



2016 Media Release

Gifted children think differently; they process differently, their brain is wired differently. This does not make them more special than anyone else; giftedness is not elitist. It is not gender-specific, nor bound to one cultural group or socio-economic status. Giftedness is not free from a learning disability. It does not guarantee happiness nor success; it is not a golden lottery ticket. Gifted children are rarely prodigies or geniuses. All children are gifts, all children have gifts, but not all children are gifted. 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 weekend or holiday '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, loneliness, and disengagement 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 looking at Australia's growing bank of Naplan results. In each year of school in Australia, the most advanced 10 per cent of students are five to six years ahead of the least advanced 10 per cent of students. 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 endeavour to nurture giftedness in all domains, ensuring we celebrate intellectual giftedness in the same manner that we celebrate physical giftedness in the sporting field and the like.

Of the 37 universities in Australia who offer education at a tertiary level, only 3 presently 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 in our curriculum, teaching standards, under-graduate studies and on-going post-graduate professional development.

Gifted Awareness Week Australia was founded 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 difference in the lives of gifted children and their families.

Gifted Awareness Week Australia: 13th to 19th March, 2016

Melinda Gindy

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