

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

I am writing to you as a parent of gifted child - my son tested 99.7 at aged 5.

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 we went through personal heart ache when my son started school as his teacher had no idea how to deal with a reception student who could read at year 4 level. In fact she emotionally abused him as he didn't fit into her little box of how reception students should be. This caused off the scale stress to me, and severe mental health issues to my son. We moved him as soon as we could after 3 terms to a private school who has programs for gifted kids. This is not something we wanted to happen and could have been prevented if his initial teacher understood more about gifted students. My sons psychologist told me children that children like him need AS MUCH IF NOT MORE support than children at the other end of the scale who can not read and write. I clearly think psychologists understand this concept but teachers don't.

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,