



**Australian  
Association for the  
Education of the  
Gifted and  
Talented**

**Response to the  
Teacher Education Expert Panel  
Discussion Paper**

Elizabeth Singer  
Vice President  
Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented  
Email: [vicepresident@aaegt.net.au](mailto:vicepresident@aaegt.net.au)  
Website: [www.aaegt.net.au](http://www.aaegt.net.au)

## **About the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented**

The Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) is comprised of members from all states and territories in Australia who together recognise the academic and social/emotional needs of gifted children. They include university researchers/academics, educational consultants, schools, principals, teachers and parents. Furthermore, members represent a diverse population incorporating a variety of cultural backgrounds and geographical locations, including metropolitan, regional, rural and remote members.

The AAEGT team that compiled this response was comprised of experts in the field of gifted education. Each of these members has either a PhD or Ed.D. Between them, there is more than 100 years of national and international experience in the field including: teaching in Initial Teacher Education; teaching as gifted specialists in classrooms, schools and at systemic level, and, conducting and publishing research in gifted education.

### **Introduction**

The AAEGT and its members welcome the opportunity to provide comment on the discussion paper on the review of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) for consideration by the panel. We make four recommendations in response to the suggested reforms and discussion points.

Across all school sectors and stages, there are gifted students and students with high potential. It is helpful to clarify the definition of gifted. The AAEGT uses a definition proposed by Professor Gagné and his theoretical model Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Gagné, 2004). Gagné's model is referenced by every Australian state Department of Education and Catholic education diocese with a Gifted and Talented policy and is the suggested model in policy guideline documents provided by all independent sector advisory bodies with a Gifted and Talented policy. From Gagné comes the definition of giftedness that is used across sectors: giftedness is the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities (called outstanding aptitudes or gifts), in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers (Gagné, 2004, 2020).

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses are designed to meet the Professional Teaching Standards (The Standards), ensuring that when pre-service teachers (PST) graduate, they meet the Graduate level of The Standards and are prepared to teach in all classrooms relevant to their degree. The AAEGT notes that 'gifted' does not appear in any of The Standards as a specific term or in reference to a cohort of students, despite also noting that diverse students (including language background other than English, First Nations students), and those with a disability are specifically mentioned. PSTs are required to engage in course material that supports their understanding and capacity to teach all students, covering cognitive, emotional and

physical development and concomitant learning needs to address the diversities and individual characteristics of the different cohorts.

## Current Relevant Reports

This response takes into account the following reports and reviews of education and teacher education:

1. The [Terms of Reference for the Teacher Education Expert panel](#) that include clear direction to consider the preparation of quality teachers who are 'classroom ready', with reference to Recommendation 7: *Strengthen initial teacher education (ITE) programs to deliver confident effective, classroom ready graduates to ensure ITE graduates are taught sufficient evidence-based practices to meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and empower them to lead a classroom, with particular attention to teaching reading, literacy and numeracy, classroom management, cultural responsiveness, teaching students with diverse needs and working with families/carers. (Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (p. ix)).*

2. The most recent (2023) Prosperity' which recommends in Volume 8 (Recommendation 8.3, p.50) the value of innovation in schooling including different school structures and approaches to support diverse student needs, and the need to provide teacher expertise through technology, special programs to individualise student experiences, allowing students to learn different content in interest and skill areas.

3. The [2021 OECD study of policy approaches and initiatives for the inclusion of gifted students](#) found that:

- "Overall, there is consensus on: (1) the crucial role of educational staff, in particular teachers, in the academic success and well-being of gifted students and (2) the specific needs giftedness implies in terms of educational support."
- "Evidence shows that gifted education programmes, from identification and assessment to differentiation and other pedagogical strategies, are significantly more efficiently implemented by teachers who undertook specialist studies in gifted education (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2019[53])."

4. In addition, we reference the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, the key goals of which include promoting:

- Personalised learning and providing support that aims to fulfil the individual capabilities and needs of learners.
- A culture of excellence in all learning environments, by providing varied, challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all learners to explore and build on their individual abilities, interests, and experiences.
- The development of successful lifelong learners who... develop their ability and motivation to learn and play an active role in their own learning.

Another key goal within the Declaration is to ensure that Australia's education system is recognised internationally for delivering high quality learning outcomes.

### **Recommendations from AAEGT**

On the basis of these key reports and policies in education in recent years with a focus on meeting individual needs of diverse students, the AAEGT is concerned that gifted students are not explicitly mentioned in the discussion paper from the review of teacher education despite their presence in all classrooms and their particular needs to support their best outcomes. Our recommendations for consideration by the panel are:

1. Address the absence of specific reference to gifted students in policies and documents including the professional teaching standards and the program standards for ITE. The generic comments of 'all levels of ability' do not pay attention to the specific needs of gifted students that assure best outcomes for these students.
2. Require all programs to include at least one course/subject focussed on the identification and through consensus define key topics to be addressed.
3. Ensure all PSTs have the opportunity to teach in a context where gifted students are present (Jung, 2014), to provide them with exposure to these students.
4. Early career framework that recognises the essential need for ongoing learning post-graduation to support the development of specific teaching skills.

Our response to the discussion paper addresses the suggested reforms to teacher education that frame the discussion paper:

### **Reform 1: Strengthen ITE programs to deliver effective, classroom ready graduates**

#### **Evidence Based practice**

Of great concern, from the perspective of diversity, is the lack of recognition in this proposal of the impact of individual differences in the learning process. Whilst neuroscience is presented as underpinning the choices made by the panel in terms of the evidence-based teaching practices to be included in ITE courses, there is limited acknowledgement of the impact of individual differences in how learning is structured and supported in the classroom.

The assertion by the panel that they have made a deliberate choice to avoid addressing diversity due to the fact that most students will respond well to the suggested practices is fraught with problems. It seems from the panel position that graduate teachers need to consolidate practices that will support most students, and then they can then learn on the job how to support student diversity. This goes against the very tenets of evidenced-informed teaching practices. This position is potentially highly damaging, as all graduating teachers will enter classrooms in their

first year of teaching that contain students with diverse needs. This includes students with diverse learning needs (e.g., cultural, social, linguistic, gifted, talented, disabilities) who will need differentiated approaches to their learning. In fact, up to 10% of all students are likely to be gifted and/or talented (Gagné, 2009; 2020), and at least 7% of these gifted students being twice-exceptional (gifted with disabilities). This means these students will require adjustments to the pace and depth of their learning (Van Tassel-Baska, 2005; Heacox & Cash, 2020). Without such adjustments, these students are at risk of becoming bored and disengaged and dropping out of school, and may develop social-emotional issues, such as perfectionism (Schuler, 2002; Neihart et al., 2016). Students who are not challenged at their point of need do not have the opportunity to develop learning skills and abilities, or the skills of learning they need over time such as persistence when things get difficult, academic risk taking, and a focus on academic growth over academic achievement.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (COAGEC, 2019) reinforced and renewed the ambitious aim of the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) for an education system that supported all students to realise their gifts and talents. To meet these ambitious goals, ITE students need to have the opportunity to learn how to address and respond to diversity in their initial training. Differentiated practice needs to be embedded as part of ITE courses, including a focus on the strategies that will meet the needs of gifted and talented students. Without such measures, Departments of Education will need to invest heavily in equipping in-service teachers with the skills required to meet the needs of high ability and high achieving students. For example, the Victorian Government [invested 60.2 million dollars](#) to improve educational outcomes for high ability Victorian students from 2019-2021. This initiative included the development of an online toolkit to support teachers, the development of a virtual program to challenge high ability students, funding for a role dedicated to high ability in each school, professional learning for Victorian teachers, and access to enrichment opportunities for high-ability students. The ongoing need for this initiative has been recognised by the Victorian Government who have agreed to a further three years of funding of the program, [investing a further 37 million dollars](#). This heavy investment acknowledges the inservice gap in skills of educators in supporting this cohort, and reinforces the necessity of equipping ITE students with the skills required to provide appropriate learning opportunities to the diverse range of students they will encounter in their classrooms.

Acknowledging the legislative requirements to meet the needs of students with disability is not enough. ITE teachers need to be equipped with the skills to put this into action, as well as the skills to address other forms of diversity in their classrooms, such as giftedness and twice-exceptionality.

- Differentiation and personalised (individualised) learning (e.g., Tomlinson's extensive work on this), see also Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019) lit review - <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02366/full> integration of differentiation b/w theory and practice – article (extensive evidence-based lit review) - Pereira et al. (2021). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0162353220978304>

- Problem-based learning (PBL) (e.g., see extensive lit review by Turullas et al., 2022 - <https://bmcmmededuc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12909-022-03154-8> ), Hung et al., state PBL is “perhaps the most innovative pedagogical method ever implemented in education” (p. 486 - <https://tinyurl.com/4kbta2ka> ), see also a large-scale, randomised-control trial of the ML-PBL curriculum in 46 schools across Michigan (Michigan State University, 2021), etc..
- High Impact Teaching Strategies – seems to already be the focus of the TEEP – these incorporate more than already stated in the TEEP, including metacognitive strategies (e.g., self-regulation), differentiated teaching (see also above)
- Art and Science of Teaching (Marzano, 2007) - approach to effective instruction which is underpinned by three general characteristics: 1. use of effective instructional strategies, 2. use of effective management strategies, 3. use of effective classroom curriculum design strategies.
- Effective teaching model (Fleming & Kleinheinz, 2007) - four pillars to drive teaching and learning for improvement (incl. Teacher directed and explicit instruction), long-term memory strategies and importantly, effective relationships.

Any evidence-based teaching practice needs to be responsive to context (place-based) and the specific students (personalised) in that context. Specifying a one-size-fits-all national ITE curriculum would not be responsive to what individual schools and education jurisdictions are actually practising in classrooms – every school is different and different pedagogical practices are used in response to context and need. PSTs may then be at risk of only being familiar with a narrow set of practices that are not in reality being actually used in their future schools/classrooms. It is one thing to mandate ITE curriculum but another to mandate these practices in all schools where PSTs will eventually teach – this runs a very real risk of further disconnecting ITE and actual classroom-based practices. A *one-size fits all* approach should not be prescribed, as pedagogical approaches (practices) need to be responsive in the moment while teaching and be responsive to context-specific factors. PSTs need to enter the profession with a repertoire of evidence-based practices to draw on when and as needed, rather than a narrow set of prescribed practices.

### **Amending Accreditation Standards and Procedures:**

All ITE programs are designed to address the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2017) and their accreditation requires a demonstration of where PSTs will be taught, assessed and able to practise the skills and processes of quality teaching. Standards 1 & 3 in particular focus on how students learn and how to plan for appropriate learning, including diverse students. But the AAEGT believes that The Standards do not adequately address all of the necessary requisite requirements for pre-service teachers to meet by the time they graduate, with the Graduate Standards driving accreditation of ITE courses, there needs to be consideration to making sure The Standards address the skills required by graduates. For example, nowhere in The Standards is there explicit recognition of the needs of gifted or talented learners and the skills required by teachers to support these students in schools. Graduate teachers soon find they are

inadequately prepared by the ITE courses to work with, and teach, gifted or talented students.

The silence in The Standards about the needs of gifted students, despite the literature that identifies their particular needs and characteristics PSTs not learning particular management or instructional strategies that prevent potential disruption due to boredom or frustration (Troxcclair, 2013).

The current TPA requires ITE students to demonstrate capacity to respond to different levels of need in the classroom. ITE students must use data to determine points of need and provide differentiated learning experiences for students who are above, at, or and below expected levels. While this is not a complete picture of differentiated practice, it does require students to at least consider diversity, and prepares them for the reality of the classrooms they will enter where students' skills and achievement will be varied. The current format of the TPA means ITE students have some, if a somewhat inadequate, exposure to the importance of meeting the needs of high achieving/high potential students. The practices that have been highlighted as evidence-based by the panel serve to water down these differentiated practices. The inclusion of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) approach to teaching and learning is commendable, but not enough. Within the first tier there should be a focus on differentiated practice (Fien & Chard, 2020), such as those that are currently included in the TPA, including practices aimed at supporting high achieving/high potential students in the every-day general classroom instruction. This seems to be lacking in the tiered model that is presented here with no mention of differentiated instruction under the umbrella of general classroom instruction. Whilst there is a brief mention of the role assessment and feedback may play for 'meeting students' where they are at in the explicit instruction section, there is no guidance provided as to how ITE students should be prepared to adjust the pace and depth of learning for gifted students, other than a brief mention of the notion of 'enrichment'. Further, critique has been provided in relation to the MTSS's failure to provide for equitable outcomes in relation to diversity, and calls have been made for more equitable MTSS approaches (Cramer et al., 2023), and this position has not been addressed in the panel's proposals in this document.

The current AITSL program standards and The Standards need to be completely implemented and then reviewed prior to any amending. There are still some ITE providers who have yet to undergo Stage 2 Accreditation for their courses. TEMAG reforms and other jurisdictional requirements need to be fully implemented before they can be independently reviewed and evaluated.

There is a clear consensus on the need for consistent and defined ITE to support the needs of gifted and talented students. The 2001 Senate Report into the Education of Gifted and Talented Children (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) revealed that "all types of interest groups agree that there is a problem with the education of gifted children. These children have special needs in the education system; for many their needs are not being met." The report identifies consequences of this unmet need, including underachievement, boredom, frustration and psychological distress. The report states that "all agree that better teacher training and better curriculum support are essential to dispel myths about giftedness, and to ensure that that teachers have the skills to differentiate the curriculum for gifted

children.” However, 20 years into the future, there is still a critical lack of training provided to pre-service and working professional teachers in Australian schools (Jolly & Robinson, 2021).

Key goals within the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration include promoting:

- Personalised learning and providing support that aims to fulfil the individual capabilities and needs of learners.
- A culture of excellence in all learning environments, by providing varied, challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all learners to explore and build on their individual abilities, interests, and experiences.
- The development of successful lifelong learners who... develop their ability and motivation to learn and play an active role in their own learning.
- Another key goal within the Declaration is to ensure that Australia’s education system is recognised internationally for delivering high quality learning outcomes.

The 2021 OECD study of policy approaches and initiatives for the inclusion of gifted students found that:

- “Overall, there is consensus on: (1) the crucial role of educational staff, in particular teachers, in the academic success and well-being of gifted students and (2) the specific needs giftedness implies in terms of educational support.”
- “Evidence shows that gifted education programmes, from identification and assessment to differentiation and other pedagogical strategies, are significantly more efficiently implemented by teachers who undertook specialist studies in gifted education (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2019[53]).”

Given that there is a key imperative to meet the unique learning needs of all Australian children and given that there is clear national and international consensus on the need for preparation for teachers to meet the needs of gifted students, it is worth considering the content of such preparation programs. In the 2022 AAEGT submission on the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, we noted “Both parents and teachers across Australia report to the AAEGT that one of the core issues they experience is the lack of teachers equipped with the knowledge to identify and effectively educate gifted students.” The US National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) provides Teacher Knowledge and Skills Standards for Gifted and Talented Education (2006). Key areas within the Standards include (but are not limited to):

- **Foundations:** relevant theories, models, philosophies, laws/guidelines, definitions, cultural factors, key issues and trends
- **Development and Characteristics of Gifted Learners:** cognitive and affective characteristics, role of family & culture, developmental milestones
- **Individual Learning Differences:** identifying and serving diverse gifted learners, including culturally diverse and twice-exceptional students
- **Instructional Strategies:** classroom differentiation, pacing, pre- and ongoing-assessment, assistive technology, research skills, pedagogical content knowledge, resources (classroom & community)



- **Learning Environments and Social Interactions:** collaboration, communication, avoiding stereotypes, encouraging personal development, developing appreciation for their own and others' diverse and unique heritage and languages
- **Languages and Communication:** developing strong oral and written language skills, including resources and strategies, impact of diversity and assistive technology
- **Instructional Planning:** differentiating learning experiences across strength areas and curricula, responding to difference, enhancing rigour, careers and guidance
- **Assessment:** identifying gifted students using equitable and non-biased practice, interpreting assessment data, appropriate placement, bias avoidance, identifying students from diverse backgrounds appropriately, qualitative and quantitative assessment methods

It is most clear that meeting the needs of **some** students within the classroom is **not** enough. We must prepare **all** of our new teachers with the knowledge and skills they need in order to support **all** of the unique and individual children within their classrooms. This includes all gifted and talented students, including those from diverse backgrounds, underperforming students, twice-exceptional students and those from lower income and rural and remote backgrounds. The AAEGT recommends that all ITE programs include a minimum of at least one semester unit on gifted education, based upon a unique set of Standards within a Teacher Knowledge and Skills Framework to be developed and supported in the Australian context, with input from Australian students, parents, teachers, gifted education professionals, current ITE program instructors, pre-service teachers and university academics in the field of gifted education.

A focus on student diversity and inclusive education practices at classroom level, whole school level and system levels, including ITE are required. A thorough and evidence-informed understanding of who diverse students are is necessary (e.g., students with disability, First Nations learners, gifted/talented learners, twice-exceptional learners – have both disability and giftedness, refugee students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, diverse cultures, EAL/D learners etc.); this is not fully recognised nor appreciated in the current report, which predominantly focuses on a neuro-typical, one-size fits all model, with the add-on of support for students with disability. Gifted students are as diverse a cohort as all other groups of students and make up at least 10% of the students in any school. In a standard school of 200 students, there are likely to be 20 students who are gifted and within this group, 3-4 are likely to be twice-exceptional learners (Ronksley-Pavia, 2020). Teachers entering the profession without understanding the specific needs of gifted learners will be limited in their capacity to address their unique learning needs.

## **Reform 2: strengthen the link between performance and funding of ITE**

There are concerns about how 'performance' would be measured, in ways that reflect the diversity of pre-service teachers enrolled in and wishing to enrol in ITE courses. There is no 'one' type of pre-service teacher, and they need to be adequately prepared through their ITE courses to **support all learners across and within different contexts**. A performance-based funding model would be problematic as it would likely tie to common misbeliefs about what is indicative of 'good performance'.

It would not be useful to measure performance on graduate outcomes, as the ITE provider has little input on who is successful on job applications and these sit outside the scope of ITE courses. Job-ready graduates are the aim of ITE, but being job-ready does not guarantee employment. Being job-ready requires specialisation and offering skills to the position that are qualitatively different to the next candidate (e.g., a specialisation in gifted education, or a specialisation in special education, or inclusive education); this would not be possible if every ITE provider taught the same courses/content in the same way.

### **Reform 3: Improve the quality of practical experiences in teaching**

#### **Centres of excellence**

Specialist practicum experiences in such settings as gifted programs, selective schools, gifted education schools, schools for twice-exceptional students, and IB schools would add a greater dimension and range of experiences for ITE students to ensure that they are more adequately prepared for teaching in real-world contexts after graduation from their ITE courses. Providing information about the location of centres of excellence for gifted education and making access available to all providers to support opportunity for PSTs to observe, or engage with excellent teachers assures equity of access for PSTs in regional universities. Partnerships across providers to enable this is a consideration to improve access for all PSTs.

Practical experience for pre-service teachers (PSTs) is very much dependent on finding schools and supervising teachers who are available and willing to supervise PSTs on their placements. Unfortunately, there is no national accreditation or training in place to ensure the quality and rigour of supervision in school placements, this would be a useful addition to ITE. Additionally, it would be useful to provide incentive for experienced teachers to take on supervisory roles for PSTs on their placements, such as extra payment that genuinely reflect the additional work of supervision of a PST.

#### **National frameworks**

Gifted students are a cohort of students within all schools, with specific identified learning needs and characteristics (Plunkett & Kronborg, 2011). Classroom teachers are not confident to teach gifted students, a confidence that could be addressed in pre-service course work (Plunkett & Kronborg, 2013). Many PSTs enter their course of study with a set of conceptions about learners and teachers that are

born of their life experiences, their personal school experience and the images and messages from popular culture, news media and the community. These attitudes and misconceptions include understanding the needs of gifted students/students with high potential (Plunkett & Kronborg, 2011; Fraser-Seeto, 2013; Young et al, 2018). Across the years of teacher education, PSTs learn about theories of teaching, and they are able to test their ideas, develop efficacy and confidence to design learning experiences that lead to positive outcomes for gifted students when on placement in schools.

Early teacher training can assist in giving educators the required knowledge, skills and confidence to identify, assess and implement quality provisions for gifted and talented students within their classrooms and school communities. (Fraser-Seeto, 2013; Plunkett & Kronborg, 2011).

“... teacher training, especially when addressed at pre-service level, can have a positive impact on an educator’s ability and confidence to provide quality learning experiences for gifted and talented students. .. teacher training reinforces positive beliefs, attitudes toward and perceptions of gifted and talented education, while ensuring the ability to identify these students and differentiate their learning appropriately across a diverse range of domains.” (Fraser-Seeto, 2013, p.33)

### **Student support during placements**

A key strategy for best outcomes for gifted students is differentiation – adjusting the learning activities, assessments and content for students with high potential to meet their needs. During placement, there is opportunity for PSTs to make the connection between theory and practice – to observe explicit modelling, hear teachers talk positively about differentiation, to be provided with frameworks to use and to be assessed specifically on their attempts to differentiate. The support that is needed should include explicit expectations about gifted learners: how to recognise the students who need differentiation to extend their learning; explicit assessment in the classroom on how the needs of gifted students are successfully met and professional collegial discussion with their mentor reflecting the PST’s ability to plan for, teach and assess gifted learners (Plunkett & Kronborg, 2011; Scarparolo & Subban, 2021; Young et al, 2018). When on placement, PSTs will increase their self-efficacy when they are supported to teach diverse students, working out what is needed and ways to provide activities that are relevant for the learner and the context. While on placement a focus on doing, exploring, trying out the strategies they have learned in theory is more effective than observation. Trying strategies in a classroom where the teacher works alongside the PST – modelling, highlighting what works and doesn’t, assessing PSTs on their actual teaching and its impact on students – and has authentic collegial discussion in the moment. PSTs need diverse experiences that include intentional placements in different contexts and types of classroom/school across their practicum experiences where there are gifted students and an explicit expectation that they experience different forms of programming for gifted students.

Mentor teachers can influence by using the language of differentiation, planning for it, implementing strategies and aligning strategy choices with student needs. Also through their supervision – highlighting where PSTs begin to

differentiate for gifted learners (Scarporolo & Subban, 2021). Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) has been recognised as an important predictor of future practice, behaviour, persistence, and effort and can influence various aspects of a teacher's role, including how they structure and use instructional strategies; how they view their students' ability; how they engage students; and their approach to classroom management ( Scarparolo & Subban, 2021)

### **Integrating theory and practice**

Projects linking PSTs to schools (Jobling & Moni, 2004) in an authentic experience that includes observation, theory, opportunity to work with diverse students both in and out of classrooms in special programs, or activities where PSTs work with gifted students are an alternate way to an extended placement, where PSTs are under pressure across a full classroom. A project lead/mentor who talks them through what they are seeing and targets their observations plays a role of influencing their understandings and supporting their capacity to teach gifted learners. Jung (2014) identified the positive impact of becoming familiar with gifted individuals through programs or activities on the way PSTs approached the teaching of these students, and how it provided them with a deeper understanding of their needs and ways of learning.

Students asked for more real experience (Jobling & Moni, 2004), wanting chances to observe, work alongside diverse students to reinforce their learning about these students. After being involved in mini-projects that were designed to provide them with real experience with diverse students they felt more confident. Students also expressed concern that in every element of their course there needed to be reference to diverse students, rather than these learners being on the margins of their core content.

A valuable resource for ITE providers would be a collection of profiles of good teachers of gifted learners – what makes a good teacher of the gifted? Such a resource would help PSTs to see what personal and professional skills they can aspire to develop/focus on when on placement – and to look for when observing teachers in action. Fraser-Seeto (2013) talks about the need for PSTs to see good practice, and to engage with discussion around what makes good practice in gifted education. Profiles and case studies of effective quality programs and teaching allows for discussion, modelling and investigation of the characteristics of effective programming for gifted learners.

### **Role of schools in supporting practical experience**

Plunkett & Kronborg (2011) identify that many in-service classroom teachers are not confident or knowledgeable about teaching gifted students. They also note the impact of professional development targeted at gifted learners had on attitudes, approaches and recognition of the different needs of gifted students. Offering a program of professional learning for teaching gifted learners for free to the school would be a way of supporting the school overall and improving their outcomes. Engaging in an action research project supported by academics and supporting this with funding for time and relief would demonstrate a valuing of gifted learners as a distinct cohort in a school. Plunkett & Kronborg (2011) discuss such an approach. The project approach described by Jobling and Moni (2004) highlights the impact on

both school and PSTs when they are engaged in mini projects that have a specific goal or focus.

Inviting schools to provide ITE providers with the details of their programs and provisions for gifted students would support providers to match student profiles with the school profile for an aligned experience. A requirement for PSTs to experience a range of classrooms or programs across their course, accompanied by a set of guidelines that indicate a variety of experiences across the hours of placements would support placements and inform the provider of programs or activity that may become case study examples for course content.

Providers need to be provided with specific information about schools where programs for gifted students are effective and successful – some way of guiding providers to ensure students experience these programs – opportunities to talk with classroom teachers – so practice experiences need to include not just being in a classroom but meeting with different teachers, hearing about real time activity, teacher responses and reflections – where are the effective gifted teachers – resources that all providers can use so that all PSTs hear about real teaching of gifted students

#### **Reform 4: improve postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants**

As PSTs, mid-career entrants may, in fact, have experience working with and interacting with gifted individuals that results in a readiness to consider the value of, and need for, inclusion of explicit content on giftedness and gifted learners (Jung, 2014).

For career changers, such as postgraduate mid-career entrants, the addition of paid professional experience placements may be appealing, otherwise ITE students will need to go for lengthy periods during placements where they cannot work full time, or even part time due to the rigour and intensity of block placement periods (e.g., five weeks at a time).

#### **Conclusion**

The AAEGT supports the intention of the panel to review and assure the quality of ITE programs to graduate classroom teachers who are well prepared to teach in classrooms now. Our comments on the four suggested reforms support the reforms while highlighting where the AAEGT has concerns about the preparation of PSTs to teach gifted students - our students who potentially will lead in our communities, create solutions to environmental issues, and support the development of a just and equitable society where all members are able to achieve their potential.

Our recommendations address some of the gaps that create a risk of gifted students, or those with high potential, failing to achieve their potential because of teacher misunderstanding or misconceptions.

**Recommendation 1:**

Address the absence of specific reference to gifted students in policies and documents including the professional teaching standards and the program standards for ITE. The generic comments of 'all levels of ability' do not pay attention to the specific needs of gifted students that assure best outcomes for these students.

**Recommendation 2:**

Require all programs to include at least one course/subject focussed on the identification and through consensus define key topics to be addressed.

**Recommendation 3:**

Ensure all PSTs have the opportunity to teach in a context where gifted students are present to provide them with exposure to these students.

**Recommendation 4:**

The establishment of an early career framework that recognises the essential need for ongoing learning post-graduation to support the development of specific teaching skills.

The AAEGT is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion, and to provide the panel with insights into the education of gifted students within all Australian schools.

## References

- Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented. (2022, December). *Response to the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan*. <https://www.education.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/consultations/national-teacher-workforce-action-plan/submission/15769>
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2017). *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/standards>
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2001). *The Education of Gifted Children*. Australian Government Publishing Services.
- Council of Australian Governments Education Council. (2019). Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Government. [http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/National\\_Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Educational\\_Goals\\_for\\_Young\\_Australians.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf).
- Cramer, E. D., Theodore, S., Lumpkins, A., Cummings, C. S., & Flores, H. R. (2023). Enhancing Social Justice via Equity-Based Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. In *Social Justice and Culturally-Affirming Education in K-12 Settings*. 111-132. IGI Global.
- Fien, H., Chard, D. J., & Baker, S. K. (2021). Can the Evidence Revolution and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Improve Education Equity and Reading Achievement? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56, S105-S118.
- Fraser-Seeto, K. (2013). Pre-service teacher training in gifted and talented education: An Australian perspective, *Journal of Student Engagement: Education Matters*, 3(1), 29-38. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/jseem/vol3/iss1/5>
- Gagné, F. (2004). Transforming Gifts into Talents: The DMGT as a Developmental Theory. *High Ability Studies*, 15, 119-147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1359813042000314682>
- Gagné, F. (2020). *Differentiating Giftedness from Talent: The DMGT Perspective on Talent Development* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003088790>
- Jobling, A. & Moni, K. B. (2004). 'I never imagined I'd have to teach these children': providing authentic learning experiences for secondary pre-service teachers in teaching students with special needs, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(1), 5-22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866042000206026>
- Jolly, J. L., & Robins, J. H. (2021). Australian gifted and talented education: An analysis of government policies. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 46(8), 70-95.
- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. (2008). *Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians*. [http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/national\\_declaration\\_on\\_the\\_educational\\_goals\\_for\\_young\\_australians.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/national_declaration_on_the_educational_goals_for_young_australians.pdf)

- National Association for Gifted Children, & The Association for the Gifted, Council for Exceptional Children. (2006). NAGC-CEC teacher knowledge & skill standards for gifted and talented education.
- Neihart, M., Pfeiffer, S. I. & Cross, T. L. (2016). *Social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* Routledge.
- Plunkett, M. & Dr. Kronborg, L. (2011). Learning to Be a Teacher of the Gifted: The Importance of Examining Opinions and Challenging Misconceptions, *Gifted and Talented International*, 26(1-2), 31-46.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15332276.2011.11673587>
- Plunkett, M., & Kronborg, L. (2019). Teaching gifted education to pre-service teachers: Lessons learned. In *Handbook of giftedness and talent development in the Asia-Pacific*. Springer.
- Ronksley-Pavia, M. (2020). Twice-exceptionality in Australia: Prevalence estimates. *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*; 29(2), 17-29.
- Rutigliano, A., & Quarshie, N. (2021). *Policy approaches and initiatives for the inclusion of gifted students in OECD countries*. <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-approaches-and-initiatives-for-the-inclusion-of-gifted-students-in-oecd-countries-c3f9ed87-en.htm>
- Scarparolo, G. & Subban, P. (2021). A systematic review of preservice teachers' self-efficacy beliefs for differentiated instruction, *Teachers and Teaching*, 27(8), 753-766, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2021.2007371>
- Schuler, P. (2002). 'Perfectionism in gifted children and adolescents', in Neihart, M., Reis, S. M., Robinson, N. M. & Moon, S. M. (eds.) *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?*. Prufrock Press.
- Tasmanian Association of the Gifted. (2021). *Submission to the quality ITE review*. <file:///C:/Users/sbond/Downloads/36.%20Tasmanian%20Association%20for%20the%20Gifted.pdf>
- Troxclair, Debra. (2013). Preservice Teacher Attitudes Toward Giftedness. *Roeper Review*. 35. 58-64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2013.740603>
- Young, G.; Specht, J.A.; Hunter, F.E.; Terreberry, S.; McGhie-Richmond, D. & Hutchinson, N.L. (2018). 'The First Day He Kicked Shoes at Me, the Last Day He Brought Me a Picture of Himself': Investigating the Practicum Experiences of Pre-service Teachers. *Exceptionality Education International*, 28(3), 83-101.