



New Zealand Centre
for Gifted Education
Empowering Extraordinary Minds



Strategic Plan 2022-2024

THE PRIZE

New Zealand schools place an enormous focus on kids who are struggling, but very little on the 5 percent of kids from all ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds whose brains are wired to learn faster, retain more and think more deeply – gifted kids. Without that support, more than 50% of them will underachieve. In social investment terms, investing to ensure these kids achieve their potential as our future scientists, technologists, creatives and entrepreneurs has a huge return. It's an even bigger delta for gifted kids with additional neurodiversities such as autism or dyslexia – without specialist support they are even more likely to underachieve.

The NZ Centre for Gifted Education has a 25 year history of supporting gifted kids and has Ministry of Education support but right now only reaches 1.5% of NZ's gifted kids. Our three year growth and innovation strategy is an ambitious project to realise the potential of our future workforce and community leadership through finding lower-cost, higher-impact, scalable ways to support far more of our gifted children.

Many people in the education space look to disrupt existing models, but not all are genuinely committed to demonstrating their impact on student learning outcomes. We have this commitment. We will innovate, but also fail fast where there is not a demonstrable positive impact on gifted students' learning.

CONTEXT: The Heart of our Programmes

In 2021, over 670 children from over 280 schools were enrolled in our MindPlus family of programmes. At the heart of all our programmes is what we call the “MindPlus magic”. It consists of:

- **A specialist curriculum** - Gifted learners have unique learning, social and emotional needs and in response to these, we have developed a specialist curriculum that we use across all of our programmes. This has been tested and continuously refined over our 25 year history and works to provide gifted learners with the intellectual and social and emotional skills they need to thrive.
- **Specialist teachers** - Our teachers are, first and foremost, exceptional educators, and many come with years of expertise and higher qualifications in gifted education. We are also adept at training and developing younger teachers who bring other skillsets such as working with cultural diversity into our team. We work closely as a team, with regular coaching and mentoring, professional development and evaluation to ensure our team continues to learn and grow and meet high quality standards nationally across all programmes.
- **Like-minded peers** - Research and experience shows us that gifted kids need to learn with a group of peers who can challenge, inspire and support them, intellectually and socially.

Through our comprehensive application process, involving parent, teacher and often professional input and, where necessary, participation in entry workshops, we are expert in putting together the right combinations of children to provide a high-functioning environment. Our specialist curriculum and specialist teachers are skilled at bringing our learners together to get the best from each other.

In 2021, we operated four programmes:

- **MindPlus OurSchool:** where gifted children from years 2-8 come together in our dedicated learning spaces for one day a week. There are currently 13 units across New Zealand.
- **MindPlus PreSchool:** a fun and stimulating 3-hour weekly session for children aged 2-6 and their caregivers, led by a teacher who specialises in working with gifted kids.
- **MindPlus Online:** if a child lives in a rural area, or a place where specialist teaching isn't available, they can join MindPlus classes online.
- **MindPlus Badges:** an opportunity for gifted kids to explore a special passion area for a few hours a week during school time or at home, working online and video calling together once a week with one of our specialist teachers.

OUR MODEL DELIVERS IMPACT...

Our 2021 Impact Survey provides evidence that our MindPlus programmes are successfully achieving the range of learning outcomes we are seeking:

- **96%** of students enjoy MindPlus
- Students find that MindPlus gives them:
 - Interesting and challenging work (**95%**)
 - A teacher who "understands" me (**92%**)
 - An opportunity to learn about being gifted and what it means for me (**95%**)
 - A chance to learn about new things and have new experiences (**94%**)
 - Time and support to develop my talent area(s) (**90%**)
 - Better thinking skills and strategies (**87%**)
 - How to overcome challenges (**82%**)
 - How to work hard to achieve excellence (**82%**)

In terms of parent outcomes, **86%** feel more confident that, through attending MindPlus, their child is getting the support they need to thrive. **98%** of families feel welcome and that their diversity is respected.

...BUT THAT IMPACT IS NOT REACHING ENOUGH CHILDREN

There are currently around 47,500 Kiwi kids - of all ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds - with extraordinary abilities aged between 2 and 13 years old in New Zealand, attending almost 2000 schools. Right now, only a low percentage of these children receive specialist gifted education support. In our MindPlus programmes, we serve only around 670 of these gifted children - around 1.5%. Only 280 primary and intermediate schools, or 15%, send at least one child to MindPlus.

Further, we know that the students and families served by MindPlus are highly skewed demographically. The ability to pay \$75/week to attend MindPlus is a significant factor, as is proximity to one of our 13 centres. Girls and students from non-majority backgrounds may also mask their differences in order to fit in at school, making them harder to identify. Currently:

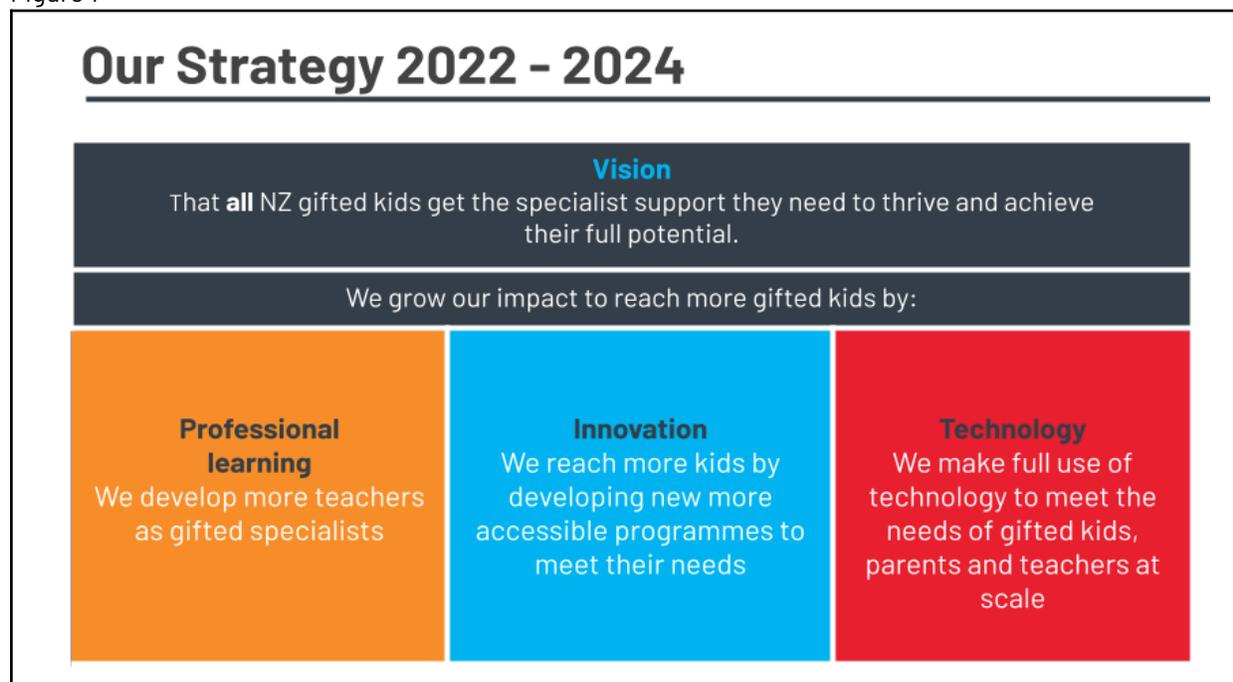
- 67% of our students are male
- Only 57 or 9% of our students are Māori
- Only 6 or less than 1% of our students are Pasifika
- 30% of our students come from Decile 10 schools and only 5% from Decile 1 & 2 schools

In FY2022 we aim to increase funding available for financial scholarships for under-represented groups to \$180,00.

OUR STRATEGY TO INCREASE THE SCALE OF OUR IMPACT

NZCGE is committed to a vision of all NZ gifted children getting the specialist support they need to thrive and to achieve their full potential, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background. Our three year growth strategy focuses on three areas as key enablers for significant progress towards this: professional learning, innovation and technology.

Figure 1



Professional learning

New Zealand has over 35,000 primary school teachers working in around 2000 schools, only a small number of whom have received formal education or significant professional learning around the needs of gifted learners. NZ needs to develop and grow a solid core of teachers who have experience and skills in gifted education. Ensuring that at least **every school has one teacher with gifted education training** would represent a significant - but attainable - long-term goal for the sector.

Professional learning outcome sought	Target (FY 2022)	Action plan
Develop and begin testing a two year professional learning programme in gifted education for new teachers employed by NZCGE	Y1 programme developed, tested and refined; Y2 programme in prototype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop prototype using Teachable with a specific focus on Y1 content • Test with new teachers • Revise Y1 programme • Develop Y2 prototype
Develop, test and refine a bite-sized, introductory level, self-paced professional learning programme for external teachers working with MindPlus programmes	Programme prototyped, tested and iterated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with group of Partner and Contributing School Teachers to identify needs • Develop a prototype on Teachable • Test and refine

Work with other professional learning providers to build gifted education into their offerings	At least one partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to The Education Hub’s Neurodiversity Course • Co-develop with The Education Hub a new course in Gifted Education
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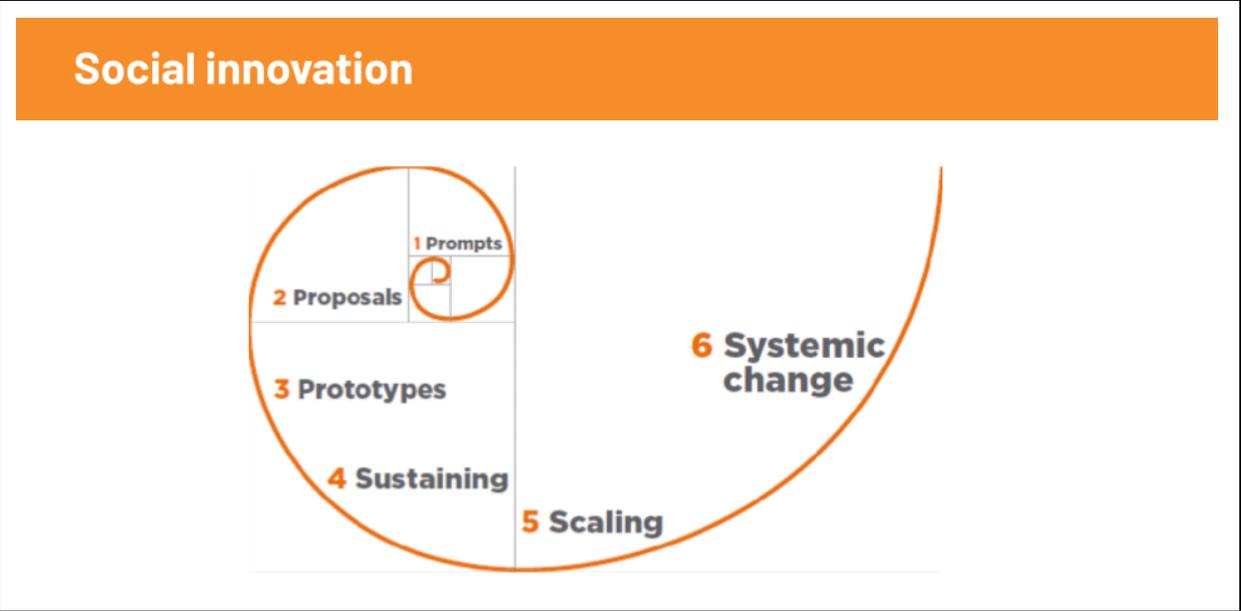
Innovation

There is a clear need for NZCGE to innovate in the areas of programme design and delivery to find lower-cost programmes able to meet the needs of gifted students at scale.

Over the next three years, NZCGE will develop a structured innovation programme to:

- Identify unmet needs (prompts)
- Develop a proposed programme or mode of delivery to meet those needs (proposals)
- Test the innovation for impact with a small number of participants on a Minimum Viable Product basis, iterating to address issues as required (prototyping)
- Work to build a successful programme or mode of delivery into a sustainable product able to be operated at scale (sustaining)
- Work together with government and other partners to explore how successful programmes might be further scaled so as to eventually lead to systemic change (scaling)

Figure 2



Innovation outcome sought	Target (FY 2022)	Action plan
Prototype and test delivery of MindPlus onsite at schools ("MindPlus YourSchool") with a group of diverse Partner Schools; decide whether/ how to continue in 2023	Programme prototyped and tested; decision made on 2023 go-ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop MVP programme • Begin testing with North Street School and Murrays Bay Intermediate • Continue discussions with prospective partners; bring on board • Conduct an evaluation, working together with Partner Schools • Determine whether to continue programme and in what form
Develop an early stage prototype programme enabling the provision of low-cost online gifted education at scale, initially building on MindPlus Clubs (new talent development initiative piloting in 2022)	Programme in early prototype	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with a group of gifted students, parents and teachers to understand needs and opportunities • Survey available online tools and resources • Locate potential partners • Develop an early stage prototype programme for testing in 2023

Technology

NZCGE recognises the opportunity that technology provides to address key challenges experienced by gifted children, their parents and their regular school teachers. This includes:

- Hybrid learning, where students can seamlessly and accessible learn on and off-line, on and offsite, individually and as a group, at the same time and different times
- Access to up-to-date, proven technological tools that can facilitate learning, especially for children with neurodiversities such as ASD, dyslexia and ADHD
- Bite-sized, just-in-time learning that is fun and involves multiple approaches (visual, oral, written etc)
- Individualised learning, with opportunities for development and progression
- Micro-credentials that can certify learning and be shared as digital badges
- Opportunities to connect with peers and "like minds"
- Opportunities to have new real and virtual experiences and make new connections outside of what is available locally
- Ability to learn in different language mediums, particularly te reo
- Regular updates on what their child/ student is learning and how they are doing
- Close communication with teachers responsible for their child's learning

Students, parents and teachers also now expect their interactions with us to be individualised and efficient and that they will be able to access the information they need, including their own personal information, online and when they want to. They and our funders also expect that we are running our operations as technologically efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

Our technology strategy will ensure that we are operating at the cutting edge of learning technology across all our programmes. We will be actively looking for partnerships enabling us to provide better outcomes for our stakeholders more cost-effectively.

Technology outcome sought	Target (FY 2022)	Action plan
<p>Improve our communications around student progress with parents and Contributing School Teachers using technology</p>	<p>Above 90% of parents and 70% of Contributing School Teachers feeling up-to-speed with child/ student progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build out Hero functionality and protocols around regular communications ● Prototype a continuous assessment and reporting system using Hero ● Test with parents and Contributing School Teachers
<p>Use technology to build greater connection amongst our wider MindPlus whānau</p>	<p>Above 90% of students and parents and 70% of Contributing School Teachers feeling well-connected with others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct focus groups with MindPlus students, alumni, parents and Contributing School Teachers focused on whether and how they would like to connect with others ● Prototype MindPlus Clubs, beginning with Creative Writers, Chess and Readers, and progressing to all talent areas ● Iterate and continue to test and refine