

Dear Ms Lisa Paul and members of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review,

I am writing to you as a teacher and consultant in gifted education, an Executive Committee member of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) and a Doctoral Candidate at Western Kentucky University (Leading Diverse Learners)

Many different Australian government enquiries have considered gifted education and reported on the need for initial teacher education to include a compulsory unit on gifted education. Some of these include:

- Report by the Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children 1988,
- Senate Inquiry into the Education of the Gifted and Talented 2001, which amongst its hearings found:

“The main theme that emerged in the inquiry is the need for better teacher training (both preservice and inservice) so that teachers are better able to identify the gifted and make provision for their special needs. Better curriculum support is also essential so that teachers can differentiate the curriculum for the gifted.”

- Productivity Commission Research Report, Schools Workforce, April 2012, which reported: “...it is also important to recognise the learning needs of gifted and talented students who have the potential to excel beyond the achievements of an average student.” (p268)
- In 2012, the Senate enquiry into Gifted and Talented Education in Victoria released its 9 key findings including teacher education and training [here](#)

Despite all these inquiries, reports, and findings there is still no inclusion of a compulsory unit on gifted education included in initial teacher training in Australia.

Fraser-Seeto (et al., p. 14 2016) found that... “gifted and talented education offerings at the university level continue to be insufficient relative to minimum standards outlined by previous senate inquiries” (Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).

The AITSL teaching standards also do not name the needs of diverse, gifted students and this needs to be changed. Not at any stage of career progression is the word “gifted” mentioned in any of the teacher standards. Many students who are gifted also have a disability and this intersectionality needs to be explained in the standards, so teachers in every Australian school, know and are aware of the learning needs of this diverse group.

AITSL should link to ACARA with this information on the needs of students who are gifted for example, [here](#).

Professor John Hattie has also recently written on this topic of giftedness and schools (2019) in the Sage handbook of gifted and talented information. See the total abstract [here](#). The salient points for AITSL in this review from this abstract are below.

*If schooling systems around the world are basing their decisions on myths, and not on the evidence of research studies covering decades, then gifted children will continue to miss their potential for becoming gifted adults. More importantly for parents and the gifted students, being permitted to proceed with ability peers rather than being retained with age-peers, mitigates the risk of becoming one of the 'lost gifted'.*

Henderson and Jarvis also wrote about the AITSL standards and how they could be improved for students who are gifted.

"...without professional learning in gifted education, teachers are ill-equipped to understand, identify and provide for gifted students. As all teachers will teach gifted and talented children, it is important to define the elements of quality teaching that are inclusive of high ability students in the Australian context and contribute to a professional learning agenda for all teachers." (Henderson & Jarvis, p. 60, 2016)

The WCGTC is about to release guidance on the topic of initial teacher education and students who are gifted so I would be delighted to support AITSL in developing the relevant information for Australia.

Quality teaching, and thus a quality education for gifted students who are at least 10% of the school population is primarily met by teachers in mainstream inclusive classrooms. That is where most gifted students are taught. Therefore, it is essential for teachers during initial teacher training to develop an understanding in the needs of gifted students and the appropriate pedagogies and identification processes so that can provide a rigorous, engaging learning experience when they start classroom teaching.

I urge you to make a unit of study in gifted education compulsory in all initial teaching programs across Australia.

Yours faithfully,

Sue Prior

Prior Learning



## References

Fraser-Seeto, K.T., Howard, S., & Woodcock, S. (2016). Preparation for teaching gifted students: An updated investigation into university offerings in New South Wales. *Australasian journal of gifted education*, 25, 45-51.

Senate References Committee (Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education). (2001). *The Education of gifted children*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Senate Select Committee. (1988). *The Education of gifted and talented children*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Wardman, J., & Hattie, J. (2019). What works better than the rest? The impact of various curricula provisions for gifted learners. In B. Wallace, D. A. Sisk, & J. Senior, *The SAGE handbook of gifted and talented education* (pp. 321–334). Sage

Henderson, L., & Jarvis, J. (2016). The Gifted Dimension of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: Implications for Professional Learning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(8).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n8.4>

