section will outline the procedures that were undertaken in conducting this research and the ethical considerations that were adhered to. As with all qualitative research that deals with participants' experiences and perceptions, this study must deal with the ethical concerns of dealing with human participants. Accordingly, an application was made to the Massey University College of Education Human Ethics Committee for peer review and approval to proceed was granted.

3.5.1 Initial Stages: Permission Sought

Initially all school principals were telephoned and the study was outlined to them offering them a chance to participate. Letters were sent out inviting them to participate in the study

(See Appendix A). Accompanying this letter was a detailed information sheet (See Appendix B) outlining the nature and purpose of this study and participation that was required from those volunteering, noting their rights as participants to:

- decline participation
- refuse to answer any particular questions
- withdrawal from the study at any time without penalty
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.

3.5.2 Informed Consent

Accompanying the information sheet that all schools received was a consent form (See Appendix C) requiring the signature of the principal, Boards of Trustees, and teachers of the programme, to signify their agreement to voluntarily participate in this study. Following the return of this consent all the students involved in the withdrawal programme were provided with a letter for them and their parents/caregivers, inviting their child to participate in the study (See Appendix D) and an information sheet (See Appendix E) outlining the study, their rights as participants etc. In order to signify consent to participate in the study the students and parents/caregivers were asked to sign and return the consent form (See Appendix F). The parents/caregivers were asked to discuss the study with the children so that they were consenting with full understanding of what their involvement involved. Every effort was made to avoid academic jargon in any correspondence with the students and the caregivers, to make sure that all contact was understandable for all.

3.5.3 Data Gathering Stages

At this point the appropriate ethical consent had been gained and interviews could now commence.

Individual Interviews

Three teachers were interviewed individually about the withdrawal programme that they offered to cater for the needs of their gifted and talented students (See Appendix G). The questions asked allowed the teachers of the withdrawal programme to share the school's perception of gifted and talented, identification procedures used policies in place, how the programme runs in their school, what is offered and how it differs from the regular classroom in order to cater for these students, and evaluation procedures. The questions also allowed the teachers of these programmes to share their perceptions on all the issues mentioned above.

The hour long interviews were tape recorded to allow for transcription. At this point documents were collected that might be of use in understanding more about the procedures of identification, policies etc.

Focus Group Interviews

Students were interviewed in groups at the time of their scheduled withdrawal slot (See Appendix H). The students were briefed about what this interview involved and how it would run. They were given the opportunity to ask any questions about what was required of them. For confidentiality purposes the students were then given Winnie the Pooh character names to be used rather than their real names. The children were asked the interview questions and given time for each child to answer accordingly. The half hour interviews were recorded and transcribed. The questions asked required the children to share their perceptions about how they felt about the withdrawal programme they were involved in, how they perceived their peers' feelings toward their involvement, and how they felt this programme differed from their normal classroom.

3.5.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity of schools, teachers, and students involved was safeguarded in a number of ways. Confidentiality has been assured by changing student, school and teacher names, and/or assigning numbers to those involved in the research report, therefore their identity will be concealed and they were assured of this. Schools were assigned a code number to allow the researcher to distinguish the documents that were relevant to each particular school. The transcriber of the interviews was required to sign a confidentiality agreement with respect to the data and information on the tapes. In regards to anonymity, this may not be assured in the school and community. This is with respect to the fact that while school name, locality, and student identity can be concealed and be made anonymous, identification can be made from other sources. For example, my name is on the report where people knew I was carrying out the research, and because gifted and talented education is such a specialised area, particularly in a small community, schools may be identifiable.

Students involved were put at limited risk, with each student involved having a thorough understanding of what was expected, procedures used and what participation was required of them, at the commencement of the study. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time if they so wished. At the completion of the research, both the tapes and transcriptions were destroyed.

3.6 Analysis of data

Firstly, data from all interviews was transcribed and code numbers used in all recording. Data was organised in groups under the coding of each individual school consisting of teacher interviews and relevant documents, and the children's responses from the focus group interviews.

The documents collected and the use of the interview transcripts from the teachers involved, allowed me as the researcher to establish familiarity with the withdrawal

programme. The analysis of the school records enabled me to understand the identification procedures for these children, providing me with knowledge as to why these children qualified for entry into the withdrawal programme. The documents collected were used to gain an understanding of the programme in place and how their needs are catered for, identification procedures, purpose etc of the withdrawal programme offered within each individual school. This data was then used to outline what individual schools offered and the purpose of the programme to give readers an understanding of these programmes in the findings section of this report. This document collection provided a basis for interviews with the teachers to gain a more holistic understanding of the programme in place, hence strengthening this overall understanding of the programme and this research.

From here, the responses were analysed specifically to each individual school, building up a case relevant to the withdrawal programme offered in each school. Siedman (1998) suggests a conventional method of presenting and analysing interview data is to organise excerpts from the transcripts into categories to enable the researcher to search for threads and patterns amongst the excerpts within the categories identified. From here, responses were then combined and analysed across all schools to pull out emerging common themes with regards to the research questions in focus. Data was organised around each research question to explore and verify findings.

Interview transcripts from both the individual and focus groups interviews, as well as documents collected were triangulated to aid in data analysis. The data collected during the course of the study was analysed according to responses that emerged from the one to one interviews with the classroom teachers, as well as students' responses from the focus group interviews. Broad coding categories were developed from the overall data collected with reference to the programmes offered through teacher responses and children's perceptions through their responses. Analysing the transcribed notes from each interview and coding the data according to commonalties that arose across all interviews within each withdrawal programme offered over the three schools, allowed me to form generalisations about the overall programmes.

The incorporation of multiple methods to aid in analysing the overall data provides this study with some validity through the ability to draw conclusions based on a number of sources from which the data was gathered. This in turn may enrich the overall understanding of the topic at hand in identifying common themes that overlap from within the different sources of information.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

For any research study to be credible in its field it must convince its readers that it has validity and reliability, however these concepts are particularly difficult for qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). "There is general consensus, however, that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible" (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p.124).

3.7.1 Validity

Validity and reliability are important issues for any research to confirm truth and validity of one's research. Discussions of the term validity have traditionally been attached to quantitative research; hence it is not surprising the mixed reactions by qualitative researchers to applying such a concept to qualitative research (Burke, 1997). Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term trustworthiness for that of validity, arguing that qualitative research must inform their research and what they do as credible. Seidman (1998) highlights that neither the vocabulary of validity or trustworthiness may be adequate, yet "interviews can respond to the question 'are the participant's comments valid?"(p.17). We see that there are many issues around the use of such terms, and this debate remains unresolved.

Internal validity is concerned with the extent at to which the results of the study can be interpreted accurately (Tuckman, 1999). Part of addressing this question of the accuracy of the interpreted findings of the research study is addressing whether or not the researcher's report is a true representation of the participants perceptions. The authenticity of what these participants have to say is strengthened through that of an internal validity procedure that

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was practiced for the purpose of giving this research credibility. Member checking requires the researcher to take the data back to the participants for them to confirm the credibility of the interpretation of the findings. (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Transcribed interview notes were taken back to the interviewees involved to check and make any changes they felt necessary to portray an accurate representation of their comments. Member checking was not utilised with the children involved in the focus groups interviews. Utilising the procedure of member checks makes it reasonable to have confidence in the validity of the comments made as a result of the interviews undertaken.

Triangulation is a validity procedure that researchers use to create common themes and categories within the study among multiple sources of information for qualitative inquirers (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Moon (1991) suggests that triangulation is used by case study researchers as a means of checking the accuracy of their conclusions by drawing together data collected from various sources. This study uses multiple methods of gathering data such as individual interviews, focus group interviews and document collection to increase the understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the students involved.

External validity is concerned with the extent of which the findings from the study can be generalised to other populations (Tuckman, 1999). Burke (1997) takes the stance that the issue of generalisation is reasonable in doing so when other people, settings and times are similar to that of the original study. In saying that, the more similar the people and circumstances are to those involved in the original study one is generalising about, the more credibility the research has. This study does not however seek to imply that the findings from this research are a representation of all gifted students in withdrawal programmes, but rather that it provides an overview of the perceptions of some students' experiences.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with respect for the truth in case study research. Reliability is concerned with the consistency to the research and the extent of which the study can be replicated (Wiersma, 2000). This is a difficult area particularly with this study because people's perceptions are liable to change over time and with different cultures, age groups

and so forth. For this reason the study could not easily be applied to other settings as different schools around New Zealand have specific withdrawal programmes to meet the needs of the pupils it serves.

The reliability of focus group data needs to be considered in a different light, because of the fact that participants are responsive to each other's comments within the group setting, and in replicating this study, it is unlikely that the same data would be collected from another group. For this reason the information gathered within a particular group is an accurate representation of the perceptions of the group's reality, and therefore valid (Carey, 1995). Providing a comprehensive methodological section in the final report of the study noting number of participants, selection process, sample number and so forth, enables the readers to make informed decisions about the trustworthiness of the research for themselves (Burke, 1997).

3.8 Limitations to Methodology

"Because case studies are usually a product of an intense involvement with one or few individuals with their subject matter, they are sometimes dismissed as purely "subjective" and are regarded with suspicion, even hostility, by some social scientists" (Kemmis, 1980, p. 99). With the nature of case study and it being a single unit of study, from a scientific point of view, one could not draw comprehensive, critical findings from such a study. For this reason it would not stand firmly under the framework of a scientific philosophy. Here the issue of reliability, validity and generalisation from a scientific philosophy, provides limitations for this case study research.

While focus group interview proves to be a strong choice for data collection for this research, in that it provides a relatively easy way to elicit opinions and perceptions, it does not go without criticism. Focus group interview not only provides open discussion but it also has potential to cause some limitations through the tendency of particular participants to dominate the session leaving others in the group less spoken. Another such reservation with the use of focus group interview is that in such a group setting opinions may be influenced by the interaction of the group. Researchers should also ensure opinions stick to

the topic at hand, in light of the fact that in such a situation the topic may easily get off track (Carey, 1995).

Focus group interviews are often criticised for creating conformity of views and opinions (Morgan and Krueger, 1993). Here participants may adjust their own comments in response to others in the group, or they may withhold comments perhaps due to the lack of trust in other group members (Carey, 1995). Efforts were made within this study to create an environment where those involved were free to voice their opinions in a safe and non-threatening environment (Morgan and Krueger, 1993). Discussions were had at the beginning of the interviews with regards to behaviour and voicing opinions. This was to ensure all involved had a fair chance to voice their perceptions, thus not allowing particular participants to dominate the group and affect the results in any possible way.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology of this qualitative case study research. Case study research was described and justifications made for the use of the research method and the data gathering tools that go with it were explained. Procedure and ethical issues were also examined; handling information and dealing with the children involved in the research. Validity and reliability were discussed in relation to data gathering methods used for the purpose of this case study and the limitations of this case identified.

In conclusion this study aims to add to the limited research on the voice of gifted and talented students, where withdrawal programmes are aimed at catering for their unique gifts and talents. The case study research method has enabled the researcher to establish an understanding of the perceptions of gifted and talented learners involved in withdrawal programmes, aimed at applying this knowledge to the effects of such programmes.

Chapter Four: Results

4.1 Introduction: Three Case Studies

This chapter discusses withdrawal programmes in three primary schools within this case study research. Each school's programme is discussed individually and in chronological order, in the order that each case occurred.

Each school is discussed in the first instance from the teacher's perspective, and his or her experiences about the programme including identification, procedures, programme purpose and so forth, then looking at the children's perceptions as raised through the focus group interview process.

4.2 Case Study One: School A

School A is a mixed primary school starting at year one going through to year five, with a decile rating of five.

The school provides a variety of withdrawal programmes aimed at catering for their gifted and talented children across a range of curriculum areas, with which to extend and challenge the ability of these individuals. They tried as much as possible to cover a range of curriculum opportunities and were picking up children who may not be academically gifted but may be performing in other areas like art, physical activity, science and so forth. These extension programmes involved other staff who had a particular interest or strength area in the targeted curriculum area. Staff were released by the principal so that such programmes could be offered within the school to cater for the needs of their gifted and talented individuals.

The school had been running an extension reading programme for many years. The principal, John, had been leading this school for the last three years, and had been running the extension reading programme for two years. The withdrawal programme offered and

studied for the purposes of this case study involved extension in the area of English, specifically within the area of Reading. This withdrawal programme had a targeted group of children from the middle syndicate, those children in year three or eight and nine years of age. From the school's point of view, the purpose of withdrawal extension programmes, including the Reading programme, was to encourage children to think and question through an inquiry process, getting the children to participate and engage in learning in order to maximise their own potential. These programmes provided extension for a variety of children. However, with this reading group, often the same children were included year after year because of their reading ability, providing these children with more exposure and opportunity in their area of talent.

4.3 The first individual interview

How is giftedness and talent defined within your school?

Within School A, giftedness and talent is defined in two ways. Firstly it is defined as the children that have a high IQ or an identified high IQ which will be discussed a little later on, and secondly as those having some gifts in particular areas that may not be able to be assessed through an IQ or some sort of formal identification procedure such as standardised testing. Such areas include the Arts, Sports, Science and so on. The school's view of the term showed a holistic understanding incorporating the many areas of giftedness and talent. John explained that it is not just about high performing children that had been identified as gifted and talented. The school saw the importance of looking at the whole range of areas and believed in teacher's intuitive feelings about children that may have some sort of gift or talent. The school identified with a broad picture of giftedness and talent rather than IQ alone.

How are gifted and talented students identified within your school?

Whilst the school saw giftedness and talent as those having a high IQ they don't have IQ testing as such but tended to use testing in terms of what standarised tests were available within the school such as progressive achievement tests (PAT's), and standardised reading

and mathematics assessment testing. Teacher nomination was also used as a means of identifying those gifted and talented children through teachers observing and noting behaviours, talents etc of individual children within individual classrooms. John explained that while there were no formal identification procedures in place, the school used a variety of procedures for assessing gifts and talents within a range of areas for specific extension programmes.

What are your perceptions of how gifted and talented students are identified within your school?

John explained how he saw gifted and talented as being different. He believed that a child could be gifted but they may not be talented, and there were some children who were both gifted and talented. "It's the way in which you go about helping that gifted child become talented is what our job is really about." The school's philosophy follows Gagne's model (1991) of gifted and talented. John highlighted the catalysts in the center of the model, with the add on value of what people do for that gifted child to make them talented, which is where he saw the extension programme having effect. The next step for the school included writing a policy in catering for the needs of gifted and talented children, and more formally establishing procedures for identification. He suggested that there was a need to set in place some sort of criteria which they work from. He also insinuated the benefit of having such policies in place, to aid in the formality of such procedures for the parents' own peace of mind, particularly for those parents whose children are not chosen for such programmes.

What criteria do gifted and talented children need to meet to be included in the withdrawal programme?

In looking at the reading withdrawal programme specifically being studied here, these children had been identified through a standardised reading process involving all classroom teachers within the middle syndicate. The children considered were required to be reading above a specific reading level for their age. The children identified for the extension reading programme involving the senior school, used PAT testing as an identification procedures. The children involved here consisted of those who performed in the 90th

percentile on PAT comprehension and vocabulary testing. Identification procedures used depended on the type of programme offered and the year group in which it was offered, with respect to different testing being utilised in different areas of the school.

How do you feel personally about the criteria the students need to meet to be included in this programme?

John expressed that he personally felt pleased with the criteria and the children chosen for this extension group, stating that the subject area of Reading is perhaps an easier one to establish a benchmark with. He felt they had set criteria for children with special needs but felt they needed the criteria more clearly identified so teachers are a little bit clearer in understanding themselves how the programme operates and the purposes of it. John emphasised that he had a fairly fluid group, with three children moving from the junior school extension reading programme to the middle school making the benchmark as a result of their above average reading age.

What policies do you have in place for gifted and talented students and how are the students affected by this policy?

As mentioned earlier the school had no written formal policies for gifted and talented education. John stated that their next step would be creating and writing a formal policy to guide future practice.

How is the withdrawal programme structured within your school? What are its objectives, curriculum components, time tabling etc?

The reading extension programme withdrew the children during reading time four times a week for one hour each day. All middle school classes time tabled reading in at the same time. This way the children were not missing out on any extra learning during their normal classroom programme. The teacher of the programme was the Principal who had a special interest in gifted and talented education.

The objective of the programme was to encourage children to think and question, through an inquiry process getting the children to participate and engage in learning to maximise their own potential. This particular programme was based on the Williams Model (Williams, 1970) and also incorporated some Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). John was also looking at incorporating De Bono's thinking hats (1985) into his programme to provide the children with further extension and to get them to talk and question things about the text being studied. The programme was aimed at extending and broadening the current abilities of the children through extension, working within their current reading level and ability. John tended to run a child centered programme catering for the needs of these gifted and talented individuals, in providing material that was appealing and of interest to the individual children.

Text choice was a key component to this programme in providing the appropriate level of text difficulty but also providing a text that they could manage that was also at their level of understanding and maturity. John explained that whilst these children were gifted and had superior reading abilities it was important to bear in mind their maturity level. He stressed the importance of these children understanding appropriate concepts and themes without getting into too much depth of thinking before they were able to maturely understand it. "You've got to be a little bit careful that you're not giving them Shakespeare when they don't understand the conventions of it or even the maturity behind Shakespeare." He acknowledged the use of material written about children that allowed them to relate to the story, enabling him to extend and challenge their thinking further.

At the time of data collection the children were working with *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl. John chose this text in light of the fact that it was a fun story for children and captured their interest of chocolate and fantasy, while provided lots of areas to challenge the children's thinking. Such topics for discussion included greed and fairness embedded within the context of the children's lives in this story. The last unit of study these children were exposed to was based around the story *George Speaks* by Dick King-Smith. The story was about a boy who was a gifted reader and was able to read from the time he

was four weeks old. This story provided the children with a fictional story that directly related to these children having been identified for this extension programme, giving them something real to relate the story to, their own life experience. This study was directly related to the Williams Model. The objectives of this study were to get the children to relate the feelings and experiences of the boy in the story to themselves and their gifts, and to get them to investigate young children in history and their contributions to society. Such studies allowed for the differentiation of learning in pulling together many different forms of questioning from the Williams model by asking questions of reasoning and paradox, inferential, provocative questions and so forth. These studies hosted an inquiry based learning mode to it, in getting the children to use multiple sources of information such as the internet, interviewing, specific studies on a chosen area, allowing the children to choose something of interest to them personally, and a creative component such as design, creative writing etc.

What are your perceptions of the structure of the withdrawal programme offered in your school? What do you think of its objectives, curriculum components, time tabling etc?

While John was happy with how the programme was running, he suggested that he would prefer to have had more staff and funding. He saw the needs of our gifted and talented children as just as important as those with special needs. "We do a lot in our schools on special needs and it is also good to have a programme operating for children on the other side and it is timely that New Zealanders are starting to identify that, and with the minister starting his thing with initiatives." He stated that he had a dilemma in the school between prestige and giftedness in terms of parent attitude, with some thinking that they had a gifted child without really understanding the whole concept of giftedness. He felt that there was a lot of pressure on schools when it came to gifted programmes and while he saw himself as an advocate for gifted and talented children, he trod carefully so as not to cause problems amongst the school community.

John explained that they were trying to marry programmes that accommodated the academic aspect as well as other areas of giftedness. He stated that he was not sure how successful it was yet as they were still in the early days and it was important to look ahead and extend beyond what they had done already. John had thought about the possibility of including other schools into these programmes, with the opportunity of setting up mentors allowing other gifted children to work alongside children who had similar needs and interests.

How does this programme cater for the needs of your gifted and talented students as opposed to that of the regular classroom?

"I guess the good old answer to that one is that all teachers should be providing for every child in the room and that's the stock answer really isn't it. There are some good programmes going on in the rooms and people are providing for those programmes." John explained that Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) and De Bono's thinking hats (1985) were used in many senior classes and acknowledged the difficulty in catering for these gifted and talented individuals in the regular classroom when you have got thirty children in a room and you are trying to cater for all the other children as well. He noted that often the child who is reasonably able in, say mathematics, tended to get things finished first and then be asked if they could help or supervise someone else. "So it's not actually necessarily giving them some extra work, and giving them more of the same is not the answer for providing for them, it's really challenging their thinking."

Do you believe that such a programme is of value for the students participating and if so what evidence reinforces this belief?

John believes that it is quite hard to ascertain testing of thinking and comprehension; however the reading levels had gone up a little, showing some progress. The school had just had standardised testing for their mid year and they found that some of the children did not do so well. He reasoned that there was a need to look at what actually sits behind the test in terms of the type of questions and what they were expecting. It may be direct recall

of facts in the comprehension questions but this programme was operating at a level where they were trying hard to extend their thinking. John stressed that this was difficult to gauge but they were actually performing at a reasonable level and they were making progress. He was hoping that the programme was developing processes where the children were starting to think about the way in which they think and were more aware of their metacognitve processes. "It's actually teaching them to think. It's a bit like learning how to learn." While the school did not have hard data about the benefits of this extension programme, John believed that these children were better thinkers now than six months ago.

How are your practices reviewed and evaluated to ensure the programmes effectiveness?

Evaluation of extension programmes within the school tended to be very loose and informal. John reviewed the programme for himself and highlighted that he was often harder on himself. He acknowledged that it was not just about assessing the ability of the children. John stressed that time was a factor impinging on the evaluation of these programmes. "We haven't got the time and I guess that's something we need to address for effectiveness." In reflection John explained that the children seemed to be engaged in what they were doing and they did not seem to have any major behavioural problems and if children were motivated to come, then things must be working well. John explained that they did get informal feedback from parents about how they felt about the programme, and generally that feedback was positive.

Concluding Remarks:

In conclusion John explained that it was important to remember that these children were just kids at heart. "You get these estranged statements and I think where did that come from? You know I want to keep it like that because they are kids and we are in a primary school." The school promotes itself as a school offering programmes for its gifted and talented not so overtly, rather in saying that they cater for the needs of these children. John

was hopeful that they were catering for the needs of their gifted and talented individuals the best they could.

4.4 Student Perceptions: The first focus group interview

4.4.1   Selection Criteria

The participating children seemed to have a general awareness as to why they were chosen for this extension programme. Many of the children had a strong sense of their reading capabilities, particularly in relation to their peers. Many of them also highlighted the fact that while they were good at reading they also really enjoyed reading. The following were comments made by the children when asked about why they were involved in this programme.

- *Because we are intelligent readers.*
- *Because we do really special work and are really good at reading.*
- *Because we like reading and we can do hard work.*
- *Because we can learn harder things and do harder stuff than other kids.*
- *Because we're good at reading.*
- *Because we can do Intermediate stuff now.*

4.4.2   Perceptions of being withdrawn from the regular classroom programme

In listening to the children respond here, one could sense a strong feeling of the positive outcomes of being involved in this extension programme. Many of the children expressed that they liked being removed for many different reasons. They liked being able to do different things within the programme that they were not offered in the regular classroom, and often they saw these activities as fun. Of interest to note here was that the following comments in relation to this perception were from girls. These comments arose when children were asked about how they felt about being withdrawn from their regular classroom.

- *I think it's good because we get to do different stuff so we get lots of extra things to do in different classes.*
- *I feel happy because we get to learn new things and different things that the other classes don't get to learn and it's really neat because when our teacher isn't here we go to a different classes and do reading and other classes get to do reading too.*

A number of the children expressed the joy in being given opportunity to read for enjoyment. Of particular interest here was that the children that expressed their enjoyment for reading were actually boys. When asked how they felt about being withdrawn from their regular classroom and taught in the extension programme two boys offered this:

- *Happy because you get a teacher with you most of the time and you get more fun work.*
- *It's cool because you don't have to do normal work like writing and that.*

4.4.3 Peer group reactions

There were two standout responses when children were asked how their friends reacted to them being taken out of their own classroom and taught in this reading programme. Some of the children mentioned that their friends were jealous of them because they had to go to another class for reading. This was because reading was cross grouped for all children in the middle syndicate, so they all went to separate classes according to their reading ability. These comments made in relation to their peers having feelings of jealousy towards them came from girls. The following comments were made in relation to a question about how their peers felt about them being involved in the programme.

- *My friends are jealous because they have to go to other reading classes. They go, "I wish I was in there as well".*
- *Jealous because we get to do different stuff from us and we get to do things with Mr * like other people don't.*

The other noted response was that some of the children felt that their friends were proud of them for being involved in this programme, as the comments below suggest, which again were made by girls.

- *My friends are proud because their friend is a really good reader.*
- *Some are really jealous and some are really happy and they are happy for me because they haven't been in here.*

All children in the middle syndicate were cross grouped for reading so they all went to different teachers depending on their specific reading needs. One child, a boy mentioned this:

- *My friends don't know I'm gone. They haven't even bothered to, they go to other classes like the seniors or the juniors.*

4.4.4 Positive perceptions of involvement

Many of the children expressed different positive aspects of being involved in the reading extension group. Some children noted that they saw the privilege of being allowed to exceed the normal book limit at the library as a major benefit for being involved in this group. The children commenting in relation to these privileges were boys.

- *We get to go to the library and we are allowed to get more books out and we get to find more information than the other classes.*
- *You're allowed to go along to the library and you're allowed ten books out and other people are only allowed two.*

Some of the children saw the studies they worked on for different texts as a positive aspect of being involved in this reading group. They commented that they enjoyed using the Internet and finding information in the library. They also enjoyed being giving the opportunity to read independently and being read to by the teacher of the programme on a

daily basis. The following comments were made when the children were asked about what they enjoyed about being involved in the reading programme.

- *We get to find out information and do lots of things and when we study Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and we do pictures and that if we're in this reading class.*
- *We get to go on the Internet with Mr *. He reads for ten minutes and we can go to the library and get the books out with our own books.*
- *I like reading because we don't just do reading. We do all this other stuff.*

4.4.5 Negative perceptions of involvement

The children did not identify many negative aspects of being involved in the extension group and there were mixed responses between the girls and the boys. The girls liked everything about the reading programme, while the boys disliked the homework aspect of their involvement. The following comments were made when the children were asked if there was anything they didn't enjoy about their involvement in the programme and was a mix of both boy's and girl's responses.

- *I like everything.*
- *I like everything about reading.*
- *I don't like doing homework.*
- *I don't like it either.*

Of interest here was that the children who enjoyed everything about their involvement in the programme were girls, and the comments about homework being a negative aspect came from the boys. One boy commented on the pressure from parents to meet the expectation and commitments of being involved in this reading group.

- *I don't really like doing this homework when I'm on the computer at home. I'm not allowed to talk to my friends until I've done all my work on the computer.*

4.4.5 Regular classroom comparison

At first glance the children's comments alluded that back in their regular classes the children were given work that was often easier than they were given during extension time. However one must remember that during reading all children were cross grouped and moved around into different classes to allow the school to cater for more individual needs. In light of this, perhaps the children were comparing the work they receive to the work other children receive back in their normal classes. Some of the comments included:

- *We read chapter books and they read little books and they do easy activities.*
- *Some classes have good books and these books are – look in the back and things and do the answers from the story in it and we can just do it and do things that are fun like we made a Chocolate Factory. (comparing the normal class work with the extension group work)*
- *Because in other classrooms they have to do stuff like they have to do like read words and read the books and stuff like that and we know how to read chapter books and stuff like that.*
- *They have heaps more people than us and they have big reading groups like the size of our group except about four or five and they read different books than us. Like we read chapters and they don't.*

4.4.6 Advice to others

The last question was a hypothetical, requiring the children to give advice to other children if they were considering joining the group. Some of the children had some trouble with this question, perhaps as a result of their age and the hypothetical nature of the question. The following responses included:

- *I'd tell them that you have to get chosen to come in and because we've been chosen from a special person*
- *I'd tell them that you need to be chosen by the principal otherwise then you might go into other rooms – another room, like room six or room seven*

Some of the responses showed the understanding the children had in relation to their ability in reading as compared with their peers. Many of the responses gave advice on the need for them to get better at reading in order to be considered for the group, showing their understanding of their superior abilities in relation to their age peers.

- *I'd tell them they should learn how to read a bit more and they might get chosen by Mr *.*
- *I would say you have to get chosen by Mr * and you have to be a good reader and you have to do your work and do more than you want to. They probably won't think they want to do it because you've told them that.*
- *I'd say to them you've got to get better at reading if you're not so good or something. You should read every Friday night, because we don't read on Friday, we don't go to reading on Friday.*

As a response to this question common themes emerged. The first was in relation to the selection of these children for involvement in this programme. Many comments highlighted that you had to be chosen to be a part of the programme, and secondly that if you wanted to get chosen, you had to work hard.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

The school had used a specific reading level as a means for identifying children for this extension programme. The children's responses showed they had a very good understanding as to why they were chosen, and were very aware of their ability in reading particularly in relation to their peers.

John highlighted that he used material, and provided extension that was of interest and relevance to the children, which again was reflected in the comments made. Many of the children expressed enjoyment of the reading programme and enjoyed the activities they were provided with. John also stressed the importance of text choice, which again was positively mentioned by many of the children during the focus group interview.

Overall, the responses from the children about being withdrawn and taught in the extension reading programme were positive, with few negative aspects of their involvement being mentioned. Generally the comments from their peers about their involvement in the programme, was regarded as positive with some responses of jealousy.

5.1 Case Study Two: School B

School B is a mixed primary school starting at year one through to year six, with a decile rating of ten and a disproportionate number of able children. The school provided a variety of withdrawal programmes aimed at catering for their gifted and talented children across many curriculum areas, in order to challenge and extend their current abilities. Whilst the school covered the majority of academic areas such as mathematics, written language and reading, they also covered other areas where children may be exhibiting strengths, such as art and science. These programmes were run by staff with a particular strength in the area being covered, and were released by an employed release teacher.

The withdrawal programme that was running and being studied for the purposes of this study was a one off programme that was running for just over one term, in total thirteen weeks. At the time of data collection an outside, trained part-time teacher was employed to run this special abilities programme. The programme had a major focus on technology, however it also covered a multitude of different areas capitalising on the different strengths of the group. The programme was targeted toward the senior school, those children in year five and six, and it was also opened up to children in year four.

5.2 The second individual interview

This interview was undertaken with the special ability teacher who ran the withdrawal programme being studied. Sarah had worked part time on and off over the last ten years doing special needs and special abilities work. She was a part time teacher employed in the school for this purpose only, therefore not fully aware of other aspects of the school, which this interview reflects.

How is giftedness and talent defined within your school?

Within School B, giftedness and talent was defined as children in the top one percent, or those who showed signs of being natural and divergent thinkers. It was not just seen as those performing in different curriculum areas within the top percentile, but also children showing talents and strengths in thinking differently and being able to look at things from different perspectives. The school had a strong focus on thinking and thought processes rather than just academic ability alone. The school also incorporated different areas within which one's gifts or talents may arise, such as art, science and so forth. The school identified with a broad notion of giftedness and talent.

How are gifted and talented students identified within the school?

As Sarah was only a part-time teacher employed for this withdrawal programme, she did not have much of an understanding about the identification procedures used in the school. She believed that teacher observation in the classroom and therefore teacher nomination was a common practice in the school for identifying the needs of their gifted and talented students. She also noted that tests, be it individual set tests by teachers or standardised tests such as progressive achievement tests (PAT's) were also used.

It was here that I was referred to the school policy to gain more insight into such identification procedures. The school's NAG One procedures policy contained a section about identification. These policies were in all teachers' folders within their own classroom

and were followed up by the deputy principal, who had responsibility for the area of special abilities. The school employed a responsive environment approach in order for children with special abilities to display their gifts and talents where they felt supported and challenged. Teachers were encouraged to gather information, particularly in the first term, but also throughout the year, on abilities displayed by children in their class from the following sources: preschool and previous information, student profiles, school achievements, test results, observations and assessments, products, checklists / rating scales, parents, the children and outside professionals (if needed).

What are your perceptions of how gifted and talented students are identified within the school? How do you feel about procedures that are used?

Because Sarah was a part time teacher who was in the school during withdrawal time only, she was not able to comment on how she felt about such procedures being used within the school, in light of the fact that she had only been involved in the identification of this group of children. She did note however, that she felt that there needed to be perhaps more specific testing done rather than utilising teacher nomination alone.

What criteria do gifted and talented children need to meet to be included in the gifted programme?

The teachers of children in year four, five and six were given a criteria seeking children that were articulate, creative, mathematical, and showed initiative. At this stage, the teachers selected forty children over the three year groups. The children were given a technology challenge where they needed to achieve an outstanding mark for several different criteria. The criteria the children were marked on included: communication, co-operative work, creativity, thinking laterally, and self-management. As well, this technology challenge had a written component to it requiring the children to draw a plan for the playground, to allow Sarah to assess creativity, and then the children had to present their ideas to the wider group. At this point 15 children were selected based on the marks they were given for the challenge. These children were given an assessment task of building a bridge that had to be

modifiable, collapsible, and reusable. From here, the eight children currently involved in this programme were selected. Of these eight children, seven included children in year five and six and one child in year two was standing out as being gifted and talented so was also included.

How do you feel personally about the criteria that the students need to meet to be included in this programme?

Sarah expressed that she personally felt pleased with the criteria the children were expected to meet in order to be involved in this programme. She felt that this was because the criteria was so wide ranging and picked up children who may not necessarily have been picked up in the regular classroom, as she felt that often the creative side of things was often overlooked in a normal classroom setting. Because the programme was not just assessing written or mathematical ability, it allowed those with good ideas and real creativity to have a chance at being involved in something they may not necessarily have been chosen for previously.

What policies do you have in place for gifted and talented students and how are the students affected by these policies?

As mentioned earlier, Sarah was a part-time teacher for this programme and therefore was not aware of what policies the school had, just that she knew they did have them. In light of this I collected the relevant documents. The school had a few policies that included procedures for the following: identification, assessment of individual needs, criteria for referral, programme organisation, staff involvement, resources, communication between home and school and evaluation of these programmes.

How is the gifted programme structured in your school? What are its objectives, curriculum components, time tabling etc?

This programme withdrew the children three days a week for an hour per session. The

objective of the programme was to design a new junior school ground. The children were given the title of landscape designers and were to design a playground that would replace the existing one in need of redevelopment. This was a project put forward for the children to complete by the staff and the Board of Trustees. The children were to put together a proposal that they would present to the Board, following a design specification which included: using existing area, relatively low cost, easy to build, safe and suitable for all primary aged children. This project was not just theory, it was actually practical as the children's final design was going to be created and built, giving the programme real purpose, which Sarah expressed as an important component. The school was going to get a landscape designer in to do it, and the Board of Trustees suggested that the children do it, so the withdrawal programme arose from there.

While the major curriculum focus was technology, the project also included many other curriculum areas. Research was another main component to this programme. The children needed to interview and survey children about what they would like in their playground, measure out the area, research safety aspects for building a playground, appropriate equipment, planting and so on, which involved sending out for brochures, looking at aesthetic appeal, surfaces and so forth. The children were going to be doing all the landscaping themselves so had to do a lot of research into appropriate plants for the area, what grows where, heights and so on. They were also required to do scale drawings, which Sarah noted they had difficulty with, and create models and budgets for the development of the playground. Because of the nature of the project the children contacted and sought help from experts in the field, involving the community. The children used the following experts: landscape designer, designer / draftsperson, builder, building inspector, plant nursery, power point specialist and librarians. Then finally, they had to present their final product through a power point presentation to convince the Board of Trustees that their project was worthy, which the board then went ahead with its development.

The programme aimed to not only extend the current abilities of the children but also to accelerate them as well. The programme was planned for at level five of the curriculum; however, Sarah explained that they might not be actually working at that level necessarily.

The programme offered components and opportunities within different areas that could not be offered in the regular classroom, which also capitalised on the gifts and talents these children exhibited.

What are your perceptions of the structure of the withdrawal programme offered in your school? What do you think of its objectives, curriculum components, time tabling etc?

Sarah noted that this programme was quite different to what she had done in the past but she felt that the children were really enthusiastic about it and really got involved. It had taken longer than she thought it would but she noted that the regular time slots worked well. She liked the fact that the project incorporated many curriculum areas as well as skills to extend and challenge the current needs of these gifted and talented children. As the programme was only half way through the allocated 13 weeks Sarah's comments reflected how it had gone so far.

How does this programme cater for the needs of these gifted and talented students as opposed to that of the regular classroom?

Sarah expressed strongly that this sort of thing with its practical nature could not really take place in a normal classroom. Sarah believed that the fact that it is practical and not just theory alone, that their design would actually be developed for all children to enjoy, was the main reason it was running so successfully. It involved the children in contacting people such as the city council for safety standards, ringing around to do costings of products, determining what products they needed and how much they would need and so on. It provided the children with new skills that they could not receive from being in the regular classroom.

Do you believe that such a programme is of value for the students participating, and if

so what evidence reinforces this belief?

Sarah believed that this programme was of great value to the children involved. She believed that the fact that there was a real purpose for learning was the reason that it was so valuable. The children learnt practical skills they would use for later on in life. She felt that the children were also learning how to take control of their own learning and to move through different stages. Just as they moved through different stages involved in this project, she believed that they could use these skills and this knowledge to apply to a lot of different things in their life, therefore seeing the value in this programme. Sarah also noted that the children learnt the value of communication through the process of working together and communicating their ideas with professionals, which will also help in their future. The proof of learning came from teacher assessment at the completion of each stage, which revolved around a checklist using the school rubric. This incorporated all the aspects assessed in the initial stages in identifying these children, which included co-operative skills, creativity, communication, numeracy and self-management.

How are your practices reviewed and evaluated to ensure the programmes effectiveness?

The programme was reviewed as a group between the teacher and the children, and reviewed weekly. They looked at what they had done so far, what was effective what was not and what they needed to change. This was done orally during their withdrawal time. Every month or so the children completed a written evaluation of how they were going individually and as a group. Sarah also had criteria that she used to evaluate the programme. In the initial stages of the programme they used action research, which Sarah evaluated after every step. At the end of the unit, the children were to present their power point to the Board of Trustees, for feedback in making any changes necessary, before evaluating the final product.

5.3 Student Perceptions: The second focus group interview

5.3.1 Selection Criteria

The participating children seemed to have a very good awareness as to why they were involved in the extension programme. Many of the children had a strong sense of their abilities and capabilities. Some of the children highlighted their individual talent areas as being the reason they had been chosen for the programme. The following comments were made when children were asked about why they were included in the programme.

- *Because we have an interested mind.*
- *Because we have been chosen by our teachers and with our abilities.*
- *Because we are much more able to develop more things than some kids.*
- *Because we have special artistic design and artistic skill.*
- *Because we went through a test and Mrs * picked out who she thought was the best*

5.3.2 Perceptions of being withdrawn from the regular classroom programme

In listening to the children respond here, one could sense a strong feeling of the positive outcome of being involved in the withdrawal programme. Many children commented on the fact that being involved in the programme was fun when compared to the regular classroom. The following comments came about when the children were asked how they felt about being withdrawn from the regular classroom.

- *I quite like it because I think it's better than normal school work.*
- *Because we can do fun stuff with the extension programme and there's boring stuff for schoolwork.*
- *Because we get to use the computers and make models instead of just doing writing or reading*

While the children's comments reflected that they found work back in the regular classroom boring, they also commented that the work in the withdrawal programme was harder, as the following comments suggest. Of interest here is that these comments were made by boys.

- *Because we don't just do boring old writing and books and things. It's more other harder stuff.*
- *Because we do other harder work than schoolwork. Not boring stuff that I don't really like.*

While many of the comments were positive toward being withdrawn from the regular classroom, one child commented on the other side to the issue in that they sometimes missed out on things that were going on back in the regular classroom, as the following comment suggests.

- *I feel sort of – sometimes I miss other things, but it's quite fun doing the programme.*

5.3.3 Peer group reactions

When the children were asked how their friends react to them being withdrawal from the classroom and taught in this extension programme the children's comments were very similar. The responses showed that children felt that their peers were angry and annoyed at them not because they went out of the classroom, but because they were treated differently when they were back in the classroom, as the following comments show.

- *Sometimes they get a bit angry because they have to repeat everything that they did while I was away, to me.*
- *They get annoyed because we don't have to finish our work that they have done when we were away.*

- *Our teachers give us some exceptions because when we are reading a story we can just finish it the next week instead of finishing it when everyone else does.*
- *They think that we are really slimy things.*

One child, a boy, commented that perhaps their peers were sometimes jealous but felt that they didn't really care, as the following comment suggests.

- *I think they are a little jealous but I don't think they could care less.*

5.3.4   Positive perceptions of involvement

When children were asked what the positives were for being involved in the withdrawal programme, two themes arose. Firstly, the children commented that the programme was fun and it offered them opportunities they would not normally receive back in the regular classrooms. The following were comments made when asked about these positives.

- *It's quite fun and I get to do things that I wouldn't usually do.*
- *I think it's quite fun because you get to make models and you don't usually make models in the classroom, and we do other stuff that you wouldn't usually do in other schoolwork and stuff.*

The other theme that arose from this question was that the children felt that they were given choices when in the extension programme, which the following comments strongly suggest.

- *Because you don't have to – when you are in the extension program you don't have to do what you don't want to do. You just have to choose which part of it you want to.*
- *In class you don't get to sort of choose what you do. You actually are given the choice of what you can do and you choose.*
- *I can work to my potential.*

5.3.5   Negative perceptions of involvement

The children's responses here showed two main themes. Some children felt that there were no negatives aspects of being involved in the extension programme because they felt that their regular classroom was boring, as the following comments clearly suggest. These comments came from the boys in the group.

- *There are no negatives because our class is really boring anyway.*
- *Yeah I agree there are no negatives our class is boring.*

While these children felt that the programme did not have any negatives, the other children noted that they felt that they missed out on opportunities back in the regular classroom. The following comments identified the negative comments made when children asked if there was anything they did not enjoy about their involvement in the programme.

- *Well sometimes there's some boring parts where you just sit around and do things like costings, but otherwise it's pretty fun.*
- *We sometimes get to miss out on games, but sometimes it's all right.*
- *Sometimes we are doing fun things in class and we miss out on them.*

5.4.5 Regular classroom comparison

Two main themes arose from the comments the children made when asked how the extension programme differed from that of the regular classroom. Some children's comments suggested that the work they were given in the extension programme was more pitched at their level and more of a challenge; where as work in classroom was perhaps easy, as the following comments suggest.

- *I find the work in class and the work here is actually going to be more fun because it's not – it's just at the right level, whereas the stuff in class is really easy and it's just boring. You don't really learn anything.*

- *Well we get to do things that – we get to things that other people - that we won't get to do in the classroom because some other people in the class wouldn't be able to do it. Things like making models to scale because making scales is quite hard.*
- *I think it's better because like you get to make models and you get to design stuff that's going to go on the paper.*

The other theme that arose from this question was that the children felt that they were given more freedom and choice in the extension programme compared to that of the regular classroom. The comments suggest that the children felt that they had to do what the teacher back in their regular classroom wanted, rather than be creative and have any say in the matter. The following comments support this theme.

- *We think it's better because in the classroom you have to do what the teacher tells you to. You do exactly what he thinks and then you just don't design it and choose how you want it to be.*
- *I think it's better here because you get to be creative and we don't have to be bossed around by our teachers.*

4.4.6 Advice to others

The last question was a hypothetical one, requiring the children to give advice to other children if they were considering joining the group. The children's comments showed their awareness of their abilities and why they were involved in the programme. The comments from all the children suggested that this programme was for children above average, as the comments suggest.

- *Well it would depend on what type of person they were. If they were quite clever then I would say it was a good idea for them, but if they were quite, well – their working skills were average, then I would say that it wasn't for them.*
- *I think if they are a little above than the usual average then they should get into it. If they are not, then they should stay where they are.*

- *If they always got their work finished up way before everyone else, then they should because they've got nothing else to do in class.*
- *I wouldn't suggest it to anyone if they were a real drop kick, but like if they were someone who was actually quite brainy I would probably just say, yea, good idea.*
- *I think the people who were more like creative and if they have met the criteria.*

4.5 Concluding Remarks

The school had designed a technology challenge as part of the criteria for being chosen to be included in the extension programme, and the comments from the children showed they had a very strong sense of their abilities and strengths and why they were chosen. The children had a strong understanding of their abilities in comparison to many of their peers, particularly when compared to others back in the regular classroom.

The teacher of the extension programme highlighted the success and positive nature of the programme, attributing it to the practical nature of it. The programme aimed at providing children with opportunities that would not normally be offered back in the regular classroom. The comments from the children also reflected this as a positive aspect to the programme, in that the children recognised that they were given opportunities they would not have received back in their regular classroom. The programme aimed to provide these gifted and talented children with new skills and challenges they would take and use in their future long after this programme finished. The programme had a strong emphasis on accelerating and extending the life skills of these children to further challenge and extend their current abilities.

Overall, the responses from the children about being withdrawn and taught in the extension programme were positive, with only some negative aspects of their involvement being mentioned. The comments that arose from the focus group interviews shared a strong sense of feeling valued for their abilities in the programme and many children commented on their freedom and choice in the programme when compared to the regular classroom.

5.1 Case Study Three: School C

School C is a mixed primary school starting at year one going through to year eight, with a decile rating of eight.

The school had been running extension programmes for the last five years. They provided a variety of withdrawal programmes aimed at catering for their gifted and talented children across a range of curriculum areas, with which to extend and challenge the ability of these individuals. The extension programmes covered all curriculum areas such as science, art, physical activity and so forth. These extension programmes involved other staff who had a particular interest or strength in the targeted curriculum area. During this case study the school had employed an outside person with a specific strength in the targeted area of science, to further extend and challenge the children using the expertise of this person. The withdrawal programme had a targeted group of children from the senior school, those in year seven and eight.

6.2 The third individual interview

This interview was undertaken with the special ability teacher who ran the withdrawal programme being studied. Jane was employed by the school to work part time for the purpose of this science extension group being studied.

How is giftedness and talent defined within your school?

The school used the term special abilities when referring to gifted and talented children. The school believed the term 'special abilities' incorporates a range of gifts and talents. "I think special abilities, is the word we use because every kid has some sort of talent or gift that makes them quite special." The school incorporated many different areas within which one's gifts or talents may arise, such as art, science, language, maths, music and so forth. The school believed that children with special abilities were those children who displayed special gifts or talents in a particular area. The school looked at the whole range of areas in

relation to gifts and talents and identified the importance of teacher's intuitive feelings about children who displayed some sort of gift or talent. The school identified with a broad notion of giftedness and talent.

How are gifted and talented students identified within the school?

While Jane was only a part time teacher employed for this withdrawal programme, she had a good understanding of the identification procedures used in the school.
Teachers in the school were expected to carry out assessment testing during the first term to gather data about all children. Teachers were asked to use this testing to gather information about abilities displayed by the children in their class as well as from other sources such as preschool and previous information, student profiles, school achievements, test results, observations and assessments, products, checklists / rating scales, parents, and outside professionals if needed. Teachers were expected to use all of this information to make choices about children in the top range who had special abilities through displaying some gift or talent in a particular area.

The main form of identification of these children with special abilities was through teacher nomination. Teachers were expected to use assessment data and classroom observations to determine the abilities of these children, hence identifying children with special abilities. It was the teachers who were responsible for putting forward children's names for extension programmes; however, Jane commented that there was quite a bit of discussion amongst staff as to whether a student meets what they would consider special abilities.

What are your perceptions of how gifted and talented students are identified within the school? How do you feel about procedures that are used?

Jane explained that she felt that teacher choice as a means of identifying these children was dependent on how perceptive the teacher was. She felt that in her opinion some teachers chose the 'good kids' or those who answered every question and did things well in the classroom, rather than those children considered having special abilities. She also felt that it

was important for teachers to consider behaviour as well as whether they can be trusted outside the classroom. "So behaviour has to be – to actually be a part of a separate group you have to show that you are responsible. The gifted and talented is not to be fostered without the responsibilities that go along with being a child in the school as well." Jane however did note both sides to this issue in those children displaying inappropriate behaviour or personality problems in the classroom not being selected for extension groups even though they have shown much talent in a particular area. Jane commented that she felt that some children were selected for extension programmes based on the reasoning "to give the teacher a breather" from children displaying less than appropriate behaviours. She also commented that some teachers selected children on the fact that they had a keen interest in the area an extension programme was being offered, which she felt defeated the purpose of providing extension for those identified as having special abilities. "It may not be that they are necessarily gifted or talented, but they have a high interest in that area that they are being taken out for, which I don't know." Jane highlighted very strongly that teacher nomination as the main form of identification in this school had both positives and negatives to it, which needed consideration in order to cater for their gifted and talented population.

What criteria do gifted and talented children need to meet to be included in the gifted programme?

In looking at the science extension programme being studied here, these children had been identified through teacher nomination alone. There were no specific criteria the children needed to meet to be included in the extension group; it was left up to individual teacher choice within the syndicate level the programme was to be run for. The teachers were aware that the programme was an extension programme aimed at extending children with special abilities in the area of science. While there was the expectation that children were chosen because they were considered to have special abilities in the area of science, they were also expected to have an interest in the area and exhibit commitment and responsibility. Jane felt strongly that the children involved in her group needed to display some responsibility so that the children who were given this special opportunity were well

behaved and rewarded for this.

How do you feel personally about the criteria that the students need to meet to be included in this programme?

Jane expressed that she personally felt relatively positive with the criteria, but highlighted the negatives of it. She felt that having watched this group of children in action, she could see that some children could reach great heights in the area of science, while there were some children in her group that were not that way inclined and were getting lost and frustrated. She felt that these children "actually affect the group as well because we don't want to make them feel frustrated and lost and don't want them to feel put down by not knowing, so there's a few things to consider." She felt that this had some positive aspects to it in that the children were more supportive of each other because of the difficulties some children were having and they all supported each other as a team. Jane noted that, "it may not have been what I thought, or wanted, or requested; it was discussed and everyone decided about it, but it still worked in its own way."

What policies do you have in place for gifted and talented students and how are the students affected by these policies?

The school does have a policy in place for catering for the needs of all children but does not have a specific policy for children with special abilities. A teacher in the school had been given special responsibilities for this and was responsible for making sure that these children were being catered for. The policy covered identification and assessment of children's needs. This is done through thorough testing in the first few weeks to identify these children early on, and these children were continually reviewed throughout the year. The policy notes that teachers were responsible for catering for the needs of all children without specifically mentioning children with special abilities.

How is the gifted programme structured in your school? What are its objectives, curriculum components, timetabling etc?

The science extension programme withdrew children once a week for an hour at a time. The programme had been running for two terms and was to continue over into the third term due to the weather not allowing the group to get out and do the more practical side of things. Due to the nature of the programme and needing to be outdoors, these time slots were varied to try to accommodate for the weather. The objective of the programme was made up of many environmental educational goals. These included: an awareness and sensitivity to the wetland environment, knowledge and understanding of the wetland ecosystem and the impact on people, attitudes and values that reflect feelings of concern for the protection of wetlands, skills in identifying, investigating and problem solving associated with wetland environmental issues and a sense of responsibility through participation and action as a group in addressing environmental issues surrounding wetland care and sustainability.

The major curriculum focus for this extension programme was science. The children were involved in learning about and investigating many different aspects of the wetland environment. The programme combined both knowledge and practical sessions, where the children were working and learning about aspects, then going out to the wetland environment and applying this knowledge in a real life context. A major part of this programme was the investigation side through practical investigation experience rather than investigating through written form. The expectation as part of the programme was that all children involved would complete a science fair project around what they had been studying during the withdrawal programme. This was as a means to put their investigation skills into a context within the wetland environment that interested them and further challenged their understandings and abilities. However, due to other things going on in the classroom and the more short-term nature of the criteria for the science fair projects, this was not something that was carried through by all children involved.

The children worked through topics such as mapping and developing an understanding of a wetland ecosystem. They studied hydrology and learnt about the water cycle and how seasonal changes affect this environment. The children looked at different macro invertebrates, studying bugs that lived in this wetland environment, explored life cycles, looking at them with microscopes, microbiology of mud and soil profiles where the children carried out different experiments allowing them to apply knowledge learnt thus far within the wetland environment. The children were then going be learning about bird and plant life in the wetland environment and look at human effects on these aspects of this environment. Within all of these topics the children spent time learning and acquiring knowledge about the topic in the withdrawal programme classroom as well as being giving opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge in the practical environment. Experts were also used during different components of the programme to provide the children with real life experts in the field.

Jane commented that the time slots were difficult in relation to the practical nature of some of the components of the programme. She highlighted that not being in the school due to being employed for this withdrawal programme only, and having only one-hour time slots were problematic as being out in the environment gave no time for follow up with the children. She felt that this was an important part of assessing and confirming their current understandings, particularly with the complex nature of some of the topics chosen to extend their current abilities.

Jane commented that there was a need for the children to share their knowledge with others, which she felt was not done so successfully, as she had no control over what happened once the children went back to their classrooms. She felt that the children had done some really amazing things and should have been made to feel special about their abilities and interests back in the classroom and that in doing this it would have reaffirmed their understandings further. "It made me realise that when I'd allowed kids that had gone out in my class to do something different, that they'd got that opportunity to share and just to express the fact that they felt special."

What are your perceptions of the structure of the withdrawal programme offered in your school? What do you think of its objectives, curriculum components, time tabling etc?

Jane felt that the timetabling would have been better if it was not scheduled during winter, as the weather affected them immensely. Jane's group was a very hands-on group and while she did a fair bit of theory back at school, it was important that the children got out and saw these aspects in action within the environment. She noted that the dual nature of this programme being theory and practical experience perhaps hindered the programme in meeting objectives and deadlines, with the weather acting as a factor as well. Aside from the weather affecting their field trips, Jane also felt frustrated, as did the children, by not being able to make up these times when the weather was not on their side. Because Jane did not work in the school and had other commitments outside, she often could not get the time to catch up on missed field trips and curriculum objectives. "So the structure of my programme I don't think has been the best, but I've enjoyed having that weekly going out to the school, and I know the kids did enjoy it in the first term, and they've got totally sort of frustrated that I haven't been out because they enjoyed going out."

How does this programme cater for the needs of these gifted and talented students as opposed to that of the regular classroom?

Jane expressed that this sort of programme with its practical nature could not really take place in a normal classroom. Jane believed that the fact that it involved practical investigations and not just theory alone was the reason the children were so successful. "With a small group you've got a focus." She felt that this particular project based around the wetlands could not have been done as successfully in terms of what the children learnt and experienced if they were back in the regular classroom. Jane commented that it was much easier to work with and extend a smaller group of children who really had ability and interest in the area, rather than catering for that area and interest in the classroom, when you have got other children who are not interested or at that level.

Do you believe that such a programme is of value for the students participating, and if so, what evidence reinforces this belief?

Jane commented that, "Well to me, variety is the spice of life, and I think the value may be for their spice." Jane felt that this programme offered these children spice to build and extend their current abilities and interests. She felt that these children were exposed to opportunities that they would not have been offered back in the regular classroom, which was part of providing spice to the life of these children. Jane felt the children who participated in this special abilities programme did have a better understanding of the wetland environment as a result of this programme. She surveyed all the children in year seven and eight about this environment and found that the children who were involved in the programme had a much better understanding, particularly in relation to the value of wetlands in our environment compared with other children who were not involved. "So I do know that there was some value, because understanding the value of wetlands is something that most people in the community do not know. So that's quite rewarding to have seen their results on the survey."

How are your practices reviewed and evaluated to ensure the programmes effectiveness?

Jane evaluated the effectiveness of her programme independently and used her reflections to drive future lessons. Because Jane was not a classroom teacher at the time, her evaluations were completely independent and done for her own purposes to guide her practices with the children. Jane had very different expectations of the group at the beginning of the withdrawal programme, but notes that she changed her tack a little due to the fact that not all of the group were necessarily children with special abilities as mentioned earlier. Jane strongly commented throughout the entire interview that the children were highly motivated and engaged in what they were doing, which showed her the programme was stimulating and working well.

6.3 Student Perceptions: The second focus group interview

6.3.1 Selection Criteria

The participating children did not seem to have a very good awareness as to why they were involved in the extension programme. Many of the children were aware that their teachers had chosen them but did not really know why they had been chosen. Some of the children highlighted they had an interest in this area which may have been the reason they were chosen. The following comments were made when children were asked about why they were included in the programme.

- *Because our teachers trust us enough to go out and do what we do.*
- *Because we volunteered to go and our teachers trusted us enough to go and leave class study.*
- *Practically the same as what they said. We are people that like that kind of stuff to do.*
- *I think we were selected to learn about like the wetlands and the wildlife and the like life cycle of everything.*

6.3.2 Perceptions of being withdrawn from the regular classroom programme

In listening to the children respond here, one could sense a feeling of the positive outcome of being involved in the withdrawal programme more, in that the children seemed to enjoy getting out of the classroom rather than it being more challenging. Many children commented on the fact that being involved in the programme was fun when compared to the regular classroom, because they were able to get outside and do something different. The following comments came about when the children were asked how they felt about being withdrawn from the regular classroom.

- *I think it's really cool because we don't have to do normal class work for an hour, and I like being outside and doing things like wetlands.*

- *Same as the comment above.*
- *It's interesting, but – yea it's cold but it's educational.*
- *It's educational and we do get time off school and that's a cool thing. But other than that, it's just all good.*
- *I reckon it's good because we get to be outdoors more than indoors during school time.*

6.3.3 Peer group reactions

When the children were asked how their friends reacted to them being withdrawn from the classroom and taught in this extension programme the children's comments were similar. The responses showed that children felt that their peers did not really know that they were being withdrawn and if they did, they did not seem to care. Three out of these four comments were made by boys. The following comments were:

- *They haven't really said much about it. I don't think they really know this group.*
- *One of my friends is in it, so that's good, and my other friend doesn't know anything about it.*
- *They don't care.*
- *I don't think they really notice or care or anything like that. They just still carry on like normal.*

One girl's comment reflected that her friends were perhaps jealous as the following comment suggests.

- *They don't mind, but they don't really like what we do so they don't – some of my friends, they say, "Oh no, I don't like that group. I think it sucks. I wouldn't want to do what you do" I just say, "Oh yea I know, but I actually think it's real cool" But they don't care.*

6.3.4 Positive perceptions of involvement

When children were asked what the positives were for being involved in the withdrawal programme, all children commented that the programme was fun and it offered them opportunities they would not normally receive back in the regular classrooms. The following were comments made when asked about these positives.

- *We get to learn about where we are working and we get to see giant eels – well we don't really get to see them, we just get to know they are there.*
- *It's just cool. It's like everything is positive. There are no negatives I don't think, except for the cold.*
- *Well you learn about different things and you learn it out of the classroom. It can help you a lot when you grow up and you are looking for a job.*
- *The good thing – like we got to go to Massey and see all these little animal creature things and bugs.*
- *I like everything.*

6.3.5 Negative perceptions of involvement

The children's responses here showed two main themes. Some children felt that the only negative was the cold weather when they had to work outside as the following comments suggest.

- *The cold.*
- *The cold and when it's very wet it's very annoying when it's raining.*

While these children felt that the only negative was the weather, particularly with the programme being so practical and having a big outdoors focus, some children felt that they missed out on some opportunities back in the regular classroom. The following comments identified the negative comments made when children were asked if there was anything

they did not enjoy about their involvement in the programme which were both made by boys.

- *The coldness of it all, and the same reason as above, and because we made hokey pokey one time and I missed out.*
- *Well if we are doing a cool thing in school like going out for a game or art or something, it does get quite annoying. Plus when it's raining and we have to go out and do something it's annoying we miss out.*

6.3.6 Regular classroom comparison

Two main themes arose from the comments the children made when asked how the extension programme differed from that of the regular classroom. Some children's comments suggested that they were given opportunities in the extension programme that they were not offered back in the regular classroom, particularly the practical side of this programme, as the following comments suggest.

- *Well in the classroom at the moment we are learning science stuff and we've got all those funny test tubes and stuff, but this isn't actually like science, not the chemical science. It's like outdoor science. It's like the way things work science.*
- *Well we are learning – like the kid before said, we're learning more sort of – we are learning different sort of stuff. We get to do more in the science group because there are not as many people and so we get to do more things for longer.*
- *In the classroom we do different kinds of science things – from what we do in the science group is we do things outdoors, and in the classroom we do things that aren't anything to do with things that we do in the science group.*
- *Really it's the same as the comment above, because we do different things in the classroom.*

The other theme that arose from this question was that the children felt that they were learning more being out in the environment and doing things which would suggest that they

felt that they were learning more from the extension programme than what they did back in the regular classroom. The following comments support this theme.

- *Well in the classroom we just – in the classroom we never get to go out anywhere, but with Mrs * we always go out and like test the water and help everything and plant trees.*
- *I think it's because it gets stuff stuck in our heads because we learn more outside in an hour than we could learn in a week in the classroom just studying it from books because we are actually out there doing it.*
- *It's more fun being outside than inside because inside you don't really get it into your head. When you are outside you do stuff that's fun and you get to actually get it into your head.*

6.4.6 Advice to others

The last question was a hypothetical one, requiring the children to give advice to other children if they were considering joining the group. The children's comments showed their limited awareness as to why they were chosen for this programme, suggesting that perhaps it was due to their interest in this area, as these comments suggest.

- *It depends whether you like outside or inside better. If you like going out and studying plants and stuff, then go for it, but if you don't and you think it's pretty boring, don't. Just stay at home and do something else.*
- *If you are interested in that sort of stuff and that's what you would like to do, then it's really good, but if you were not really interested in that sort of stuff, then it wouldn't be very good.*

One child, a boy, commented that this programme would be beneficial to all children because it would help them in the future and get them out in the environment, as this comment suggests.

- *We should try to convince as much people as you could, because when they are older they will just be stuck onto the television, just sitting there being fat couch potatoes, but if you are outside learning then you can go to university and stuff like that.*

6.4 Concluding Remarks

The school had used teacher nomination as a major means for identifying the children to be involved in this extension programme. The children's responses showed that they were aware that they had been chosen by their teachers but not fully aware as to what criteria they needed to meet or why they specifically were chosen. Some children concluded that it was because they had an interest in this area.

Jane highlighted that because she was only employed by the school part-time and for the purposes of this extension programme, she had no control over what happened back in the regular classroom and felt that this was a downside to the programme, in not providing the children with discussion and reflection time back in the classroom. The children's comments also reflected this when asked how their peers felt when they were withdrawn and many of the children commented that they did not really know they had gone or why they were withdrawn.

Overall, the responses from the children about being withdrawn and taught in the extension science programme were positive, with little negative aspects of their involvement being mentioned. While the children's comments were positive they did not mention that this programme challenged them in any way, but noted the fun nature of being involved outdoors and doing fun activities associated with the environment.

7.1 Discussions and Conclusions

In looking across all three schools, some similarities and differences can be found. We turn now to analyse the interviews with each of the three teachers involved in the withdrawal programmes being offered in these primary schools.

All schools identified with a broad notion of giftedness and talent, in viewing this notion as holistic incorporating many areas with which to identify gifted and talented children. They all incorporated areas such as science, mathematics, the arts, physical education etc. All schools' views of this notion reflected their beliefs about giftedness and talent. For example, School A's philosophy strongly supported Gagne's model (1991) of giftedness and talent. Thus in turn, this philosophy defined the school's own culture, values and beliefs and established their own definition of giftedness and talent based on the needs of the children they serve. School B had a strong emphasis placed on thinking and thought processes within the school. Their definition and aspects of their criteria for identifying these children reflect this, incorporating aspects of thinking and looking at children's' thought processes that follow the schools culture, values and beliefs. This is a reflection of the Ministry of Education (2000) highlighting the need for schools to create their own definition of giftedness and talent, encompassing their own culture, views and beliefs just as these schools have done.

None of the schools had formal procedures for identifying gifted and talented children but all utilised teacher nomination as the main tool for identifying these children. While all schools noted that they used other sources for identifying their gifted and talented population such as rating scales, observations and assessments, checklists, products, student profiles and so on, the only method used for the purposes of identifying these children for the withdrawal programmes being studied here involved teacher nomination alone. The criteria for identifying these children differed in that the programmes were very different and the criteria aligned with the type of programme being offered. When asked what their perceptions of the identification procedures were for the programme they offered, all teachers of these withdrawal programmes noted that there was a need for more specific,

formal identification procedures They all highlighted that they generally felt pleased with the criteria, however it is important to note that both School B and C had employed part-time teachers for the purpose of the withdrawal programme being studied only, thus they were not fully aware of identification procedures utilised in the school. Two of the schools interviewed for this study did not have any policies in place in regards to gifted and talented, however School B did.

In questioning the teachers about how the programme catered for the needs of these children in comparison to that of the regular classroom, School B and C noted that the programme provided the children with opportunities that they could not be offered back in the regular classroom. This is perhaps due to the nature of these programmes, whereby they both contained a very practical component to them, which certainly would not be possible back in the regular classroom. These two schools also noted that the programmes developed skills the children perhaps would not have developed back in the regular classroom through allowing them to conduct practical investigations. All schools noted that the programme allowed them to cater more for the children's individual needs in a small group than would be possible back in the regular classroom with thirty or so other children. All schools noted that they did not have any specific evidence in relation to the benefits of the withdrawal programmes being studying, but each teacher expressed that the children did benefit in some way, which perhaps was not measurable.

All schools informally reviewed and evaluated their practices. This was done personally by each teacher involved in the programme, aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of the programme. School B was the only school to involve the children in this process, getting the children to be part of the review process by identifying how they were going individually and as part of the group. This school also had the Board of Trustees providing the children with feedback in relation to their presentations to provide them with information as to how effective they had been.

In looking across all three schools in relation to the withdrawal programme they offered and studied in this research, there were many similarities across these schools, with few

differences noted. Each school's programme reflected the needs of the gifted and talented children it served.

It is now we turn to analyse the focus group interviews with the children involved in each of the three schools' withdrawal programmes.

When the children were asked why they were involved or chosen for the withdrawal programme, the groups of children from two schools showed a strong sense of understanding, and were very aware of their abilities in relation to this. The other withdrawal group did not have much of an understanding as to why they were chosen by their teachers, but some children highlighted that they had an interest in the area the programme was being offered for, therefore that could be the reason they were possibly chosen.

All withdrawal groups had positive perceptions about being withdrawn from the regular classroom and taught in the extension programme. All groups commented on the fact that they felt the programme was fun and they were offered opportunities and got to do things in the withdrawal programme that they were not offered back in the regular classroom.

When the children were asked about how their peers felt about them being withdrawn, similar themes arose across all schools. Many children felt that their peers felt jealous of the fact that they were involved in the withdrawal programme. The children from School B commented that their peers were jealous in light of the fact that the children involved in the withdrawal programme were treated differently when they returned to the regular classroom, in relation to being given exceptions with work expected when they returned. A few children across all schools commented that their peers did not really care, with the children from School C commenting that their peers were not aware that they were being withdrawn or aware of what they were doing. This is reflective of the teacher's interview for this group, noting that she felt that because she was a part-time teacher employed to teach the extension group only, that she had no control over what happened when the children went back to the regular classroom. She also noted that this was perhaps a

downside in that the children would have benefited from going back and reaffirming their understanding back in the regular classroom.

All groups commented that they had positive perceptions of being involved in the withdrawal programme. All groups commented that they felt a big positive for being involved in the withdrawal programme was the fact that they were given opportunities that were fun that they would not be offered back in the regular classroom. With each withdrawal programme being so unique, the opportunities mentioned reflected the type of programme they were offered. When the children were asked about what the negatives were to being involved in the programme few were actually mentioned. Some of the children from School B and C commented that they missed out on things going on back in the regular classroom. This was the only negative comment made by a boy from School A commenting negatively about additional homework.

When the children were asked to compare the withdrawal programme to the regular classroom the strong theme that arose was that they were given opportunities in the withdrawal programme that they would not be offered back in the regular classroom. The children from School A and B commented that the work back in the regular classroom was easier than what they were given in the extension programme, and provided them with more of a challenge. The children from School B commented that they were given more choice in the programme to suit their strengths than they were given back in the regular classroom. The children from School C commented that they felt that they learnt more in the withdrawal programme perhaps because of its practical nature.

When the children were asked about what advice they would give to someone wanting to join the extension group, all withdrawal groups had children highlighting their understanding of their abilities in relation to their peers in offering advice on how to improve, or what ability was needed to successfully join the group. While the children from School C did not really have much of an idea as to why they were chosen for the group, they did comment on the fact that they would need to have an interest or ability in the topic area to join the group. The children from School A and B commented that if you were

considering joining the group you would need to be above average or have high ability in the focus area reflecting their ideas that they were chosen for the group in the first place through their strengths and abilities.

In having reviewed the themes that arose across all schools, it is now we turn to look at the themes that arose from these case studies in relation to the literature available.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

The major goal of this study was to examine withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools, from the participating student's point of view. This chapter explores trends that have emerged from the findings and discusses these trends in relation to existing literature. As highlighted in the literature review there is limited existing research around students' perceptions in relation to gifted and talented literature, which is apparent in this chapter. The following areas were of primary focus for this study.

Part A:

Aimed to examine:

• The identification of these gifted and talented students' and develop an understanding of the withdrawal programme that they are currently involved in.

Part B:

Aimed to answer the follow questions:

- • Do students view their participation in the withdrawal programme in a positive manner?
- • Do students view the programme as beneficial to having their educational needs met?
- • What do students see as being the social and emotional needs of being involved in the withdrawal programme?
- • Do the objectives of the programme cross over to the students' perceptions of the withdrawal programme?

In this chapter, these areas of focus are discussed in light of the research findings. This chapter also outlines suggestions for future research based on the findings from this research.

Part A:

5.2 Identification of Gifted and Talented Students

The fact that gifted and talented is now perceived from a more multidimensional view, creates issues in the identification of our gifted and talented students. All schools involved in this study defined gifted and talented from a multi dimensional view encompassing a broad picture of this notion. The difficulty lies in that there is no one method of identification that is guaranteed to be effective in all cases. The Ministry of Education (2000) highlighted that identification is the mediating link between definition and programmes provided for our gifted and talented children. With this in mind identification procedures vary from school to school, and identification reflects one's notion of giftedness and talent, which was not necessarily the case in all three schools in this study.

In New Zealand, teacher observation and nomination is the most common method of identification across all areas and facets (Riley et al., 2004). While all three schools studied for the purposes of this research provided very unique and different programmes aimed at catering for the needs of their gifted and talented population, all three schools used teacher observation and nomination as a primary means to identify the children for these programmes. All schools highlighted that teacher nomination was their main form of identifying these children, with standardised testing also being mentioned. Some of the schools comments would also suggest that identification procedures were dependent on the children being identified. For example, school A and B commented that they utilised testing as a means of identification when identifying older children who had been involved in testing such a PAT's. A number of year 4-6 children in New Zealand primary schools carry out these tests and these two schools used the information from these tests to help identify children for gifted and talented programmes.

McAlpine (2004) notes that the effectiveness of teacher nomination is reliant on the teachers identifying such children, through the attitudes they have about giftedness and talent. Teachers with positive attitudes can be a reliable method for identifying these children; however, teachers with negative attitudes can create difficulty to such procedures.

Davis and Rimm (2004) also highlighted this point through teachers' ability to identify well behaved, conforming 'teacher pleasers' who may or may not be gifted, overlooking gifted students who may display negative classroom behaviours or those underachieving. The comments made from the teacher of the withdrawal programme in school C strongly reflected this view in suggesting that teacher choice as a means of identifying these children was dependant on how perceptive the teacher was. She commented that in her opinion some teachers choose the 'good kids' or those who answered every question and did things well in the classroom, rather than those children considered gifted and talented.

The use of multiple methods provides opportunity to identify a range of different groups of gifted and talented children, being cohesive with a multidimensional view of giftedness and talent. While these schools all identified with this view of gifted and talented, their approaches did not reflect multiple methods as a means to identifying these gifted and talented children. Schools B and C encouraged teachers to carry out specific testing at the beginning of the year to identify their gifted and talented students early on through incorporating a number of identification procedures, and continue throughout the year with ongoing assessment of their needs. The Ministry of Education (2000) outlined some underlying principles for identifying gifted and talented students, which included the need for early and ongoing identification. School A did not have any formal identification procedures in place however did suggest that they used a variety of procedures. While all schools suggested that they used a variety of procedures for identifying their gifted and talented population, they all relied heavily on teacher nomination as a primary tool for identifying the children involved in the programmes.

School B employed a responsive environment approach in order for children with special abilities to display their gifts and talents in an environment where they feel supported and challenged. This school placed a strong emphasis on thinking and thought processes in defining giftedness and talent and their identification procedures reflected this. The identification procedures in this school reflected their beliefs about what defined giftedness and talent for them, which research suggests is an important component in meeting the needs of our gifted and talented students. School A's philosophy strongly supported

Gagne's model (1991) of giftedness and talent. The school believed that gifted and talented were two different things in that children may be gifted and not talented. The school felt that it was their job as educators to help these gifted children become talented. Thus in turn their philosophy of giftedness and talented was reflective of the values and beliefs of giftedness and talent for their children, in turn providing multiple areas from which to identify these children.

Riley et al. (2004) highlighted recommendations based upon the underlying principles needed to allow identification to be effective and encompassing of a multidimensional view of giftedness and talent. One of these recommendations included: Continual evaluation of methods and procedures for ongoing improvements and the guiding of future directions in catering for these gifted and talented students. All schools involved in this study carried out evaluation of the programmes they ran for these gifted and talented individuals, but there was no evidence that they evaluated the effectiveness of their identification processes and procedures. While these procedures were not necessarily formal, they were done to ensure effectiveness of the actual programme. School B was the only school to involve the children in this process asking them how they felt the programme was going, and acting upon this information to drive future lessons.

Children's Perceptions

After having heard from the teachers of these withdrawal programmes about identification, it was important to see what the children thought and get their perceptions. When the children were asked about why they were involved in the extension programme studied here, many of the children had a strong sense of their abilities and strengths. Many of the children from school A and B were aware of their strengths in relation to the area of each specific withdrawal programme. These children were aware as to why they were included and the process as to how they were chosen. The children from school C were the only ones who were not aware of why they were involved in the extension programme other than to assume it was because they had an interest in the subject of the withdrawal programme being offered.

Part B

5.2 Do students view their participation in the withdrawal programme in a positive manner?

The majority of the children studied for the purposes of this study, commented that the programme they were involved in had many positive aspects for their participation. When children were asked what the positives were for being involved in the withdrawal programme, many of the children across all three schools commented that the programme they were involved in was fun and it offered them opportunities they would not normally receive back in the regular classrooms.

Many of the children across all three schools commented on each of the withdrawal programmes in a positive manner with a number of similar themes. A number of children commented on the fact that they felt that these programmes were fun and that they enjoyed being involved. They also commented that they were given opportunities and privileges in the withdrawal programme that they were not offered back in their regular classrooms. These opportunities provided different processes and content from the regular classroom and provided them with new learning and experiences which they saw as a positive for being involved in such a programme. Another theme that arose was that many of the children felt that being given choice in these programmes was a big positive.

In turning now to look back at the research, often students who are selected for such programmes have similar needs and abilities, which allows the programme to be designed specifically to meet their needs, hence pertaining to the purpose of providing a specific programme for gifted and talented individuals. As Moltzen (2004) highlighted, curriculum developed within such a programme should be differentiated from that of the regular classroom, hence providing more stimulation and more of a challenge for these able children. It is apparent from the comments that the children made in relation to their positive perceptions for involvement, that these programmes provided differentiation from

that of the regular classroom in offering opportunities and choices that aimed to meet and challenge the needs of these gifted and talented children.

In providing a withdrawal programme, the number of students involved is often limited, where students can carry out small projects that perhaps would not be possible back in the regular classroom. Moltzen (2004) highlights that these types of programmes may provide more choices for the students, allowing one to capitalise on individual strengths and abilities. The children's comments from this study are consistent with this research in that a number of the children commented on being given choice in the withdrawal programme, which they saw as positive for their involvement.

Whilst we have looked at the positive perceptions of the student's involvement in these withdrawal programmes it would interesting to look at their negative perceptions as a comparison. When children were asked about the negatives of being involved in the withdrawal programme some similar themes arose. Some children felt that in being withdrawn from the regular classroom they sometimes missed out on things going on back in their classroom. School C's timetable for withdrawal was often varied each week, so the children's comments here in relation to missing out on work was more so than children from other schools commenting on missing out on activities such as art and physical activity. Davis and Rimm (2004) commented that regular classroom teachers often oppose pullout programmes due to the fact that they are confronted with the dilemma of permitting students to miss important content or else forcing them to make up missed work. This highlights the problematic nature of withdrawal programmes in these children missing out on activities happening back in the regular classroom. Some children commented that they felt that being given homework was a negative to being involved.

A number of children across all three schools commented that there were no negatives to being involved in these withdrawal programmes. The children from school B who felt this way commented that this was in light of the fact that they felt their regular classroom was boring. The Ministry of Education (2000) highlighted that enrichment may reduce problems with the intellectual frustration and boredom these children may display within the regular classroom. The fact that the students who are selected for such programmes have similar

needs and abilities, allows the programme to be designed specifically to meet their needs, hence pertaining to the purpose of providing a specific programme for gifted and talented individuals. Curriculum developed within such a programme should be differentiated from that of the regular classroom, hence providing more stimulation and more of a challenge for these able children. The comments made from the children in school B in relation to their being no negatives of the withdrawal programme they were involved in, is reflective of this research in that they felt that this programme provided a challenging environment when compared to that of the regular classroom.

5.4 Do students view the programme as beneficial to having their educational needs met?

In having looked at how the children perceived their participation in the withdrawal programme, one could intuit a strong sense of positives for this programme. Overall the children saw many positives to their involvement in the withdrawal programme with only few negatives mentioned. In light of reviewing the children's perceptions as above, one could deduce that they felt that this programme was beneficial to their learning experiences but questionable in relation as to whether their educational needs were being met.

Many of the children studied commented on the fact that they were given opportunities and choice that they were not offered back in the regular classroom. In having heard their responses in relation to this research objective, one could presume that the withdrawal programme was catering more for their needs and interests than that of the regular classroom, without clearly determining whether the programme was beneficial to the educational needs of these children. A number of the children particularly from two out of the three schools also commented that they felt that the work they were given in the withdrawal programme was harder and more pitched at their level when compared to the regular classroom. Again, one could presume from these children's comments that they felt that the withdrawal programme was more beneficial in meeting their educational needs by providing them with a challenge, compared to the regular classroom. In summary, the results from this study showed that the children seemed to view their participation in the

withdrawal programmes as being beneficial in some way, with the conclusion that maybe one of the schools studied viewed the programme as possibly being beneficial in meeting their educational needs.

The children commented that they enjoyed the challenge of the level of work they were given, and enjoyed being given choice in their learning. The children from school B particularly, had a very strong sense of their abilities and strengths and were very much in tune with the level of schoolwork they received both in and out of the withdrawal programme. One could conclude that these children felt that the programme was beneficial in having their educational needs met through offering challenging opportunities and choice to best utilise their abilities and talents. One possible reason for this is that fact that the withdrawal teacher had planned for the use of both enrichment and acceleration, and as we have seen, research suggests (Kirsheabaum, 1992; Ministry of Education, 2000; Townsend, 2004; Riley et al., 2004) the need to integrate the two approaches to best meet the needs of our gifted and talented students.

As the research suggests, enrichment should provide these gifted and talented children with extension in their area of need, and not just provide more of the same. (Townsend, 2004). The children's comments in relation to the withdrawal programme they were involved in showed that they were provided with opportunities that differ from that of the regular classroom, providing these children with enriched experiences. This would indicate that these withdrawal programmes were providing these children with extension, hence pertaining more to their educational needs than perhaps the regular classroom. Kulik and Kulik (1992) have analysed many grouping studies and have come to the conclusion that when grouping is accompanied by advanced conceptual curriculum, the ability group programmes show a clear advantage over the heterogeneous classroom. They found that the withdrawal programmes that they studied provided students with enrichment that differs from that of the regular classroom programme. Obviously there is little point in providing a separate programme if it is not noticeably different from regular classroom activities, as the children's comments from this research corroborate. Thus highlighting that these

withdrawal programmes provided enriched more varied experiences than that of the regular classroom.

Overall, the response from these children showed a positive attitude towards withdrawal as a means to catering for the needs. It could not be assumed however that these programmes were truly beneficial in meeting the educational needs of the children they served, with no hard data to support this.

5.5 What do students see as being the social and emotional needs of being involved in the withdrawal programme?

When children were asked how their peers reacted to them being withdrawn from the regular classroom and taught in the withdrawal programme, the main themes that emerged were feelings of jealousy and annoyance from peers, with some commenting that their peers were not really bothered by them being withdrawn.

When the children across all three schools were asked about how their peers reacted to them being withdrawn similar themes arose. Some children felt that their peers were jealous of them while others felt that their peers were proud of them for their involvement in these programmes. The children who commented that their peers were jealous felt that it was not just because they were involved in this withdrawal programme, but because they were also treated differently when they arrived back in the regular classroom. This included their peers having to catch them up on missed work, and their teachers giving these children exceptions for regular classroom work. A few children across all three schools also commented that their peers were not even aware of the fact that they were involved in these programmes and being withdrawn in the first place.

One concern for the use of withdrawal programmes as a means to cater for our gifted and talented children, is that this approach singles out these students and the labelling of gifted may create resentment amongst peers back in the regular classroom (Carter & Kuechenmeister, 1986). The children from school B strongly identified with this research. A number of the children felt that they were resented back in the regular classroom as a

result of being withdrawn and that they were treated differently from their peers. These children also commented that they felt that they were treated differently from their teachers as well, with some of the children, particularly from school B commenting that their teachers were empathetic towards them providing some exceptions in relation to missed work as a result of not being in the regular classroom.

Davis and Rimm (2004) commented that regular classroom teachers often oppose pullout programmes due to the fact that they are confronted with the dilemma of permitting students to miss important content or else forcing them to make up missed work, thus punishing them for their participation in such a programme. School B was the only group to comment on their regular classroom teacher, expressing that their teachers were empathetic and did not place the demands on these children of catching up on work they missed during withdrawal time. This is not to say however that these teachers were not confronted with the dilemma of what to do in relation to missed work back in the regular classroom, but rather how they dealt with this issue.

Kirby and Townsend (1999) carried out voluntary interviews with eight gifted children who were members of the Explorers Club, an organisation affiliated with the New Zealand Associations for Gifted Children. The participating children included both accelerated and non-accelerated gifted students, and while this study was not based around acceleration both studies were based on student perceptions and getting the students view. The findings from their study showed that the experience of acceleration appeared to have little influence on the children's beliefs about stress, happiness, and reaching their potential. This study was also reflective of this in that the withdrawal appeared to have little influence on the social and emotional needs for these children.

One concern for the approach of withdrawal programmes is the singling out of these students and the labelling of them as gifted creating resentment amongst peers back in the regular classroom (Carter & Kuechenmeister, 1986). The children's perceptions about how their peers reacted to them being withdrawn from the regular classroom, showed two main themes in relation to their social and emotional needs. The first was feelings of jealousy

from their peers due to their involvement in the programme, and secondly some children commented on the fact that their peers were often annoyed with them for receiving special treatment back in the regular classroom and having to catch them up on missed work when they returned.

5.6 Do the objectives of the programme cross over to the students' perceptions of the withdrawal programme?

Before digging deeper and looking at whether these programmes met the educational needs of these children it is important to look at the structure of each of these programmes. McAlpine (2004) has recognised the need for identification to be seen as a means to an end, thus ensuring that educational provisions are customised to meet and challenge these needs. At this point identification will have uncovered the abilities of these children which allows one to tailor a programme that aims to further extend the abilities and interests of these children (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Enrichment occurs when gifted and talented children are given more demanding activities than their peers and classmates within a particular curriculum area, according to the abilities of these gifted and talented students (Townsend, 2004).
The term enrichment provides some issues for educational provision as the term itself does not possess an agreed upon definition therefore providing problems for the provision and practice of such a strategy (Townsend, 2004). As a result of this, enrichment strategies vary greatly amongst schools, and was the case for this research.

School A provided a reading extension withdrawal programme that aimed to provide enriched experiences for the children involved. The children in this programme were not accelerated due to the nature and area of the programme. The children were working at the instructional reading age but given more enriched experiences aimed at developing the children's thinking in relation to text. This withdrawal programme was based on the Williams Model (Williams, 1970) and the teacher used this model to plan accordingly. Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) was also used in this process.

School C provided a science extension withdrawal programme that aimed to provide enriched experiences and develop skills for scientific investigation for the children involved. This programme planned for enrichment providing the children with many experiences that differed from that of the regular classroom. These children were provided with a range of enriched activities and experiences that aimed to provide knowledge and skills in science and provide them with opportunities to apply these skills in a practical nature allowing the children to develop their current abilities and interests.

George (2003) suggests that an effective enrichment programme should be based on set objectives that provide for the excitement of learning and lead to more advanced thinking, so that our able children are provided with appropriate curriculum and not more of the same. A number of these programmes aimed to provide these enriched experiences and advance the levels of thinking of these children, which will be questioned throughout this research in looking at the participating children's perceptions of these programmes.

Acceleration refers to instruction that more closely matches the abilities and needs of these gifted and talented children to the curriculum, through offering stimulating intellectual challenges more suited to their abilities. School C was the only school studied for the purposes of this research that actually planned for acceleration. This school planned to provide enrichment and acceleration in order to cater for the needs and abilities of the children involved in this withdrawal group. This group differed considerably from the other two studied here in that this programme was not solely based around a particular curriculum area but incorporated many areas allowing them to cater more for the varying needs of the children involved. The programme aimed to provide enriched experiences that allowed the children to develop real life skills for their future. Townsend (2004) suggests that "good acceleration is good enrichment, and effective enrichment demands acceleration" (p. 303). It is therefore suggested that to gain the strengths that acceleration and enrichment have to offer, there is a need to provide an integrated programme combining the two as school B had planned to do. It is now we turn to look at how the children perceived these programmes that aimed to meet their educational needs.

In turning now to look at whether the objectives of the programme as set and implemented by the withdrawal teacher, cross over into the student's perceptions. George (2003) suggests that an effective enrichment programme should be based on set objectives that provide for the excitement of learning and lead to more advanced thinking, so that our able children are provided with appropriate curriculum and not more of the same. While all three programmes aimed to provide for the educational needs of these children, it is important to listen to the students' view.

The key ideas coming through from the children in relation to the withdrawal programmes they were involved in included the following: They enjoyed the work; it differed from their regular classroom work; it appealed to the children and sparked their interest; and it provided them with choice in their learning. Whilst overall the children commented positively in relation to the programmes, the children's comments lacked enough depth to be able conclude that these programmes met their educational needs. From the researcher's point of view the teachers had planned objectives for each of the programmes, however these objectives were loose and informal, in that these objectives were not shared with the children. It would seem that the children weren't actually aware of these objectives as their comments suggest, therefore they may have found it hard to see the purpose behind the learning, hence their comments mentioning generally that these programmes were fun. It is therefore hard to determine whether these programmes were beneficial in meeting the needs of these gifted and talented children.

The children's comments in the withdrawal programme in school B more strongly suggested that regular classroom work was easy and boring and that work done in the withdrawal programme was more pitched at their level. This links in well with the objectives of the programme in the teacher planning to accelerate and extend the children. It could be concluded that the educational objectives of this programme met the educational needs of the children it aimed to serve, more so than the other programmes.

Overall all three withdrawal programmes planned to extend and challenge the abilities of these gifted and talented children. Generally, the children commented on the positive aspects of the programme; however it could not be determined whether these programmes were actually meeting the education needs of the children they served.

5.7 Implications of the Research

Identification procedures should embrace a wide range of procedures in order to identify a full range of the gifted and talented population in primary schools, thus being cohesive with a multidimensional view of giftedness and talent, aligning with the multicultural society we live in here in New Zealand. Having a school wide policy in place that is reflective of current research and best practice in gifted and talented education, would support schools and teachers in not only selecting their gifted and talented population, but also aid in the development of programmes aimed at meeting the needs of these children. With schools developing such a policy, each individual school must also ensure that their understanding of giftedness and talent is reflective of the culture of the individual school and is reflective of the needs of the children it serves.

While schools can develop policies aimed at meeting the needs of their gifted and talented children, it is often the teachers that are responsible for seeing that these policies are implemented within the school. Teachers need professional development in the area of gifted and talented education to allow them to be receptive to such policies, theory and best practice to assist them in implementing appropriate programmes in their classroom and within the school. We have already seen that research suggests that there is a need to integrate the provisions of enrichment and acceleration in order to best cater for the needs of our gifted and talented children. In considering options for programmes aimed at catering for the needs of our gifted and talented learners, professional development in the area of provisions and best practice of is equally as important in order to develop teacher knowledge and expertise in order to best cater for the special gifts and talents of these children. It is with the support and knowledge of the teachers that we can truly begin to

meet the needs of our gifted and talented children in New Zealand primary schools, so professional development in this area is fundamental.

This research highlights some important implications for schools who are considering the implementation of a withdrawal programme aimed to meet the needs of their gifted and talented children. Professional development has already been discussed above as an implication and it is important that teachers are aware of the nature of withdrawal programmes and have an understanding of the provisions of both enrichment and acceleration and can make informed decisions about how these options can impact on the learning of the gifted and talented children they aim to serve. Teachers need to consider how the programme will differ from that of the regular classroom, as we have already seen from the literature that there is little reason for providing a programme that is not markedly different to that of the regular classroom, and is not just providing more of the same.

Gifted and talented students have unique learning needs, requiring curriculum differentiation aimed at more closely meeting these needs. The research suggests that ideally we should combine both enrichment and acceleration as part of this differentiation. There is little point in providing learning experiences for these gifted and talented children if they do not benefit them, extend, and challenge their abilities. This really stresses the importance of the need to provide an appropriate curriculum for these children to bring out their full potential and provide them with the education they deserve. These programmes need to be well thought and planned in order to meet the vastly different educational needs of our future gifted and talented children.

This research has highlighted the fact that when gifted and talented children are given the opportunity to speak about a programme they are involved in, they do so freely commenting on both the positives and negatives. The voices of these children can provide educators with the information that can only aid in the understanding of these children's needs and allow one to continue to develop programmes that more closely match their abilities and interests, and where their precious gifts and talents are nurtured and developed and not wasted.

5.8 Limitations of the Research

In considering the interpretation of these results, it is important that the limitations of this study be highlighted. This research examines the perceptions of a relatively small sample of students involved in withdrawal programmes within three different primary schools in New Zealand. The results from this research are not intended to make generalisations to other withdrawal programmes in other New Zealand primary schools. The comments made from the children in this research are representative of the individual schools and programmes they were involved in at the time the research data was collected.

Although these withdrawal programmes had some similarities, each school is unique in respect to their educational philosophy and the culture of the school. The small sample studied for the purposes of this research limits the extent at which the findings from this study can be generalised to other withdrawal programmes in other schools. Stake (1995) expressed concern in that "case study seems a poor basis for generalisation" (p.7). He suggested the label of 'petite generalisation' for general statements made about one such case or cases. Due to the fact that people's perceptions are liable to change over time and with different cultures, age groups and so on, confirms that this study could not easily be applied to other settings in different schools around New Zealand. It is intended that schools may find the findings of this research helpful in considering programmes aimed at meeting the needs of their gifted and talented population. It is important that schools consider the conclusions and discussions of this research within the context of the situation and note that it is not appropriate to generalise and apply the findings from this study to all withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools.

This research has not contested whether withdrawal programmes should be used as a means to meet the needs of our gifted and talented children, nor has it examined other provisions for meeting these needs. This research has focused on withdrawal programmes in three New Zealand primary schools, however one should not forget that there are other provisions available to aid in meeting the needs of our gifted and talented children. This

research has contributed one small portion of enlightenment in the field of gifted and talented education, particularly from the students' point of view.

5.9 Recommendations for Future Research

1. This study provides an overview of withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools. All schools studied for the purposes of this research defined giftedness and talent from a multidimensional view reflective of the multicultural society we live in. Identification procedures however were not in line with this notion, in the research highlighting the use of teacher nomination as a single method for identifying the children for these withdrawal programmes. More consideration is needed to examine the identification procedures of other withdrawal programmes in order to determine whether or not the children selected for these programmes are truly those being gifted and talented and in need of enrichment and acceleration.

2. Withdrawal is the most common provision for meeting the needs of gifted and talented children in New Zealand primary schools. Rogers (2000) suggests that enrichment is the more likely option for curriculum differentiation in withdrawal programmes. Research suggests that there is a need to integrate the approaches of enrichment and acceleration (Kirsheabaum, 1992; Ministry of Education, 2000; Townsend, 2004; Riley et al., 2004). In order to see the benefits of enrichment and acceleration there is a need to use these approaches in tandem. Research is needed to investigate approaches used in withdrawal programmes in New Zealand primary schools, but more so as to whether the current approaches being used in schools is effective in meeting the educational needs of the gifted and talented children they serve. It would also be of interest to investigate the children's perceptions about whether they believe their educational needs are being met by the programme they are involved in.

3. The children involved in this research strongly suggested that the withdrawal programme offered them opportunities that they were not offered back in the regular classroom. Research is needed to examine what regular classroom teachers are doing to cater for the

needs of these gifted and talented students. Townsend (2004) highlights that if such a provision is enrichment based, there is a danger in providing busy work which is often 'more of the same' as is in the regular classroom. These students are gifted all the time not just during pullout time, and perhaps such a programme is seen as a "…part time solution to a full time problem…" (Piirto, 1999, p. 71). The question remains what are these classroom teachers doing to meet the needs of these children back in the regular classroom?

4. Davis and Rimm (2004) commented that regular classroom teachers often oppose pullout programmes due to the fact that they are confronted with the dilemma of permitting students to miss important content or else forcing them to make up missed work, thus punishing them for their participation in such a programme. It would be useful to hear the teachers' perceptions about how they feel about the children being withdrawn from the regular classroom, and hear their concerns about the dilemmas they are faced with when children are being withdrawn on a regular basis.

5. Parents of these gifted and talented children were an unheard voice in this research. While the main aim of this research was to examine the student's perspectives, it would be of interest to hear the parent's perceptions, as they are the ones who know their child better than any. It would be of interest to investigate the perceptions and opinions of the parents of the gifted and talented children involved in these withdrawal programmes.

6. While this research adds to the current limited research in the field of gifted and talented education, there is still a need for more research in the area of students' perceptions. These children have a voice and deserve to be heard. The programmes that are being implemented are aimed at meeting their needs, so it seems logical that one should take the time to hear what they have to say.

5.10   Conclusion

A strength of this thesis has been allowing the voices of the students involved in these withdrawal programmes be heard. The findings from this study contribute to the limited research currently available around students' perceptions of their experiences in the area of gifted and talented education. This research contributes to our understanding as educators as to how students perceive their experiences in withdrawal programmes within New Zealand primary schools.

Riley et al. (2004) suggest that in New Zealand, teacher observation and nomination is the most common method of identification across all areas and facets. In the schools studied for the purposes of this research, the teachers had a crucial role to play in identifying these gifted and talented children. Findings from the data gathered showed that teacher nomination was the main form of identification in all three schools, with some form of testing being utilised as appropriate. The Ministry of Education (2000) highlight that the use of multiple methods provides opportunity to identify a range of different groups of gifted and talented children, being cohesive with a multidimensional view of giftedness and talent. All three schools identified with this view, yet their identification procedures for the programmes studied here were not consistent with this broad notion.

While all three schools were very different in nature, and each withdrawal programme was unique to each particular school, the majority of all children interviewed spoke in very positive terms about their involvement in the withdrawal programmes. The majority of the children found the withdrawal programme fun and commented on the fact that they were provided with opportunities in the withdrawal programme that they were not offered back in the regular classroom. The fact that the children perceived the programme as fun was due to the fact that they were provided with enriched experiences that were not offered within the regular classroom environment, being one component of enrichment.

It cannot be concluded from this research whether withdrawal programmes are a viable and valuable tool in relation to meeting the educational needs of these children. The question

remains that while one can plan for enrichment in a withdrawal programme, one must question whether the programme is actually challenging and extending the abilities of these children. There is no doubt that all programmes studied here offered enrichment in the form of providing richer more varied educational experiences than that of the regular classroom, but the research could not determine one way or another, as to whether these children benefited academically. While some children commented on the fact that the work they were given in the withdrawal programme was more challenging than that of the regular classroom, one could not confirm that these programmes benefited these children academically. A possible reason for this could be the fact that as we have seen from research in the literature review, the term enrichment is vaguely defined and inadequately understood. The fact that enrichment means different things to different people was representative of this research in the variation of the types of programmes offered in the small sample of this research. There is no doubt that these children were provided with enriched opportunities that they were not offered back in the regular classroom. Enrichment should however provide these gifted and talented children with extension, within their area of need, not just provide more of the same, and while these children were provided with new opportunities one needs to question whether these activities actually challenged and extended the current abilities of these children.

George (2003) suggests that an effective enrichment programme should be based on set objectives that provide for the excitement of learning and lead to more advanced thinking, so that our able children are provided with appropriate curriculum and not more of the same. While these programmes did have specified objectives planned for by the withdrawal teacher, it was not clear as to whether these objectives were actually expressed to the children they aimed to serve. It may be due to the fact that the educational goals and objectives of the programme were not communicated to the children; therefore, they did not see the purpose behind the programme. This could be a possible reason for the comments from the children around the programme being fun and offering opportunities that were different from the regular classroom, and not commenting on the programme in relation to educational benefits.

This research makes a valuable contribution to the limited research currently available in relation to students' perceptions in the field of gifted and talented education. Some findings may provide useful information for teachers of primary schools when planning to implement withdrawal programmes aimed at catering for the needs of our gifted and talented children. Unless we provide rigorous programmes for our gifted and talented students, the talents and abilities of these children will be wasted. These children are our future and we need to be providing programmes that challenge and extend their current abilities so that these children can realise and achieve to their full potential in our society. These children have special gifts and talents and deserve the right to an education that meets their needs and challenges their abilities to allow them to achieve to this full potential, and be successful members of our society in the future.

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APPENDIX A
LETTER OF INVITATION FOR SCHOOL PARTICPATION

A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in
New Zealand Primary Schools:

Dear Principal,

My name is Corinne Walsh and I am writing in response to a phone call we had last week with regards to your interest in participating in my research study as part of my Masters in Education at Massey University College of Education. The aim of this study is to look at students and teachers perceptions of those involved in the extension programme offered at your school for gifted and talented students. Please find enclosed an information sheet detailing the focus and purpose of the study, your rights as participants, and what participation is required. Accompanying this is a consent form that will need to be signed and returned upon consenting to the participation of your school in the research conducted this year. Upon such consent I will send back an information sheet and accompanying parental and student consent form requesting participation from those students who meet the required criteria, or that of being involved in the extension programme offered at your school. Following this I will negotiate a suitable time to conduct interviews with both the teacher of the programme and the selected students involved. You are under no obligation to accept this request and if you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact me via the details on the information sheet. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours Sincerely,

Corinne Walsh

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SCHOOLS

A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in
New Zealand Primary Schools:

The focus of this study is to investigate the effect of withdrawal programmes, aimed at meeting the needs of our gifted children in New Zealand. I, Corinne Walsh, will conduct this research as a requirement for the completion of my Masters in Education at Massey University.

The area of gifted education is firstly of a personal interest for myself, and the area of withdrawal programmes as a specific means of meeting the needs of our gifted children, an area of little current research specifically from a students' point of view. For this reason, I find it an area of importance for finding out the students' experiences and perceptions about such a programme. It is my hope that this research will provide schools with a tool to assess their current withdrawal programme for future betterment.

You have been invited to take part in this study, as you are currently offering a withdrawal programme to gifted children in your school. Participation is voluntary, and as conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Massey University Ethics Committee, you have the right to:

- decline your participation;
- refuse to answer any questions asked of you;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask questions about the study at any point of time over the study;
- offer information with the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- Be given access to a summary of the studies findings when it is concluded to do with as you wish.

PARTICIPATION INVOLVEMENT:
AS FOR THE TEACHER OF THE WITHDRAWAL PROGRAMME:

During this research, you will be asked to take part in a one to one interview with the researcher. The interview will ask you to respond to a series of questions about the current withdrawal programme you are teaching, its objectives, structure, etc. An observation session undertaken by myself will occur in your classroom following this interview, to understand more about the programme you are running. Following this, I will then interview the children as discussed below, from which you may be asked to select at random up to eight children for the study, in the case where the respondents offering to participate in the study exceed the requested amount for this particular research.

PARTICIPATION INVOLVEMENT FOR YOUR STUDENTS:

During this research, students will be invited to take part in a focus group interview. This type of interview provides students with the opportunity to discuss their experiences of being involved in the withdrawal programme offered at their school. The interview will involve a group of six to eight students from the same school, who will be asked to respond to questions posed by the researcher, which will give the students an opportunity to discuss their experiences of being involved in the withdrawal programme. The information gathered will be used to put together a research report for my Masters in Education Degree. If more than eight students opt to be involved in the study then the school/teacher will randomly select the required number of students. This will also ensure the researcher does not know names of the students involved.

Each interview will last about 45 minutes to 1 hour at an acceptable time arranged between the students and their teacher. It is intended that this research will not interfere with the students' in-class time. Interviews will be tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees, and transcripts made of the interview, under which confidentiality will remain. At this stage the tapes will be transcribed by me, however in an event where this is not the case, the transcriber will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. The tapes will be held securely during the study and destroyed at the conclusion of the research. Neither the school nor any individuals involved will be identified directly or indirectly in verbal or written form. Any direct quotes used from the interview tapes will be assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. A summary of the findings will be sent to your school toward the completion of the study.

If after reading the information sheet you would like to be involved in this study, please complete the consent form and return it in the envelope provided. Once I have received your signed consent for, confirming your interest, I will contact you to begin the study.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor on the details below.

RESEARCHER:

Corinne Walsh

College Street

Palmerston North, NZ

Ph:

Email: toteach@hotmail.com

THESIS SUPERVISOR:

Dr Tracy Riley

Senior Lecturer in Gifted Education

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Massey University

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APPENDIX C
SCHOOL CONSENT FORM

A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in
New Zealand Primary Schools:

I have read the Information Sheet for the study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions regarding the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without permission. (*The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project*).

I agree / do not agree to the interview being taped.
I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. The purpose of this form is to allow you to participate in the study and to allow the researcher to use any information held by the school, in regards to the giftedness of the children involved, planning etc. Please sign the attached form if you consent to participate in this study.

_____   _____   _____
Principal's Signature   Name   Date

_____   _____   _____
Teacher's Signature   Name   Date

Once I have received the signed consent form, I will contact you to set up an appointment. If you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact me on the details outlined on the information sheet. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

LETTER OF INVITATION FOR CHILD PARTICPATION

A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in
New Zealand Primary Schools:

Dear_____;

Thank you for taking the time to consider your child's participation in my research. Accompanying this letter is an information sheet outlining the study.

If after reading this information sheet you would like to be involved in this study, please give your name to your withdrawal teacher. If you are randomly selected to take part in this research you will be given a consent form that will need to be signed by both you and your child and then returned.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details given on the information sheet. Once again thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours Sincerely,

Corinne Walsh

APPENDIX E

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CHILD AND FAMILY

A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in
New Zealand Primary Schools:

The focus of this study is to investigate the effect of withdrawal programmes, aimed at meeting the needs of our gifted children in New Zealand. I, Corinne Walsh, will conduct this research as a requirement for the completion of my Masters in Education at Massey University.

The area of gifted education is a personal interest of mine. The area of withdrawal programmes or extension programmes as a specific means of meeting the needs of our children with special abilities has minimal research data collected from a students' point of view. For this reason, I find it an area of importance for finding out the students' experiences and perceptions about such a programme. It is my hope that this research will provide schools with a tool to assess their current withdrawal programme for future betterment.

You have been invited to take part in this study, as you are currently involved in a withdrawal programme offered at your school. Participation is voluntary, and as conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Massey University Ethics Committee, you have the right to:

- decline your participation;
- refuse to answer any questions asked of you;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask questions about the study at any point of time over the study;
- offer information with the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the studies findings when it is concluded to do with as you wish.

PARTICIPATION INVOLVEMENT:

During this research, students will be invited to take part in a focus group interview. This type of interview provides students with the opportunity to discuss their experiences of being involved in the withdrawal programme offered at their school. The interview will involve a group of six to ten students from the same school, who will be asked to respond to questions posed by the researcher, which will give the students an opportunity to discuss their experiences of being involved in the withdrawal programme. The information gathered will be used to put together a research report for my Masters in Education Degree.

Each interview will last about 40 minutes at an acceptable time arranged between the students and their teacher. It is intended that this research will not interfere with the students' in-class time. Interviews will be tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees, and transcripts made of the interview, under which confidentiality will remain. At this stage the tapes will be transcribed by me, however in an event where this is not the case, the transcriber will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. The tapes will be held securely during the study and destroyed at the conclusion of the research. Neither the school nor any individuals involved will be identified directly or indirectly in verbal or written form. Any direct quotes used from the interview tapes will be assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. A summary of the findings will be sent to your school toward the completion of the study.

If after reading the information sheet you would like to be involved in this study, please sign the accompanying consent form and have your child also sign it.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or either of my supervisors via the details below.

THESIS SUPERVISORS:

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STUDENT AND PARENT CONSENT FORM

A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in
New Zealand Primary Schools:

I have read the Information Sheet for the study and have had the details of the study
explained to me. My questions regarding the study have been answered to my satisfaction,
and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I understand that I have the
right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular
questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not
be used without permission. (*The information will be used only for this research and
publications arising from this research project*).

I agree / do not agree to the interview being taped.
*I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time
during the interview.*

Both my child and I agree to voluntarily participate in this study under the conditions set
out in the Information Sheet. The purpose of this form is to allow your child to participate
in the study and to allow the researcher to use any information held by the school, in
regards to your child's giftedness. Please sign the attached form if you consent to have your
child participate in this study. Please explain the study to your child and have your child
sign also.

_____   _____   _____
Parent's or Guardian's Signature   Name   Date

_____   _____   _____
Child's Signature   Name   Date

Once I have received the signed consent form, I will contact you to set up an appointment.
If you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact me on the details outlined on the
information sheet. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

INDIVIDUAL TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in
New Zealand Primary Schools:

1. How is giftedness and talent defined within your school?

2. (a) How are gifted and talented students identified within your school?

(b) What are your perceptions of how gifted and talented students are identified within your school?

3. (a) What criteria do gifted and talented children need to meet to be included in the withdrawal programme?

(b) How do you feel about the criteria the students need to meet to be included in this programme?

4. (a) What policies do you have in place for gifted and talented students and how are the students affected
by this policy?

(b) How do you feel about the policies you have in place for gifted and talented students and how do you see the students affected by this policy?

5. (a) How is the withdrawal programme structured within your school? What are its objectives, curriculum components, time tabling etc?

(b) What are your perceptions of the structure of the withdrawal programme offered in your school? What do you think of its objectives, curriculum components, time tabling etc?

6. (a) How does this programme cater for the needs of your gifted and talented students as opposed to that of the regular classroom?

(b) Do you believe that such a programme is of value for the student's participating. And if so what evidence reinforces this belief?

(c) Can you give me a description of the programme you offer to your student's and the aims you have for catering for these gifted individuals?

7. How are your practices reviewed and evaluated to ensure the programmes effectiveness?

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A Students' Perspective of the Effect of Withdrawal Programming in
New Zealand Primary Schools:

1. Why do you think you are involved in this reading programme?

2. How do you feel about being taken out of your normal classroom to be taught within this reading programme?

3. How do your friends react to you being taken out of the normal classroom to be taught here?

4. What are the positives about being involved in the reading programme?

5. What are the negatives about being involved in the reading programme?

6. How are things different in this reading programme compared to that of the regular classroom?

7. If someone asked you advice on whether they should go into a reading programme what would you tell them?