

# Leadership and Management Tips To Build Positive Outcomes for Gifted Primary School Students

## Presenters

**Margaret Berry**

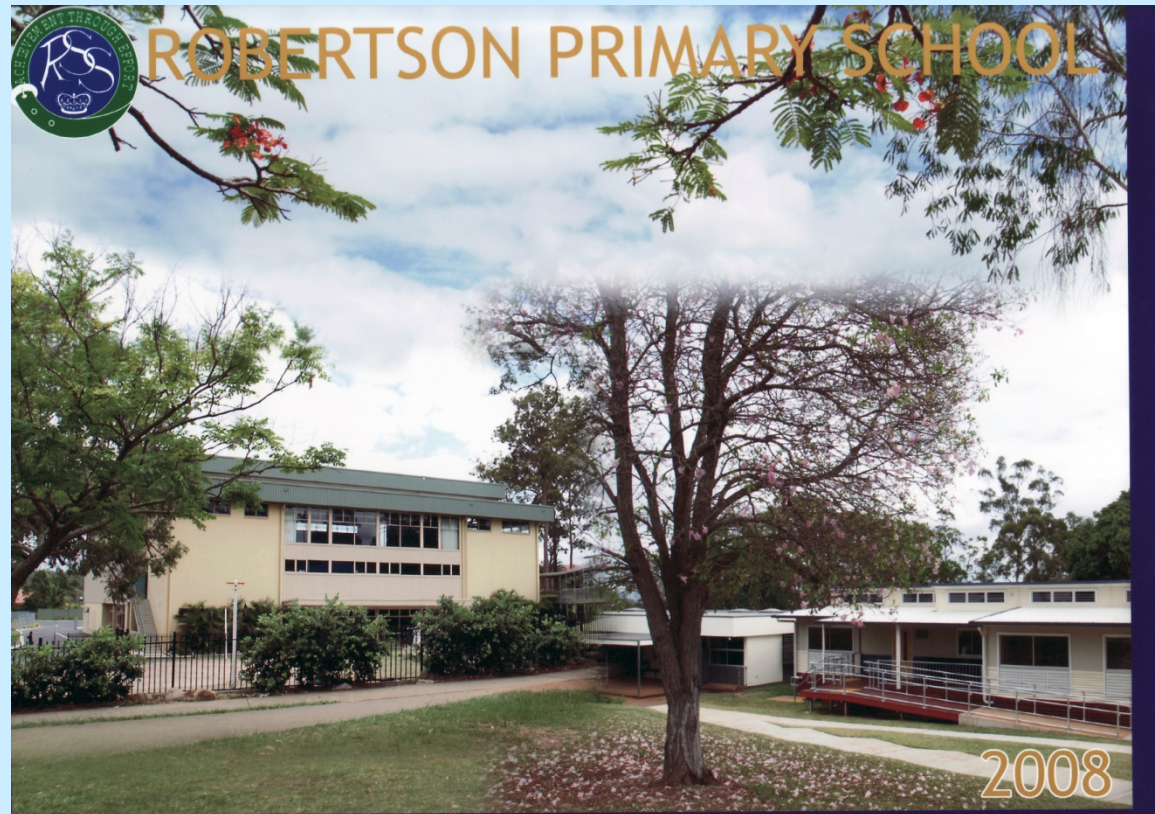
*Principal Robertson  
State School*

**Ross Harvey**

*Principal Kimberley  
Park State School  
Former Principal  
Robertson State  
School*

**Robyn Yared**

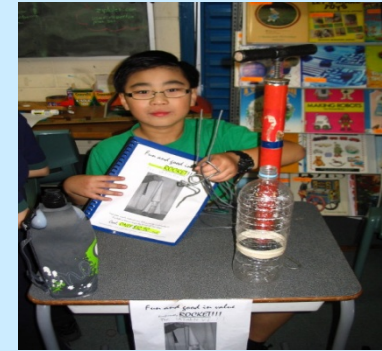
*Gifted Education  
Coordinator Robertson  
State School  
Gifted Education  
Project Officer  
Brisbane South*





## Robertson Context

- Opened 1980
- Brisbane South
- Pop – 640
- Middle class
- Multicultural
- Niche school
- G&T, Gymnastics, Music



Toy Expo & Invention  
Convention June 08





## Leadership and Management Tips To Build Positive Outcomes for Gifted Primary School Students

- Impetus
- Regional leadership
- Inception of L&D centres
- Change from L&C centres to Regional focus



- Reflect on a change that has been introduced at your school site
- Which of the following would staff most identify with during that change process?
  - Confusion
  - Resistance
  - Treadmill
  - Anxiety
  - Frustration
  - Isolation
- Important to **support others** through the change process to **minimise potential resistance** to change

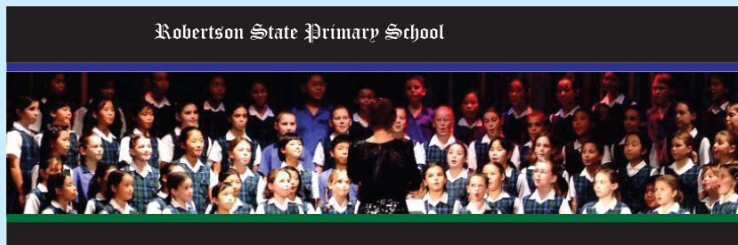
# Managing Change Matrix

Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	Collegiality	Change
	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	Collegiality	Confusion
Vision		Incentives	Resources	Action Plan	Collegiality	Anxiety
Vision	Skills		Resources	Action Plan	Collegiality	Resistance
Vision	Skills	Incentives		Action Plan	Collegiality	Frustration
Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources		Collegiality	Treadmill
Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Plan		Isolation



## VISION

- Adoption of Autonomous Learner Model as a **framework** of a whole school approach to GE
- Teachers could identify the things that they already did in their classrooms (**affirmation**) as well as see possibilities (**what could be**)
- Tomlinson recommends not asking teachers to do something that is shrouded in uncertainty
- Targeted group of **teachers** were sent on a PD with George Betts and **led** the adoption process

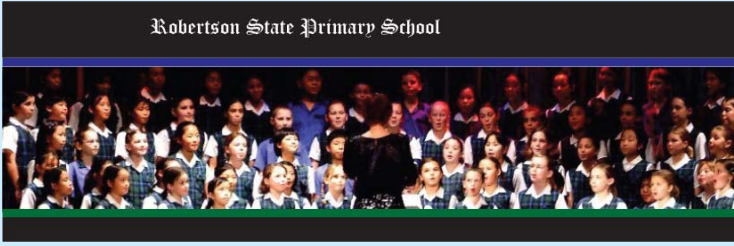


## ACTION PLAN

Goal = to build a culture where giftedness was accepted, valued, understood and catered for

- Round table conferences
- Staff survey – Gagne & Nadeau questionnaire
- GE Committee – guide implementation & share leadership
- Thinking skills focus to monitor level of challenge
- Development of units of work



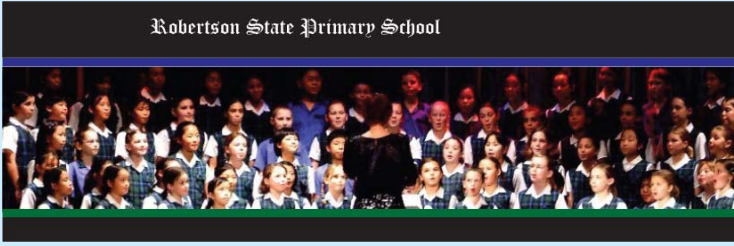


# ACTION PLAN

- Educate **parents** – outside providers, teaching staff, open forums to explain strategies
- **Identification** – initially bubble up (trait focus), ID inventories, ID model developed by staff
- Acceleration process refined
- **Clustering** of students
- Enrichment program



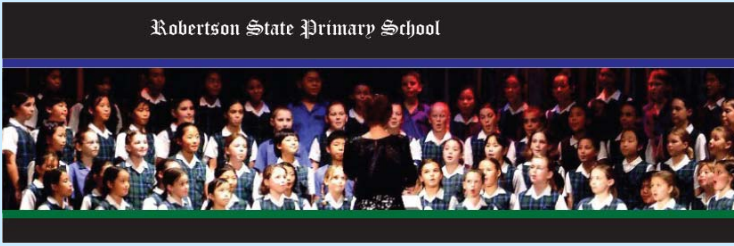




## SKILLS

- Important to **build people** & not just build a dream & ask people to do it John Maxwell
- Lots of **in-service** to build competency and confidence
- **Variety** of topics and providers
- Teacher led sessions to distribute **leadership depth**





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CONGRATULATIONS  
Tara, Ron, Jess



## SKILLS

- Model - Mind Challenge, staff meetings, assembly, PD
- Teacher planning
- Sharing at staff meetings
- Learning Circles
- Consult research
- Include aides & admin staff





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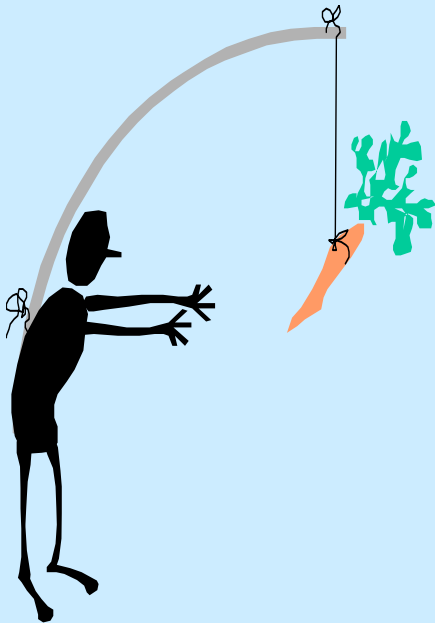


CONGRATULATIONS  
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# INCENTIVES

- Sponsored in-service
- Timetabling support for differentiation
- Learning Maps to differentiate PD & celebrate learning



# LEARNING MAP

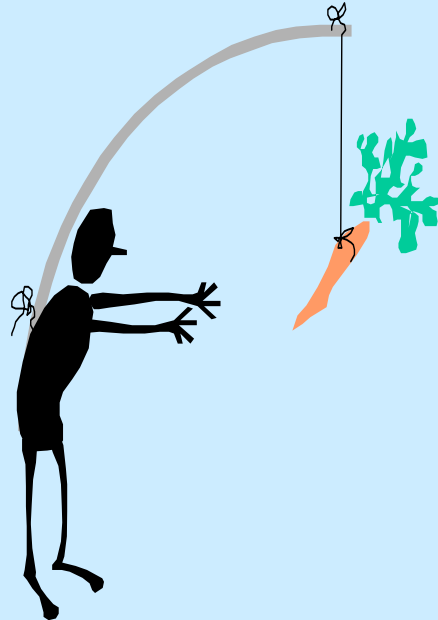
	Understanding Giftedness	Higher Order Thinking	Differentiation	MI	Unit Planning	Classroom Organisation
Teacher knowledge & Understanding						
Teacher Skills						
Student Knowledge and Understandings						
Student Skills						
Classroom Practice						

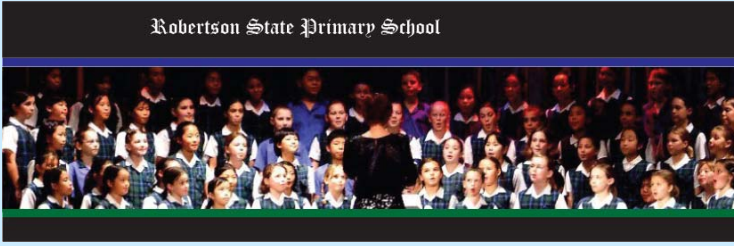




# INCENTIVES

- Relational approach to build self esteem
- Value in being part of an innovation

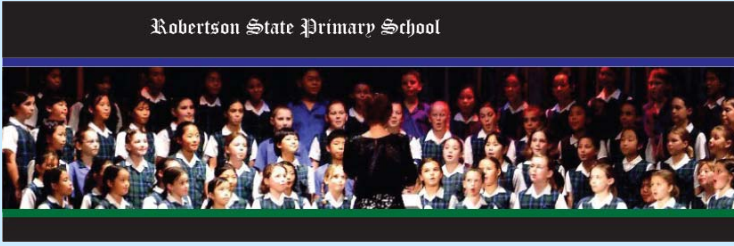




## RESOURCES

- Purchased books for year levels, and the RC – combination of theory and practical
- PD folders; handouts in response to learning maps
- Access to external experts – professional dialogue
- Release time for planning & to complete ID register
- Classroom posters
- Fact sheets





## COLLEGIALITY

- Food – staff breakfasts, afternoon teas, dinners
- Teacher sharing
- Apple for the teacher – positive affirmations of teachers in staffroom
- Teacher GOTCHA's
- Good communication – teacher forum



# **Leadership and Management Tips To Build Positive Outcomes for Gifted Primary School Students**

A Whole School Approach – Leadership tips for schools

Begin with the end in mind – in search of a vision

First things first – find the people

You get what you give – lots of professional development – invest big for big results

Practice what you preach – model everything you learn

Bubble up – returns on your PD investments

A time for everything – everything in its season – take the time to let it happen

High expectations

Create the environment that reminds, supports and encourages – mission statement through to the report cards

Expect and measure outcomes – be accountable for the investment



# Leadership and Management Tips To Build Positive Outcomes for Gifted Primary School Students

## ***Some concepts that I used over and over again....***

1. Leadership – the principal – the staff – committee – informal groupings
2. Building a critical mass of peer pressure
3. Creating a self-filling prophecy – the “rebadging” of Robertson – build it and they will come....
4. Building virtual structures – mission statement, report cards, newsletter, parent training and their influence – everywhere you turn
5. Living the research – putting it into practice – a variety of learning environments for a variety of students
6. Enriching the school culture – it isn’t just about maths and English – HPE, Gymnastics, chess, tennis, dance, art, drama and music
7. High expectations, focussed teaching and engaged learners

# Leadership and Management Tips To Build Positive Outcomes for Gifted Primary School Students

“Danger, Will Robertson” – things that will slow you down

1. Attitudes - Teaching by habit
2. Attitudes - The three r's teachers
3. Attitudes - Poor risk takers, a comfortable life and the text book junkies
4. Attitudes - The image of elitism from staff and parents – benefiting ALL students LD, ASD
5. Throwing teachers to the wolves – lack of support
6. Not allowing them to risk y/our school! – backing other's ideas
7. Life is what happens while you are making other plans- the everyday inhibitors – national curriculum, national A\_E reporting, state agendas and issues, asbestos, behaviour management, budgeting, meetings, facilities, cleaning, mowing – you know, that stuff that occupies you every day



## Outsider's View -

- ✓ Established school culture for gifted students – social emotional, differentiation and high standards
- ✓ All staff given PD in Gifted Ed and ongoing cutting edge PD for teachers of Gifted Classes
- ✓ Employment of Gifted Coordinator – professional structured program, mentor and parent liaison – an expert
- ✓ Badging/publicity and attracting enrolments – competitive market



## Future Directions

- Perpetuating the culture
- Sharpening the curriculum (use of data and research)
- Ongoing professional development: whole school and targeted teachers
- Innovation & technology
- Going global





ENCOURAGING ... Robertson State School's Robyn Yared with students Declan and Aedan McMahon. The school provides an understanding environment. Picture: Mark Calleja

# A challenging gift

Having a gifted child can be difficult in a world in which they are often misunderstood, writes **Fiona Purdon**

**B**RISBANE mum Sandra McMahon never reveals outside the school environment that her two boys are gifted, because of the social stigma.

She says that Robertson State School, on Brisbane's southside, has provided a comfortable and understanding sanctuary away from the stares and upsetting comments that she has experienced in the wider community.

McMahon, a speech pathologist, is the mother of sons Aedan, 9, and Declan, 7, and daughter Brigit, 5.

"I never say to anyone outside of the school that my children are gifted because of the stigma," she says. "The look on other mothers' faces, they think you are a pushy parent. I can talk freely about it here at the school because it's not an 'us and them' thing. This school makes it feel normal."

Robertson State School gifted edu-

cation co-ordinator Robyn Yared says the school is trying to break down the social barriers connected with gifted children.

"People are hesitant to say that their children are gifted, it's linked to the tall poppy syndrome," she says.

"There's a stigma. We are not saying these children are better."

Both Yared and McMahon say that gifted children have special needs that require understanding.

"We need to help the gifted children deal with the strong expectations they put on themselves and to help them understand themselves," Yared says.

"When you think about these children, the potential they have to save the greenhouse gases, to help deforestation or find a cure for cancer, we need to invest and nurture these brains and children. They need to be accommodated and accepted."

McMahon says her two boys can be exhausting because of their constant questions and their need for significant

## Learning some hard lessons

**Declan McMahon**  
Year 2

MUM Sandra McMahon says Declan is a perfectionist who gets frustrated and angry if he cannot do something. This year he wanted to learn to play the piano. "He went to the last song in the first book and was determined to master it. He wouldn't leave the piano until he could play it. He did the first book in six weeks."

Like brother Aedan, Declan was reading before he went to school. McMahon believes her husband Chris, a high-achieving engineer and science-fiction author, was an unidentified gifted child. She says he never fitted in at school and his family thought he would fail but instead he achieved a 990.

answers. While in theory every Queensland state school should cater for gifted children, Robertson is one of the best examples.

School principal Margaret Berry

**Aedan McMahon**  
Year 5

WHEN Aedan was four he saw a program on deforestation and cried all night because he was worried the human race would run out of air. "He said, 'Mummy if we don't have trees, we won't have oxygen and then we won't be able to breathe,'" Sandra McMahon says. "He made the links himself. He's always had strong emotional responses to world issues. He craves knowledge and asks a lot of in-depth questions. Superficial knowledge is not sufficient. He would sit on his own and read Harry Potter in Year 1. He was isolated and depressed at his first school, where they thought he was annoying and sooky."

she says that the gifted program is the best she has seen in 30 years of teaching.

An Education Queensland spokesman says that the Government announced an increase in funding two

years ago to provide stronger support for teachers working with gifted students as part of a three-year action plan.

The spokesman says that at least 10 per cent of Queensland's students have been identified as gifted and need specific educational provision to engage them in learning and enable them to develop their abilities.

Yared, who also runs the Greater Brisbane Region's Gifted and Education Mentors (GEM) program, says that 10 years ago Robertson received funding for professional development as one of the first Queensland schools to take part in the Focus School Program.

She says that the principal at the time, Ross Harvey, was determined to create an overall school culture where giftedness was accepted, recognised and integrated throughout the school and was not an "add-on" special group.

Yared says that all of Robertson State School's 30 staff members receive professional training.

She says there is an emphasis on cluster learning so students are divided into small groups with a similar ability and are able to learn at their own pace.

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