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Underachievement in gifted and talented students:
An examination of possible methods of identification, causal factors and
interventions in the New Zealand primary school setting.

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Abstract

This study uses the New Zealand primary school setting, to attempt to identify giftedness and talent, and the behaviours identified by Whitmore (1980) as those associated with underachievement in these able students.

The researcher trials one method for identifying able students in the New Zealand context using data already collected in New Zealand schools. The Enrichment Triad (Renzulli, 1997) is used to devise an intervention to gauge possible reversal effects in the presence of underachievement in gifted and talented students.

This study is written at a time when New Zealand schools are preparing themselves to meet the new requirements of the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) that must be implemented by 2005. These guidelines specifically charge schools with demonstrating their ability to meet the needs of their gifted and talented students. Within this population the author contends, there is a subgroup of able student who are underachieving. The reasons for the underachievement are varied and well evidenced in overseas literature (Siegel & Reis, 2003; Laycook, 1979; Rimm, 1986; Clark, 1992; Butler-Por, 1987). What is needed, the author contends, is a consistent approach to identifying these gifted, underachieving students, and an individualised plan based on student interests, for beginning the reversal of this underachievement.

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