

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

I am writing to you as a parent of two gifted, primary school age 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 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 since finding out that both of my children are gifted I have taken a great interest in educating myself about gifted children and their different needs and have noticed a vast gap in this area when it comes to the Australian Education system. I have even had to change my daughters school (and now pay a fortune in a private school) as her needs were being 'brushed aside' by the teachers and senior staff at the public school she was previously at. She is now thriving and much more emotionally stable in a school that is catering to her needs more fully. This is something that I should not have to pay so much extra for however I am lucky that we are in a position that we can do this. So many other gifted students fall through the gaps because they don't get access to a better system where they can be catered to more fully.

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,