AAEGT Information Statement

There are approximately 400,000 gifted children enrolled in schools across Australia. Finding out about gifted children, trying to define their differences and identify and develop their talents, understanding how they feel and what they need to thrive and succeed—these are all pieces of the intricate puzzle facing many parents and teachers of gifted children. All want what’s best for the child and all strive to provide fulfilling and challenging experiences that enrich and extend gifted children, encouraging them to grow and to explore rewarding future pathways throughout their lives.

Local initiatives to identify and provide for the educational needs of these gifted children benefit from the support of a national, collaborative approach to policy formulation and future directions setting. The Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) Ltd. has developed this information statement in its capacity as the peak national body focusing attention on Australians with gifts and talents.

What is AAEGT?

The Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) Ltd. is a national body affiliated with state and territory gifted associations listed below.

AAEGT aims to:
- Maintain a continuing Australia-wide exchange of information about giftedness, as well as ideas, experiences, teaching and teacher-training techniques for giftedness
- Stimulate research into the nature of giftedness and appreciation of the diversity of talent across the nation
- Persuade governments to recognise the gifted and talented as individuals requiring special attention in education
- Challenge myths and misinformation about the gifted
- Promote awareness of gifted students who are disadvantaged through social, cultural, ethnic, location or the possession of specific learning disabilities
- Create a climate of acceptance that the gifted are an asset to the nation in the knowledge era
- Bring together and support the gifted and talented of Australia.

AAEGT came into existence in May 1985 in response to the need for a national body to promote the cause of gifted education. The founders of AAEGT were driven by the need for a national forum that provided accurate information, as well as support, advocacy and networks across the nation.

AAEGT became an affiliated organisation in 1995 when Australian state and territory associations for the gifted and talented affiliated with AAEGT. It was agreed that through affiliation the national body could truly represent the states and territories and duplication of effort between what the AAEGT was trying to achieve and what the state and territory associations were providing could be minimised. The work of the AAEGT Council during 1994 and 1995 created this affiliated organisation in support of Australians with gifts and talents in all their diversity.

AAEGT provides expertise and advocacy to federal and state government, national forums, and education conferences. Quality resources include a refereed journal, newsletters and support materials, website development and organisation of a biennial national conference.

AAEGT Secretariat [www.aegt.net.au](http://www.aegt.net.au) [info@aegt.net.au](mailto:info@aegt.net.au)
Who are the Gifted?

Gifted children have high ability in relation to their age peers. They are capable of high performance given appropriate challenging learning experiences. The development of this potential into outstanding performance is the shared responsibility of families, educators and communities.

The Melbourne Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century 2008 concludes with the goal that “all young Australians will be provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential.” To achieve their full potential gifted students require special curricula and teachers expert in their education.

Gifted children are represented across all socio-economic and cultural groups, independent of factors such as gender, indigenous status, isolation, disability and learning difficulty. Gifted children are located in all communities and in almost every classroom in Australia. However, without adequate and specialised intervention their gifts will fail to manifest.

Gifted children do not conform to any typical manifestation of giftedness. Each has a different ability profile. Giftedness can be demonstrated in a range of areas and to varying degrees. While common characteristics can be observed, each gifted child will have differences in personality, interests and educational needs.

Nevertheless, gifted children are those who have the greatest potential to become leaders, innovators – our best and brightest – and have the greatest potential to contribute to the economic and social welfare of the nation. In an age where knowledge creation and innovation are of paramount importance, the gifted are the nation’s greatest resource.

Identification

Parents play an important role in identification and they may be the first to realise that their child is gifted. Even at a very early age parents may be aware that their child is progressing at a different rate from other children of a similar age. The research literature on giftedness suggests that parents are good judges of the broad indicators of giftedness, especially if they have some knowledge of the field, but need help with identifying the finer details of giftedness. In contrast some parents are confused by the complex behaviours they witness and experience difficulties as they seek to understand their children. Early identification is essential to foster appropriate learning experiences.

For highly gifted children, quality standardised testing, with appropriate educational placement and extension, is necessary to avoid underachievement and low self-esteem. IQ testing is the single best indicator of giftedness, however there are limitations and other criteria must be considered.

Early contact with the state or territory gifted and talented association (see below) to access information and resources, as well as discuss the child’s development and behaviour, is important for parents and teachers. This contact will assist adults to understand the gifted child’s special needs.

Parents can consider keeping a portfolio of the child’s output, types and levels of activities the child engages in, age when milestones were reached, and significant performance achievements. This portfolio will assist the school to provide an appropriate educational program for the child.

At school the identification process should involve parents and can include more than one identification tool. Children can show their giftedness in one area or in several. Intellectual giftedness is linked to academic achievement where optimal conditions exist, and schools can make use of:

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• checklists and nominations from parents, teachers, peers as well as self nomination,
• observation and evaluation of classroom tasks, e.g. products, performances, academic grades
• results of competitions
• interviews with the child and parents
• standardised IQ tests
• other standardised tests
• observations

Whatever procedures are used to identify gifted children within a school they should consider:
• using more than one instrument
• ensuring that children from disadvantaged and minority groups are included, such as underachievers, gifted learning disabled, children from culturally diverse backgrounds, socio-economically disadvantaged children
• allowing for children to be identified at any stage
• recognising all domains of giftedness
• developing a school-wide identification process
• providing opportunities for children to be identified as a result of appropriate curriculum taught within the school
• ensuring that identification results in extension for the child that includes the necessary mix of acceleration, ability grouping and individualisation.

Not everyone appreciates what giftedness is, nor can they easily see it in children. A systematic defensible process for identifying giftedness enables schools to recognise and plan for their gifted students.

Gifted children are entitled to support from educators, their family and the wider community.

What is the role of educators?

Gifted students appreciate learning environments where teachers know and respect their abilities and use these abilities as a springboard to excellent student performance. The skilful teacher uses strategies that extend, motivate and inspire the gifted student and result in differentiated content, skills development and learning outcomes.

Provision for gifted students should include an individualised educational plan that incorporates appropriate forms of acceleration and ability grouping. In gifted education, acceleration means moving faster. Rather than extensive repetition for mastery of basics, gifted children need to proceed through their learning experiences at an individual pace. Acceleration strategies include: curriculum acceleration within a year level; curriculum compression or compaction; subject acceleration and grade or year skipping. Research has shown that for gifted students acceleration has long-term beneficial effects, both academically and socially.

Grouping allows for gifted children to work with likeminded peers in a supportive environment. Gifted children can be organised into ability or achievement groups, which need not be restricted to the same class or year level.

For teachers to identify and cater for these students access to gifted education pre-service training and continued professional learning from sources such as tertiary institutions, education systems and state and territory gifted associations is essential. Currently the majority of teacher training institutions in Australia have no mandatory training in gifted education.
What is the role of families?

Parents and caregivers are the first to recognise and respond to the needs of their gifted children. Families play a key role in providing opportunities for gifted children to engage in a variety of enriching learning experiences. Passions recognised and nurtured through the family can develop to the highest levels of achievement when opportunities are supported by intense study and practice leading to mastery.

Research has shown that the best outcomes for gifted students occur when there is a successful partnership between school and home. Parents and teachers are in a unique position to share their observation of gifted students, enabling them to support each other in developing the talents of the students.

What is the role of the community?

The community provides opportunities for gifted children to further develop their talents, for example mentors can provide expertise and stimulation in a wider range of pursuits that will encourage high achievement.

The state and territory associations for gifted and talented children can serve as a focus for community activity through provision of activities: including student programs, teacher support, family support, advocacy, resources and networking.

Contacts

**Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented Ltd.**  
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**Gifted and Talented Children’s Association of South Australia Inc.**  
*Email: info@gtcas.asn.au  Website: www.gtcas.asn.au*

**Gifted and Talented Children’s Association of Western Australia**  
*Email: gatca-wa@gatcawa.org  Website: www.gatcawa.org*

**New South Wales Association for Gifted and Talented Children Inc.**  
*Email: office@ns wagtc.org.au  Website: www.nswagtc.org.au*

**Northern Territory Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented Inc.**  
*Email: webmaster@ntaegt.org.au  Website: www.ntaegt.org.au*

**Professional Association of Parents and Teachers of the Gifted (ProAPT) WA**  
*Website: www.proapt.net*

**Queensland Association for Gifted and Talented Children Inc.**  
*Email: office@qagt.org.au  Website: www.qagt.org.au*

**Tasmanian Association for the Gifted Inc.**  
*Email: office@tasgifted.org.au  Website: www.tasgifted.org.au*

**Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children Inc.**  
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