

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

I am writing to you as a parent of gifted child.

Many different 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, 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)

Despite all these inquiries, reports, and findings there is still no inclusion of a compulsory unit on gifted education included in initial teacher training. The AITSL teaching standards do not include gifted students anywhere. They are a missing piece of the classroom puzzle.

This issue is of personal interest to me because my child has had significant struggles, due to his giftedness, during his school life;

- The teachers were unable to identify his giftedness initially and, even after a private test was undertaken, hesitant to provide assistance.
- His (previous) school was not well informed or willing to undertake steps to help him outside of a personal action plan - which did not address the main areas of concern by the psychologist.
- His principle restricted him from reading books aimed at older children due to his 'not being age appropriate' even though his understanding and desire to extend himself was there and recommended.
- When discussing grade/subject extension or grade skipping the approach of the teachers and school was - as quoted from his principle - 'What if he fails?'
- Any extension undertaken was computer based with no effort to adapt the curriculum to his needs at all.

Aside from these specific areas, there was a general 'he's doing well and fine in class why upset the status quo' mentality.

Quality teaching, and thus a quality education for gifted students is primarily met by teachers in mainstream classrooms. 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,