

SUBMISSION: REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL REFORM AGREEMENT

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I am making a submission in connection to the review of the National School Reform Agreement to draw your attention to the neglect of one major group of students (i.e., **students of high potential/ability or gifted students**) in Australian education.

While most Australian schools give adequate attention to diverse student cohorts (e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability, and students who have English as an Additional Language/Dialect), comparatively less attention is given to students of high potential and ability (i.e., gifted students).

This is despite the fact that gifted students comprise a substantial portion of the Australian student population (with some estimates at **between 20% to 30% of the Australian student population**; Gagné, 2009), and **up to 50% of these students underachieve at substantial levels** (Morisano & Shore, 2010). Many underachieving gifted students prematurely drop out of school and otherwise fail to live up to their tremendous potential. It is therefore no surprise that there has been a **decline in Australia's performance (particularly at the top end) in international student assessments such as the Development Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS)**.

The lack of attention to gifted students may be reflective of an old-fashioned interpretation of the term "equity" to mean that efforts should be directed toward ensuring that the educational needs of the "low performers" in Australian education are addressed to ensure that they "keep pace" with the rest of the Australian student population. The contemporary interpretation of the term is that efforts should be directed toward ensuring that the educational needs of ALL Australian students (including those who are high potential and ability) are met.

Fortunately, there are signs that the Australian education system is now starting to be inclusive of the educational needs of these students. For example, the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* (in which I was quoted and acted as a consultant) has not only recognised the educational needs of "students with disability, students in rural or remote locations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those from non-English speaking backgrounds, low socio-economic backgrounds", but also recognised the educational needs of gifted students. Furthermore, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) requires teachers to "Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities" in its Professional Standards for Teachers.

I urge the Productivity Commission to better acknowledge and support the educational needs of students who have high potential and ability in the review of the National School Reform Agreement. I am available to discuss the above at any time. My contact details are:

It goes without saying that gifted students have a right to an appropriate education just as much as other students in Australia.

References

Gagné, F. (2009). Building gifts into talents: Detailed overview of the DMGT 2.0. In B. MacFarlane & T. Stambaugh (Eds.), *Leading change in gifted education: The festschrift of Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska* (pp. 61–80). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Morisano, D., & Shore, B. M. (2010). Can personal goal setting tap the potential of the gifted underachiever? *Roeper Review*, 32(4), 249-258.