



Founding Statement

Gifted children think differently. They often approach problems in a more creative and divergent fashion than the majority of their age peers. This does not make them more special than anyone else – indeed some would argue it makes them more needy. Giftedness is not elitist. It is not gender-specific, nor overrepresented in any one cultural group or socio-economic status. Giftedness is not always free from a learning disability. It does not guarantee happiness or success; it is not a golden lottery ticket. Gifted children are rarely prodigies or geniuses.

Of course all children are gifts, all children have gifts, but not all children are ‘gifted’ in the sense in which that term is employed in the research literature: having natural ability in the top 10% of their age cohort.

Children who are gifted need to have their needs met at school on a full-time basis – not just at chess club every second Wednesday or at out-of-school gifted workshops. Gifted students are gifted all day, every day. Since gifted students are a heterogeneous group, each requires specifically targeted adjustments to their educational program.

Children who are gifted face being misunderstood and isolated or becoming disengaged when their learning needs are not met. In his keynote address at the 2015 National Gifted Conference, Geoff Masters, Chief Executive of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), presented extensive data on Australia’s growing bank of NAPLAN results. In each year of school, the most advanced 10 per cent of students are five to six years ahead of the least advanced 10 per cent. As a society, our vision should be to guide and educate all children by meeting each one at their own level. Masters determines that, “The learning needs of the highest-performing students in our schools are often not well addressed due to the failure to recognise true variability in students’ levels of capability and achievement”.

Our nation should be endeavouring to nurture giftedness in all domains, ensuring we celebrate intellectual giftedness in the classroom in the same manner that we celebrate athletic giftedness on the sporting field and musical giftedness in the school orchestra.

Of the 37 universities in Australia which offer education at the undergraduate level, only 3 currently have a compulsory, stand-alone gifted education unit within their undergraduate programs. To support our educators and provide necessary professional development in gifted education, we need to collaborate as a nation, explicitly incorporating gifted into our curriculum, teaching standards, under-graduate studies and on-going post-graduate professional development.

Gifted Awareness Week Australia was founded in 2015 by the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) to raise awareness of the identification, support and learning needs of gifted children and to celebrate the dedication of individuals and educational bodies who are making a positive difference in the lives of gifted children and their families.

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