

# WHAT NAG CHANGE?

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## **Abstract**

In March, 2004, the Minister of Education announced that from 2005 all schools will be required to show that they are identifying and catering for gifted and talented students. This paper proposes a set of guidelines to help teachers identify and provide for gifted and talented students from ethnic minority cultures. These guidelines are drawn from an extensive review of relevant international and New Zealand writing and research. International research shows that, with a few exceptions, these students are being under-identified and ineffectively provided for. Statistics showing the ethnicity of gifted students in New Zealand are not available. However, recent national research examining the extent, nature and effectiveness of provisions for gifted and talented students in our schools (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2004)<sup>i</sup> shows that Maori students in particular, are not being well provided for. It is maintained that provisions for Maori and gifted students from other minority cultural groups can be considerably improved if teachers adhere to the eight research-based principles outlined in this paper.

## **Introduction**

At the 15<sup>th</sup> World Conference for Gifted and Talented Children held in Adelaide, Australia in August, 2005, Francoys Gagne, a world expert in gifted education, presented a keynote address outlining the “Ten Commandments of Gifted Education.” This present paper provides a cultural appendix to Gagne’s address<sup>ii</sup> It focuses on gifted and talented students from ethnic minority cultures and proposes a set of “BE-attitudes” to guide educational provisions for these students. While these guidelines do not contain the wisdom and authority of the original eight beatitudes, they are based on a comprehensive review of international and New Zealand literature relating to gifted education for students from minority cultural groups (See Riley et al, 2004) This review revealed that, with a few exceptions, gifted and talented minority students are considerably under-represented in gifted education. This under-representation was reported for minority cultures in general (Bernal, 2003; Fletcher & Massalski, 2003; Frasier, 1992; Mills & Tissot, 1995; Patton, 1997; Sisk, 2003; VanTassel-Baska, Patton & Prillaman, 1991; Worrell, Szarko & Gabelko, 2001) and for particular ethnic groups, namely, Native Hawaiian (Martin, Sing & Hunter, 2003); African-American (Ford, Harris III, Tyson & Trotman, 2002); Hispanic (Ford, 1998); Australian Aborigine and Torres Strait Islanders (Vasilevska, 2003; Harslett, 1993) and Pacific Island and Arab-speaking students in New South Wales (Vasilevska, 2003). In New Zealand there are both anecdotal reports of the under-representation of Maori in gifted education (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 2002; Cathcart, 1994; Cathcart & Pou, 1992; Galu, 1998; Moltzen, 1996; 1998/1999; Niwa, 1998/99; Reid, 1990, 1992) and empirical evidence of such Keen (2001, 2002).

The literature review also revealed that writers and researchers world-wide agree on many strategies to overcome the under-representation of ethnic minority students in gifted education. The research consistently shows that gifted and talented minority students are being effectively identified and provided for when certain principles are adhered to. These principles are incorporated into the following “eight BE-attitudes.”

**1. Happy are those who recognise a broad, inclusive, multicategorical concept of giftedness for they will have informed understanding and demonstrate a valuing of cultural diversity.**

**BE cognisant of the fact that giftedness is culturally defined and BE inclusive in the concept of giftedness you adopt.**

Giftedness is a social construct which is influenced by a cultural group’s epistemology, values, needs, customs, concepts, attitudes, beliefs and practices. Therefore, what is considered gifted behaviour in one cultural group might

not be so in another. Cultural differences exist in how giftedness is perceived, manifest and nurtured; in the domains in which giftedness is recognised; and the priorities given to these various domains (Bevan-Brown, 2003). For example, Maori recognise giftedness in a wide range of areas including spiritual and emotional giftedness; they place the highest priority on outstanding personal qualities; and not only recognise individual ability but also group giftedness. The latter refers to giftedness that is manifest when a particular group of people work together. While individuals within the group may have noteworthy strengths and talents, it is their combined effort, their “kotahitanga,” that creates the spark of genius (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1996). Gifted Maori are also expected to provide “service” in their particular area of giftedness. Fortunately, there is substantial support in the New Zealand literature for the recognition of a broad, inclusive, multicategorical concept of giftedness in general and for the inclusion of Maori and Polynesian perspectives in particular (Anderson, 1990; Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2002, 2003; Cathcart, 1994; Cathcart and Pou, 1992; Galu, 1998; Keen, 2000; McKenzie, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2000; Niwa, 1998/99; Reid, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992).

Looking further a field, there is international support for the recognition of broader philosophies, definitions and theories of giftedness that accommodate cultural diversity and cultural concepts of giftedness (Frasier, Garcia & Passow, 1995; Frasier & Passow, 1994; Ford, 1996; Ford, Harris III, Tyson & Trotman, 2002; Maker, 1996; Martin, Sing & Hunter, 2002; Worrell, Szarko and Gabelko, 2001). For example, Gardner’s (1983, 1993) theory of multiple intelligences which acknowledges a wide variety of human abilities and propensities is viewed as potentially valuable in multicultural gifted education. Subotnik (1997) maintains that one of the key principles underlying the successful application of Gardner’s theory is the recognition that the various intelligences “will be manifested and valued differently in different cultures and community settings” (p. 364).

## **2. Happy are those who use a wide range of identification methods and procedures for they will find gifted and talented learners from many different cultural groups.**

### **BE liberal in the methods and procedures you use to identify gifted and talented students.**

There is substantial support for this maxim in the New Zealand and international literature (Barkan & Bernal, 1991; Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2002; Frasier, 1997; Frasier, Garcia & Passow, 1995; Frasier & Passow, 1994; Ford, 1996; Ford, Harris III, Tyson & Trotman, 2002; Galu, 1998; Hunsaker, 1994; Keen, 2002; McAlpine & Reid, 1996; Smutney, 2003; Worrell, Szarko and Gabelko, 2001).

A wide variety and combination of identification procedures are recommended. Three approaches in particular are prevalent in the literature:

#### *(i) The use of multiple methods including those which incorporate parental and community input.*

Fletcher and Massalski (2003, p.163) suggest the use of nominations by parents, teachers, peers and community leaders; grade point averages; and portfolio evaluations because these are considered to be “site specific determinants” which take into account the cultural reality of the learner, school and community. Martin, Sing and Hunter (2003) also advocate consultation with peers, family and community members. In addition their work with gifted Native Hawaiian students includes identification using: culturally sensitive interviews and questionnaires; auditions; specifically developed behavioural checklists; school achievement scores; product presentations; problem-solving performance and immersion in a culturally responsive, enriched environment.

Research evidence supporting the successful use of a multimethod approach to identifying gifted students from minority groups is provided by Barkan and Bernal (1991) and Belcher and Fletcher-Carter (1999). Barkan and Bernal (1991) note a 14% increase of minority group participation in gifted programmes when a multidimensional approach to selection was adopted. Similarly, Belcher and Fletcher-Carter (1999) report an increase from two to 21 minority group students identified as gifted when traditional assessment measures were replaced by identification procedures involving parents and community members. In this study, teachers, parents and community members worked together to formulate Spanish and English nomination inventories which reflected culturally accepted traits of giftedness.

The requirement to include parental and community input in the identification process is considered essential. Not only does it provide a cultural dimension but it also helps counteract a weakness of the multimethod approach identified by Castellano and Diaz (2002)

*Most of the identification procedures used, such as standardized tests, teacher recommendations and grades are really a measure of conformity to middle class academic values and achievement. The more measures that are used and combined inappropriately, the more likely it is that disadvantaged students (poor, minority, creative and others that tend to be underachievers at school) will be excluded. Therefore, the use of multiple measures, which may create the appearance of inclusiveness, can actually promote elitism in the identification process.* (p. 100)

*(ii) The use of “culture free” and “culture fair” non-verbal, standardized tests*

A further strategy for identifying gifted minority students is the use of non-verbal assessment tools specifically developed to overcome the majority cultural bias of verbal tests. The Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (Naglieri, 1996), the Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (Hammill, Pearson & Wiederholt, 1996), the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA) (Mercer & Lewis, 1978) and Raven’s Progressive Matrices (Raven, Court & Raven, 1977, 1983a, 1983b) are all examples of standardized tests that are claimed to be “culture free” or “culture fair.” While controversy exists about the worth of tests which ignore a person’s cultural capital, culture free and culture fair tests are considered to be better measures of “pure potential” than traditional verbal tests because they “do not have the confounding influence of language, vocabulary and academic exposure” (Ford, Harris III, Tyson & Trotman, 2002, p. 57).

Research into the use of non-verbal tests with minority students is encouraging. For example, in one study Saccuzzo et al. (cited in Ford, Harris III, Tyson & Trotman, 2002) found that 50% of non-white students who failed to qualify for gifted programmes using the WISC-R I.Q. test, qualified when Raven’s tests were used. Castellano and Diaz (2002) and Mills and Tissot (1995) report similar findings in their research studies. However, Mills and Tissot add that while Raven’s Progressive Matrices appear to be useful instruments for identifying academic potential in students with limited English, they should be used as general screening instruments in conjunction with other identification measures.

*(iii) The use of verbal assessment tools specifically developed to identify under-represented populations*

There are a number of verbal assessment tools that have been developed specifically to identify students who are under-represented in gifted programmes, for example, DISCOVER, QUEST and STAR (see Maker, Nielson & Rogers, 1994; Fletcher & Massalski, 2003; and Van Tassel-Baska, Johnson & Avery, 2002). These assessment tools employ a variety of approaches including a continuum of “fun” problem-solving tasks, instructions in students’ first language, practice tests, pre-teaching and non-timed tests using manipulatives. Research into the use of these approaches shows them to be culturally appropriate and more effective than traditional assessment measures in identifying gifted students from Native American, African-American, Hispanic and low income groups (Fletcher & Massalski, 2003; Nielson, 2003; VanTassel-Baska, Johnson & Avery, 2002).

As previously mentioned, there is considerable support in New Zealand for a multidimensional approach to identification. However, controversy exists over the appropriateness and effectiveness of various methods.<sup>iii</sup> Non-verbal standardized tests and verbal assessment tools developed specifically to meet the needs of ethnic minority children are seldom used in New Zealand schools (Riley et al, 2004).

**3. Happy are those who take a multicultural approach to gifted education for they will provide a learning environment that is relevant, meaningful, affirming and effective for students from many different cultures.**

**BE inclusive of a wide range of cultural knowledge, skills, practices, values, beliefs and dispositions in your general and gifted programmes.**

There is substantial support in the New Zealand literature for the provision of a culturally responsive environment where the gifted student’s culture is valued, affirmed and developed. Multiple benefits are cited. Firstly, it is maintained that the gifts and talents of minority students are more likely to emerge in an environment that reflects and values cultural diversity (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000a, 2002, 2003; Cathcart, 1994; Cathcart & Pou, 1992; Doidge, 1990; McKenzie, 2001; Milne, 1993; Niwa, 1998/99; Jenkins, 2002; Reid, 1992).

Secondly, gifted minority students’ learning is facilitated, self-esteem raised, and emotional and psychological well-being fostered in culturally responsive environments (Bevan-Brown, 1993; 2003). As evidence of this, Bevan-Brown

(1993) cites successful programmes for gifted Maori and other Polynesian students at Kedgley Intermediate (Anderson, 1990), Manurewa Intermediate (Doidge, 1990), Clover Park Intermediate (Milne, 1993) and Clover Park Middle School (Jenkins, 2002). Common components of these programmes are: an environment which values and celebrates cultural diversity; a curriculum where the content and context of learning are culturally relevant; and teaching approaches which employ culturally preferred learning styles and arrangements.

A third benefit of including cultural content in gifted programmes was identified by Bevan-Brown (1993). She found that gifted Maori students who have a sound knowledge of and pride in their culture are more likely to resist negative peer pressure against achieving.

There is also considerable support in the international literature for the inclusion of multicultural content, materials, processes and perspectives in gifted education (Barkan & Bernal, 1991; Bernal, 2002, 2003; Castellano & Diaz, 2002; Ford, Grantham & Harris, 1997; Ford & Harris III, 1999; Ford & Harris III, Tyson & Trotman, 2002; Maker, 1996; Montgomery, 2001; Vasilevska, 2003). A successful example of incorporating cultural content in gifted education is provided by Na Pua No'eau, the University of Hawaii's Center for Gifted and Talented Native Hawaiian Children. The Center and its outreach facilities offer 11 core programmes which include school-based, weekend and holiday activities where teachers, university faculty, renown community resource people and established experts and artists teach a variety of topics. The activities offered incorporate Native Hawaiian values, culture, language and history. The Center also runs an annual one day "family affair" where gifted and talented children and their families are invited to the University campus to participate in educational and recreational activities offered by community agencies and organisations (Martin, Sing & Hunter, 2003).

Student and parent interviews, questionnaires and student profiles are used to evaluate the Na Pua No'eau programmes. Students who have participated in a variety of programmes report increased knowledge and appreciation of their culture, improved self-esteem and in-school benefits. School data reveal that these students "are more active in sports, are improving in their school work, and are more responsible, participating in student government and maintaining 3.0 to 4.0 grade point averages" (Martin, Sing & Hunter, 2003, p.197).

#### **4. Happy are those who provide early intervention for they will increase their chances of identifying and catering for gifted students from minority cultural groups.**

##### **BE proactive in your measures to identify and provide for gifted minority students.**

Early intervention refers to the provision of educational opportunities that enable ethnic minority students to develop their gifts and talents at as early an age as possible. While this is a laudable aim for all gifted children regardless of ethnicity it is viewed as being of particular importance to children from ethnic minority groups especially those who have not yet mastered the English language. Sisk (2003) maintains that the common misconception that children need to be taught to speak English before they can be intellectually challenged should be widely dispelled. In support of her claim she notes the successful development of gifts and talents amongst children taught in their native language in elementary schools.

Although there is no research evidence for New Zealand, overseas research shows that early intervention is a vital component in successful programmes for gifted minority children (Sisk, 2003). Two studies which provide evidence of this are reported by Karnes and Johnson (1991) and Sisk (2003). The first authors describe a study where innovative lessons were used to teach high level thinking skills to 234 four and five year old Head Start Children. Pre and post test performance on a battery of tests showed that these children out-performed a control group of 212 children. Twenty-four students in the intervention group were identified as being potentially gifted and talented. Sisk (2003) reports on Project STEP UP which provided a challenging, culturally relevant programme to 243 minority, economically disadvantaged, at-risk, high potential children in 14 school districts. Pretests and children's profiles indicated that none of the 243 children involved in Project STEP UP would have qualified for their schools' gifted programmes. However, at the conclusion of the Project, over 50% were identified as gifted and enrolled in gifted programmes. Sisk cites similar results from two other projects which provided early intervention (Palm Beach Gifted Minority Students' Project and Project TEAM.)

Additional research support for early intervention is found in Torrance's famous longitudinal comparison of culturally different and mainstream gifted and talented children. Torrance (1984) noted that providing mentors for disadvantaged gifted children at an early age was an effective way of helping them realise their potential.

**5. Happy are those who include parental, family, whanau and community input in gifted education for this involvement will contribute to more culturally appropriate, effective provisions.**

**BE welcoming of parental, family, whanau and community involvement.**

The international literature identifies parental and community involvement as a major contributing factor to successful identification and provision for gifted and talented students from ethnic minority groups (Castellano & Diaz, 2002; Damiani, 1996; Harslett, 1993; Sisk, 2003; Smutney, 2003; VanTassel-Baska, 1989). A variety of reasons for and means of encouraging family and community involvement are reported. For example, Fletcher and Massalski (2003) describe a project where community members are involved in delivering the cultural components of a community-based programme for gifted Hispanic students. Damiani (1996) reports on a project where families are helped to develop Individual Family Support Plans and offered classes on the characteristics of giftedness, advocacy and fostering their child's high ability. Similarly, parents are provided with a range of informative classes in project STEP UP and involved in interactive workshops with their children. Sisk (2003) provides an example where Navaho parents and their children "worked together to create a poem to express their feelings and ideas about visual images from the reservation" (p. 250).

Family members are called upon to share their expertise in Na Pua No'eau Center programmes. They can also join their children for lessons on traditional Hawaiian values and opt to attend additional classes on how these values can be used to appreciate and develop their children's gifts. Parents and family are invited to hear motivational speakers with their children and act as volunteers in a number of Center programmes (Martin, Sing & Hunter, 2003).

New Zealand literature documenting the input of minority group parents, family, whanau and community members in gifted education is scarce. However, one successful example of involvement is provided by Bevan-Brown (2000b). She found that parents, whanau and community members were regularly being involved as resource people and mentors to extend gifted students in kura kaupapa Maori.

Despite the shortage of minority input reported in the New Zealand literature, there is considerable support for the involvement of Maori and other Polynesian parents and whanau (Bevan-Brown, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2002; Doidge, 1990; Galu, 1998; McKenzie, 2001; RymarczykHyde, 2001). Participants in Bevan-Brown's (1993) research suggested a number of ways parents, whanau and the Maori community could and should be involved in the education of gifted Maori students. Suggestions included: increased home-community-school consultation and involvement in relevant decision-making; parent/whanau/community nomination as a component of the identification process; involvement as resource people, advisors, volunteers, audiences, programme evaluators, mentors and role models. In his research, Galu (1998) also supported the use of family and community members as mentors for Polynesian students. He noted that "for some Polynesians who have severed links with their elders or grandparents back in the islands this provision seems very appropriate" (p. 59).

**6. Happy are those who value cultural diversity and have high expectations of all learners regardless of ethnic or socio-economic background for their values and expectations will encourage and inspire gifted minority children.**

**BE valuing of cultural diversity and have high expectations of all students you teach.**

There is substantial overseas research documenting the existence of negative and detrimental attitudes towards ethnic minority students both gifted and non-gifted. This includes the interpretation of cultural differences as deficits and disorders (Blanchard, Lui, McKnight & Pittman, 1999; Gay, 1994; Ishii-Jordan, 1997; Morrow, 1994; Nuttall, Landurand & Goldman, 1984; Webb-Johnson, 1999); believing culture is irrelevant (Franklin, 1992; Harry, 1992; Lynch & Hanson, 1998; Meyer, 2001; Morgan, 1996); racism and disabilism (Gillborn, 1997; Gorman, 1999; Grossman, 1995; Ladner & Hammond, 2001; Morgan, 1996; Oliver, 1990, 2000; Simon, 2001; Smith, 2001, Sollis, 1996; Sparks, 2000; Vance, 1997; Webb-Johnson, 1999); detrimental stereotyping (AECC, n.d.; Blanchard, Lui, McKnight & Pittman, 1999; Ford, 1998; Grossman, 1995; Sileo & Prater, 1998; Sparks, 2000); and low teacher

expectation (AECC, n.d.; Ford, 1998; Gorman, 1999; Morgan, 1996; Navarro & Natalicio, 1999; Persell, 1997; Smith, 2001).

Grossman (1995, 1998) maintains that low teacher expectation and negative reactions are particularly applicable to speakers of non-standard English. The same claim is made for Aboriginal children (Blanchard, Lui, McKnight & Pittman, 1999). The importance of positive teacher attitudes towards minority group students is highlighted by Sisk (2003), Persell (1997), Gartner and Kerzner (1999), Ladson-Billings (1995), Burnette (1999) and Ford, Harris III, Tyson and Trotman (2002). The last authors cite research findings which show “that many gifted and high achieving Black students internalize deficit thinking orientations. Many highly able Black students question their own ability and then sabotage their own achievement” (Ford, Harris III, Tyson & Trotman, (2002, p. 55). Burnette (1999) goes as far as saying that of the many school factors that affect the success of culturally diverse students, good personal and academic relationships between teachers and students are probably the most influential. Similarly, Sisk (2003) identified high teacher expectation and the development of strong, caring relationships with gifted children and their parents as an essential component of successful provision for gifted children from ethnic minority groups.

In New Zealand there is research evidence of negative attitudes and low expectations of Maori students. A three year long evaluation of special education policy which consulted with over 8,000 informants and used both quantitative and qualitative research strategies revealed: negative and stereotypical attitudes towards Maori children, their parents and families; a reluctance to provide culturally appropriate programmes if the number of Maori children was small; low teacher expectations of Maori children; a preference not to distinguish between Maori and Pakeha students either because it was believed there were no differences and their needs were exactly the same or because distinguishing on the basis of ethnicity was considered discriminatory; a belief that inclusion of cultural content was unimportant, irrelevant or not the responsibility of English-medium schools; and blaming parents for their children’s special needs (Massey University Research Team, 1999; 2001; 2002).

While these findings relate to Maori children in general, negative and deficit-based teacher attitudes that disadvantage gifted Maori students are noted by Bevan-Brown (2000a), Galu (1998); McKenzie (2001), Milne (1993); Reid (1992) and RymarczykHyde (2001). Whether gifted students from other minority groups are similarly disadvantaged by negative teacher attitudes is unknown. The author believes that this is highly likely. However, it is also hypothesized that the opposite may apply for some ethnic groups. In 1993 US Department of Education statistics revealed that Asian American students were actually over-represented in gifted education (Ford & Harris III, 1999). Positive stereotyping and the “model minority” image were posited as increasing these students’ chances of identification. A similar situation may exist in New Zealand.

**7. Happy are those who understand their own culture and the influence it has on their teaching and relationships for they will be better able to provide an unbiased, inclusive and sensitive education to all gifted learners.**

**BE aware of your own cultural beliefs, values and practices and of the affect these have on what and how you teach and on the relationships you develop with gifted children, their parents, families and whanau.**

International and New Zealand literature emphasises the importance of cross-cultural competence for teachers who work in multicultural situations. (Bevan-Brown, 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Klein & Chen, 2001; Lynch & Hanson, 1998; Macfarlane, 2004; McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Programmes aimed at developing this cross-cultural competence have four distinctive components the first of which is the development of cultural self-awareness. Lim (2001), Lynch and Hanson (1998), McAllister and Irvine (2000), Sileo and Prater (1998) and Sparks (2000) maintain that until a person understands their own culture it is not possible to fully appreciate the culture of others. This cultural self awareness enables people to take off their “ethnocentric blinkers” (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990) and to recognise that many so-called ‘truths, facts and values’ are not “right,” “wrong” or “universally held” but rather expressions of particular cultural beliefs.

The second and third components of cross-cultural competence are an appreciation of the important influence a person’s own culture has on their teaching and an understanding of the influence the majority culture has on education in general. (For people from the majority culture these two components merge!) Curriculum content; teaching style; assessment methods; classroom climate and organisation; resources; reinforcement and discipline strategies; pupil-teacher, pupil-pupil and home-school relationships are all influenced by teachers’ cultural values,

attitudes, beliefs, concepts, behaviours, practices and assumptions (Bevan-Brown, 2003). As Garcia (1982) maintains, there is no such thing as a culturally free or culturally neutral teaching activity. Teachers need to be aware of this and of the pervasive influence of their culture. In addition, the international literature also calls for teachers to develop a “critical consciousness” and to gain an understanding of the nature and effect of differential power relationships between diverse cultural groups (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990).

In New Zealand the education system is dominated by middle-class, Pakeha cultural values. This is not surprising given that most teachers and administrators come from middle-class, Pakeha backgrounds and most pupils are Pakeha. The influence of majority cultural values is evident in gifted education in the concept of giftedness adopted in schools throughout the country and the domains of giftedness that are recognised and provided for (Riley et al., 2004). In addition to this major influence, less obvious cultural influences exist and are reported in the literature. For example, Bevan-Brown (2000a) describes a range of organisational procedures and structures and teaching practices that disadvantage gifted Maori students. Similarly, Henderson’s (2003) research revealed that majority culture attitudes and values in respect to music contributed to the high drop out rate of talented Maori and Polynesian students from traditional music programmes. When teachers develop an appreciation of their own culture and an understanding of the influence majority cultural values have on general education, they are more likely to recognize both obvious and less obvious cultural influences in gifted education and expand their practices to accommodate gifted students from many different ethnic groups.

**8. Happy are those who seek to increase their multicultural knowledge for their ability to provide effective gifted education will also increase.**

**BE resolute in your search for multicultural knowledge to inform your practice.**

Previous BE-attitudes are dependent on teachers possessing a broad multicultural knowledge. While they are not expected to be “experts,” teachers are expected to have a good “working knowledge” of the cultures of students they teach. Gaining and applying this multicultural knowledge is the fourth and final component of cross-cultural competence (Artiles & Zamora- Duran, 1997; Chan, 1990; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Hanson, Lynch & Wayman, 1990; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; McKay, 1995; MoE, 2000; Lynch & Hanson, 1998; Obiakor, 2000). For effective gifted education, not only must teachers increase their general multicultural knowledge, but they must also develop multicultural knowledge specifically related to giftedness. This includes gaining an appreciation of: how culture impacts on giftedness; a knowledge of differing cultural concepts of giftedness and the consequent implications for identification and provision; and an understanding of how multicultural information, experiences, practices, values, beliefs, attitudes and dispositions can be interwoven into gifted education programmes.

Fortunately, there are many helpful multicultural courses and books<sup>iv</sup> to assist teachers increase their multicultural knowledge. Community members, cultural clubs and societies, embassies, church and community organisations, colleagues and friends are additional resources that can be utilized. However, perhaps the best sources of information are students themselves, their parents, family and whanau.

### **Conclusion**

The eight BE-attitudes presented in this paper are based on findings from New Zealand and international research and writings in the field of gifted education. However, in applying these BE-attitudes teachers should be mindful of the danger of stereotyping. Similar to people from majority cultures, people from ethnic minority groups differ in the degree to which they identify with and adhere to cultural beliefs, values and practices. Culturally specific information is useful in that it raises issues that need to be considered, poses questions that need to be answered and reduces the potential for misunderstanding between people from different cultural backgrounds (Bevan-Brown, 2003). However, applying culturally specific information indiscriminately can, as Lynch and Hanson (1998, p.67) point out “lead to stereotyping that diminishes rather than enhances cross-cultural competence.” Therefore, perhaps a ninth Be-attitude should be added:

**Happy are those who consult with gifted students from minority groups, their parents, family and whanau in respect to cultural identification and desired cultural input for they will gain accurate information on which to base their gifted provisions.**

**BE vigilant against stereotyping. Do not assume that culturally specific information applies to all members of an ethnic group but be guided by parents, family members and the students themselves.**

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<sup>i</sup> This paper draws heavily on the cultural component of the literature review prepared for this research.

<sup>ii</sup> A version of this presentation was delivered at the conference "Gifted Children: Getting it Right" (Auckland, 15-16 April, 2004) run by the George Parkyn National Centre for Gifted Education.

<sup>iii</sup> See Riley et al (2004) for a discussion of this controversy.

<sup>iv</sup> Many excellent resources are listed in the reference section. A particularly helpful general resource is: Lynch, E. & Hanson, M. (1998). *Developing cross-cultural competence. A guide for working with children and their families* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) Baltimore, Md: Paul H. Brookes, while a recommended book specific to gifted education is: Ford, D. Y. & Harris III, J. J. (1999). *Multicultural gifted education*. New York: Teachers College Press. A useful resource for gifted and talented Maori students is: Bevan-Brown, J. (2004). Special abilities: A Maori perspective. In D. McAlpine & R. Moltzen (Eds.). *Gifted and talented: New Zealand perspectives* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Palmerston North: ERDC Press.