

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

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

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 ...“  
(p268) ”.beyond the achievements of an average student*

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 it affects our family. We have gifted kids struggling to keep up with normal school work as the giftedness has not been recognized and not appropriately addressed by the school in the very young years. The problem results in devastating underachievement that has consequences for our daily life as a family: unhappy kids having difficulty making friends and not enjoying school as they should. Not reaching their potential academically, socially and struggling with general happiness leads to frustration and no confidence. Every child should have the right to feel safe and be seen and heard no matter if they form part of a minority of divergent thinkers. The high potential of underachievers is a big loss for the individual, the family and society as a whole. Please help parents and teachers struggling with gifted achieving and underachieving children providing professional help in form of teacher training in giftedness, resources, engaging courses for kids and informative courses for parents. Tackling this problem would lead to the improvement of society as a whole as these children with the right care at school have the potential to grow up into future problem solvers who can make a change.

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,