SUBMISSION

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

MAY 2011
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Dear Members of the Education and Training Committee,

Please find attached a submission from Nossal High School - Victoria’s first coeducational academically selective government high school which opened in 2010.

I believe that Nossal High School offers a unique opportunity – a purpose designed, 21st century educational facility working in partnership with Monash University. Creating such a new school allows us not only the opportunity to inform our structures and practices with existing research, but to contribute new knowledge and research in the area of gifted education.

Our current cohort of 400 Year 9 and 10 students are drawn from a wide geographic area and represent diverse backgrounds, culturally, socioeconomically and experientially. Each intake of 200 students came from over 95 different schools, with approximately 50% from government schools, and demand for places is very strong (and increasing) with over 1300 preferring Nossal High School for one of the 200 places being offered in 2012.

Feedback from staff, students and parents to date has been exceptionally positive and on existing performance measures the school is achieving excellent outcomes in these very early developmental stages. It is however the “ethos” or atmosphere within the school that is most striking and difficult to quantify or describe without experiencing it first hand, and one of our significant challenges is to capture, articulate and nurture this.

Nossal High School (and Suzanne Cory High School) provide an opportunity to observe the implementation of new curriculum and pedagogy specifically designed for gifted and talented students, alongside the political, systemic and attitudinal challenges associated with the creation of two new selective schools within an existing local network of schools and the wider educational system.

I thank you for taking the time to consider our submission, authored by Nossal Assistant Principal Toni Meath (herself a Doctoral Candidate in Gifted Education)
and providing a snapshot of the experiences and perceptions of members of our school community. Our student leaders are also presenting a submission of their own; student voice and leadership are key features of our school and our students have authentic and powerful input into our structures and organisation, and have a strong desire to have their experiences and opinions taken into consideration by the parliamentary committee as well.

It is my very great privilege and honour to be the foundation principal of Nossal High School and I would like to warmly invite the parliamentary committee to visit and speak to our staff, students and parents for a more personalised insight into a school community that has been purposely created to address the learning needs of gifted and talented students.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Page
Principal
(on behalf of the Nossal High School Community)
‘At Nossal High School, students have the opportunity to work within an environment where staff and students understand their special needs, talents and abilities, and are more able to cater for them. To be with like-minded, talented and aspirational peers in an environment that is structured specifically to capitalize on their interests and abilities and to challenge them to go further and step outside of their comfort zone to enrich and extend themselves. To enable these academically capable students the opportunity to build and extend their capabilities beyond what is possible within a mainstream environment. Select Entry schooling enables significant staff enrichment, training and learning about Gifted Education, which is not possible in another setting.’

Mr. Roger Page, Principal of Nossal High School

‘The experience at Nossal High School for me has been more than terrific. Besides the friendly students, enthusiastic teachers, it has enabled me to challenge my knowledge and has made me try to stay a step ahead. Overall, my experience at Nossal has quite literally changed my life from taking me out of a slow-paced education environment (for me that is) to a challenging and fast-paced education environment.’

Year 10 student, Nossal High School

‘We chose a select entry school for our son to facilitate his understanding of his giftedness, intelligence and to further improve on his scholastic pursuits. This is a distinct possibility in a select entry school where the environment is very conductive for self improvement, academic excellence and developing a well grounded character.’

Parent, Nossal High School
2. Introduction

A beginning learning organisation such as Nossal High School is dynamic and complex. As the first Select Entry Co-educational High School opened in Victoria in January 2010 we have been challenged with the development of an iconic high school to cater for the needs of gifted and talented students. We are accountable to gain new understandings and provide fresh approaches in the delivery of gifted education. Or as Argyris and Schon state:

Organisational success, however defined, is seen as depending on the organisation’s ability to see things in new ways, gain new understandings, and produce new patterns of behaviour- all on a continuing basis and in a way that engages the organisation as a whole. (Argyris & Schon, 1996, xix)

Nossal High School has a developing shared vision of a learning organisation as a group of people who are continually enhancing their capabilities to create improved quality learning outcomes for gifted students. This is supported by Senge who states that learning organisations are:

…organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking were nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (Senge, 1990, 3)

At Nossal High School this has been highly evident in the systems focus on creating innovative student learning programs that have challenged old paradigms to create the ‘new normal’ in education practice for gifted students. Examples of this include our flexible learning spaces and approaches; personalised learning approach; focus on thinking skills; expeditional learning; student conferences; student voice; acceleration, enrichment and enhancement.

In this submission we welcome the Ministers to visit Nossal High School to see a Select Entry School in action. We also place a lens over: the effectiveness of current policies (Federal, State and School) and programs for gifted and talented students; the Nossal Context including our vision and expectations of students and staff; the definition of what it means to be gifted and talented and how this translates to the classroom and the professional learning at Nossal High School. The submission concludes with student, parent and staff voice and
recommendations to the Parliamentary Inquiry on a way forward to best support gifted and talented children in Victorian Education.

3. The effectiveness of current policies and programs for gifted and talented students in Victoria

In Victorian government schools the VCE/VELS is the core documentation guiding teacher’s determination of curriculum content and pedagogy. However, policies also inform practice and therefore merit attention. There are three levels of gifted policy that may influence the choices Victorian teachers make in the provisioning for the gifted learner including federal, state and school policies.

Federal Gifted Policy

From an international perspective Australia has been quite slow on the uptake of gifted education policy development (Wilson, 1996). The first national recognition of gifted education was the Australian Schools Commission Act (1973) providing minimal funding of $100,000 for the entirety of gifted programs in Australia. In fact the ‘tall poppy syndrome’ or the social phenomenon in which those who have genuine talent are criticized or resented is strong in the social psyche of the Australian culture. This is reflected in the federal Schools Commission Report (1980) which suggested that there be no special services or programs for gifted students because they benefit most from a comprehensive program. From the national perspective the federal government largely continued in this vein up until the 2001 Senate Inquiry into Gifted Education which essentially partly occurred as a result from pressure from several of the states of Australia, including Victoria.

The Australian Government Senate Inquiry Committee Report (2001) made several recommendations including: ‘for the Commonwealth to establish a national strategy on gifted education, to ameliorate the changeable and unstable state of policy and practice’ (Commonwealth of Australia, p.xvii). The report recognised that many gifted learners in Australian schools were experiencing underachievement, boredom and frustration (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001). The Senate Inquiry Report recommended that priority be given to research in the field of gifted education, that teachers engage in professional learning in gifted education and the development of a national approach to develop resources in curriculum for gifted students. Victoria has inadequately responded to this inquiry in its provisioning for gifted students.
In 2011, the datedness of this policy requires attention. Thinking has changed in education and there is a need for revision at the federal level. Currently, the federal curriculum authority, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA) are developing a national curriculum with an implementation timeline of 2013, however, to date there exists mention of gifted education only in consultation papers and is absent in formal documentation. Wardlaw (2008), in a consultative powerpoint to ACARA recommends catering for the diversity of gifted learners through out of school programs.

**Victorian State Gifted Policy**

The first formal Victorian policy for gifted education, was released by the Department of School Education in May 1995 and preceded the 2001 Senate Inquiry Report. In part, this was a policy combined with other state policies that placed pressure on the federal government to respond. This policy was known as ‘The Bright Future Policy’ and the main thrust of the policy was to draw attention to catering for gifted learners in the regular classroom. The policy states that there is: ‘a fundamental need to focus on students who are performing or have the potential to perform at significantly higher levels than other children of the same age’ (1995, p.3). The Victorian Department of Education combined the policy with a number of strategies to support professional learning including: the establishment of a Gifted Education Branch; the implementation of Select Entry Accelerated Learning (SEAL) accreditation for schools; a number of pilot enrichment projects; early entry to university for able students; and a financial commitment of funding to those schools who were showing a commitment to gifted education (Wilson, 1996).

With a change of government, in 2003, the Gifted Education Branch and Bright Futures Policy was disbanded and the field of gifted education was placed under the umbrella of the Strategic Project Unit which held responsibility for gifted education, gender education, indigenous education and religious education (Skantos, 2003). Funding for programs in schools was diminished and gifted education was absorbed into the rollout of Blueprint 1. In 2006, the Department of Education sought to take initiatives to improve provisioning of gifted education, such as the granting of Teacher Professional Leave (TPL) for research, such as this study. Two new Select Entry High Schools (Nossal High School and Suzanne Cory High School) were approved to join Victoria’s two established Select Entry Schools and a Select Entry Network of Schools of the four schools was established in 2009. A professional learning network for schools with SEAL programs was set up, and in 2009 the Department has engaged with Victorian gifted experts such as Munro, Kronborg and Plunkett for consultation for future gifted education provisioning.
In early 2010, a new state Gifted and Talented Policy is imminent as the Australian national testing or the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy data (NAPLAN, 2009) has revealed that New South Wales gifted students are outperforming the Victorian gifted students and a government response is required at Years 3, 5, 7 & 9 (Reynen, 2011).

Again, the time that lapsed between a possible imminent Gifted Policy for Victoria in 2011 and the 1995 ‘Bright Futures Policy’ is sixteen years. This relays to schools and teachers the apparent lack of valuing of gifted education and the importance of differentiation to cater for gifted learners.

**School Gifted Policy**

Some schools have their own policy on gifted education, which may embrace aspects of federal and state policies or reflect the thinking of organisations such as the Victorian Association of Gifted and Talented Children (VAGTC) or the Australian Association of Gifted and Talented Education (AAGTE). However, this approach is very ‘hit and miss’, with some schools choosing to support a philosophy of gifted education and some not. The programs and policies that are implemented at school level are a direct reflection of the directives and policies at the DEECD level, and if there are ‘silences, gaps and omissions’ (Rapley, 2007, p.111) at this level (of which there are) then you are unlikely to see well developed gifted programs/policies in schools.

**4. Context of Nossal High School – Victoria’s first co-educational Select Entry High School**

Nossal High School is a part of the Select Entry Network of schools which comprises Melbourne High School, the Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School and Suzanne Cory High School. Nossal High School is located in a significant growth area on the south eastern edge of Melbourne within the city of Casey’s Education Hub on the Monash University Campus site at Berwick.

Nossal High School is located on the western side of the Monash University site on Clyde Road at Berwick. The buildings have been purpose designed to provide a flexible and stimulating adult learning environment with access to state of the art facilities and an ICT rich platform allowing for collaboration, independence and extension. The school is uniquely sited on the grounds of Monash University and adjacent to Chisholm TAFE allowing for
sharing of facilities, joint programs and partnership arrangements. The school will become an integral part of the Berwick Educational Precinct and will benefit from the continued growth of the tertiary campuses, the TEC, business and research facilities planned for the site. Community partnerships with the City of Casey offers potential enhanced access to sports and performing arts facilities in the future. Berwick railway station is a short walk from the school and public bus services traverse Clyde Road.

The school will have a co-educational enrolment maximum of 800 students in years 9 to 12 (200 per year level – currently at 400). Enrolment in this school is through a standard selection processes applicable for all four selective entry schools – this involves an examination process. The selection process is overseen by VCAA (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Testing and takes place in June of the preceding year, Applications for enrolment at the school are open from March to May to all students in (the equivalent of) year 8 in both government and non government schools. A maximum of 5% of the year 8 cohort in any school can be allocated places in year 9 at selective entry schools. Merit selection of 85% of the students will be on the basis of the centralised and independently administered entrance examination. Secondary selection criteria will see the other 15% of eligible students allocated places – 10% through demonstrable “equity” criteria and 5% at the discretion of the school. A preference system will is in place for students applying for more than one of the select entry schools.

The vision for Nossal High School is that as one of four fully selective government high schools in Victoria it will provide a comprehensive and quality curriculum to students in Years 9 to 12. Nossal High School:

(a) caters for highly able students who are aspiring to academic and tertiary pathways;

(b) engages students through innovation in a relevant and integrated curriculum and quality learning approaches;

(c) develops high quality effective teaching strategies to be shared amongst teachers throughout the state; and

(d) hosts a purpose built regional professional development centre that runs independently within the school.
The Goals of Nossal High School

At Nossal High School, we see these as the essential goals for gifted and talented learners.

**Nossal High School is a school where highly able students...**

- develop and foster a passionate curiosity for life-long learning;
- are challenged to develop understanding through deep engagement with ideas and evidence;
- link learning with business, industry, tertiary and research sectors of the community;
- are actively involved in their local and wider community;
- experience personalised and challenging programs individually tailored to meet their specific capabilities interests and career pathways;
- are assessed through informed and consistent judgements to improve future learning by ongoing gathering, analysing and reflecting on evidence;
- are involved in programs that further challenge extend and enrich their skills and interests;
- have the opportunity to access VET programs and tertiary enhancement and enrichment studies through partnership arrangements with Chisholm TAFE, Monash University; and others in the tertiary sector.
- meet the requirements of VELS, complete VCE and obtain an ENTER score to support applications for entry into tertiary education

**Nossal High School is a school where teachers...**

- stimulate and support ongoing teacher learning and collaborative teacher research within the school;
- develop and improve the quality of teaching practices of pre-service teachers;
- develop innovative curriculum and teaching resources and practices that are shared across Victorian secondary schools; and within the Select Entry Network;
• promote and provide credentialed professional learning for teachers in Victoria and elsewhere.

• actively participate within local school networks and partnership arrangements with local tertiary providers;

• take an active role within the local community to ensure the school is a significant part of the Berwick Educational Precinct;

• are exemplary educational leaders within the government school system.

The learning environment and curriculum

Nossal High School is developing a learning environment that:

• is predicated on the high academic capability of the students.

• supports a teaching and learning culture that is exciting, reflective, engaging, student centred, supports independent thinking and a respect for student work and the work of others

• fosters a strong sense of identity and belonging;

• caters for an innovative and broad scaffolded curriculum.

• facilitates innovative, evidence based pedagogies.

• incorporates flexible internal and external learning spaces supported with the most current technologies to support learning.

• and enables students to link with and work collaboratively with other schools, tertiary institutions, and state, national and international organisations.

The school has a very strong commitment to Individualised Learning Plans for every student. The school offers a four year learning program incorporating core and elective studies, enrichment studies, VET and VCE Units, and University Enhancement and Enrichment Studies which will provide opportunities for all students to gain the Victorian Certificate of Education. The curriculum is comprehensive and orientated to maximise every student’s opportunity to undertake tertiary level study. There are developing extensive co-curricula opportunities available for students at all levels.
Key features of the student learning program at Nossal High School

- a individualised learning program that will clearly articulate each student’s future pathway
- opportunities for students to accelerate
- compulsory units of study for all students in English, Mathematics, Science, Physical education/Health and Humanities
- enrichment studies developed around an agreed context - an approach which is interdisciplinary incorporating key learnings from the Victorian Curriculum Domains.
- interdisciplinary strands of learning such as values and attitudes, leadership, communication, community involvement and personal and social learning will be developed within integrated studies.
- opportunities for students to gain accreditation for specific VCE Units 1 & 2 and VET studies
- opportunities to undertake VCE Units 3&4 as stand alone studies.
- opportunities to undertake university enhancement and enrichment studies and VET programs through Chisholm TAFE, local networks and other providers
- Engagement of students and staff of the school with the university, TAFE and industry personnel and educators to add value to the learning.

In addition to the VELS and VCE the Nossal High School curriculum is framed by Gardner’s ‘Five Minds for the Future’ (2008) and the OECD’s ‘Learning for Tomorrow’ approach (2004). These frameworks will provide students with an underlying philosophy for life at Nossal High School and a vehicle to allow relevance in student learning in preparation for further studies. Gardner, Project Zero, Harvard University (2008) puts forward the elegant argument that all adults in the future will require minds which have been developed in their thinking capacities in the areas of Discipline, Synthesis, Creativity, Respect and Ethics. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a unique forum where the governments of thirty democracies from around the world are working together to address the challenges of globalisation our youth will face as they become adult (OECD, 2004). The OECD model for future learning is a simple and practical one.
Table 1 Gardner’s (2008) Five Minds of the Future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIVE MINDS FOR THE FUTURE</th>
<th>A Global Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE DISCIPLINED mIND</strong></td>
<td><strong>The SYNTHESISING MIND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals will need to be an expert in one area- they will need to develop depth and breadth in specific disciplines.</td>
<td>Individuals will need to be able to gather together information from disparate sources, find links, transfer and communicate this knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth/breadth in core domains is critical.</td>
<td>Significance of interdisciplinary learning and thinking skills. Rich tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Domains will be Maths, Science, English, LOTE, Humanities</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary learning will encompass all VELS Domains &amp; Dimensions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


We see this as an important framework to value add to our students. That is, when they leave Nossal they will be adults who are respectful, ethical, creative, able to synthesise and be passionate about their chosen discipline.
The OECD Model reminds us as educators that our responsibility to develop citizens of the future who are empowered. The world of the future requires gifted students who are able to collaborate, work in teams, inspire others, take leadership roles and work collectively with all. If we do not respond to needs of the gifted today we miss developing their capacity and potentially this can impact on future society.

5. Nossal’s Definition of Gifted and Talented – Understanding Gifted Learners at Nossal

There are many models for defining the gifted learner, however Gagne’s Model (Figure 1) differentiates between what it means to be gifted and what it means to be talented. This is widely accepted as the model to be used in education by academics in the field of gifted education. This is the model that we use to guide our understanding at Nossal High school. Our challenge is to support intellectually gifted and academically talented students to pursue their individual excellence and Gagne’s Model identifies our students as IGAT or Intellectually Gifted and Academically Talented.

Gagné states that:

- **Giftedness** refers to a student's outstanding potential and ability in one or more domains, (e.g. intellectual, creative, socio-affective and sensori-motor). **Talent** refers to outstanding performance in one or more fields of human activity. Talent emerges from ability as a consequence of the student's learning experience (1991, p.3).
The Characteristics of gifted learners

As part of the professional learning at Nossal High school we support our staff to understand some of the characteristics of gifted learners that may influence the ways pedagogy is delivered. This allows them to ‘lift the lid’ on the student’s learning and cater for individuals in their classroom who in other environment may be seen to be distracting or eccentric. These characteristics combined with the data from the psychometric testing to gain a place in the school gives us an understanding of the learning profiles of the students.

So, what characteristics or behaviours might be seen in children who possess the natural abilities which we have come to associate with giftedness? VanTassel-Baska (1998) and Silverman (2003) suggest that if a child demonstrates more than three-quarters of the following traits presented in Table 4 it is likely that he or she is gifted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good problem solving/reasoning abilities</td>
<td>high degree of energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rapid learning ability</td>
<td>preference for older companions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extensive vocabulary</td>
<td>wide range of interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellent memory</td>
<td>great sense of humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long attention span</td>
<td>early or avid reading ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal sensitivity</td>
<td>concerned with justice and fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compassion for others</td>
<td>at times, judgment seems mature for age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfectionism</td>
<td>keen powers of observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intensity</td>
<td>vivid imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moral sensitivity</td>
<td>high degree of creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unusual curiosity</td>
<td>tends to question authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persevering when interested</td>
<td>shows ability with numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good at visual puzzles</td>
<td>asks probing questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shows good judgment and logic</td>
<td>produces original or unusual ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understands relationships</td>
<td>has complex thoughts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When planning and delivering curriculum at Nossal High School we ask our staff to reflect on the following:

- What is the prior knowledge/entry point of my students into the learning?
- Are my lessons challenging?
- Is my pace of delivery appropriate? (twice the depth, twice the pace mantra)
- Am I scaffolding the learning so that all students can see the pathway?
- Am I embedding the Five Minds of the Future philosophy?
- Am I incorporating ICT at a high level?
- Am I using circle time?
- Am I building relationships and help them to build relationships with each other?
- Do the students have an opportunity to work independent and collaboratively?
- What makes this learning authentic to them as adults in a future world?
- I am sharing with other staff for a consistent and richer approach?

6. Professional Learning at Nossal High School

A learning organisation such as Nossal High School requires a robust Performance and Development Culture. That is, a culture that values high performance and ongoing
development. The heart of such a culture lies in the professional learning of each individual support staff and teacher. As a new school we are able to purposefully select, induct and develop our staff to cater for the needs of gifted students. In our short existence our whole school has engaged in professional learning in gifted education from national and international experts in gifted education including: Dr. Leonie Kronborg, Dr. Margaret Plunkett, Dr. John Munro, Dr. Kate Noble and Dr. Barbara Kerr. By high level consultation and focusing on the needs of a cohort of students with distinct needs we are able to seek new ways of approaching the education of gifted and talented students.

As part of the system, Nossal High School has the capacity to develop learning about gifted learning and the appropriate curriculum and pedagogy to support this. It then has a responsibility to share this with the wider education community. To date this has occurred at four levels:

1. Local
   - inviting schools to attend Monash/Nossal events eg. Dr Barbara Kerr, Dr. Kate Noble
   - Presenting to Casey Network Meeting
   - Consulting/sharing with neighbouring schools eg. Berwick Secondary College, Kambrya Secondary College

2. State
   - hosting VAGTC Professional Learning
   - Preservice teachers (Monash University, Melbourne University, Charles Sturt University)
   - presentations at state SEAL network meetings
   - engaging in research with Dr. Leonie Kronborg and Dr. Margaret Plunkett (Monash University)

3. National
   - Presenting at the Tasmanian Gifted Association Conference, 'Empower Me' 15-17th July 2011
   - Reciprocal visiting and sharing with the Australian Maths and Science School, Adelaide
   - Reciprocal visiting and sharing with the Queensland Academies, Gold Coast, Brisbane

4. International
Nossal High School’s professional learning is one of promoting an ongoing process of inquiry into and reflection on a teacher’s practice, punctuated by high level targeted learning activities and programs designed to enhance their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes and consequently impacting on the organisation. Or as Senge would suggest the organisation learns because the individual has learnt. At Nossal High School learning together is important.

Why together? Because the greatest asset a school has is its collective intelligence. Leaders have to figure out how to harness this intelligence, to grow it, and to use it to help achieve the school’s purposes. Too often intelligence is divided among individuals diluting its effectiveness. Schools get smarter when individual intelligences are aggregated. (Sergiovanni, 2005, 177)

7. Student, Parent, Staff Voice at Nossal High School

As part of the preparation for this submission, we collected the voice of students, staff and parents. Random students were posed the question as they entered school on 240511 (See Appendix A).

**What is your experience of attending a Select Entry High School so far?** The following statement is an example of student voice:
So far my experience has been amazing. I thought going to a school that specialises in academics would be boring but it has actually offered me so many opportunities and opened so many new pathways. (NHS student)

All staff were posed the question at the Staff Forum 230511 (see Appendix C).

**Why do you think there should be Select Entry High Schools?** The following statement is an example of staff voice:

Gifted and talented students benefit academically and socially from being in a learning environment with likeminded individuals. It is one of the few areas where gifted and talented students are given specific support for their needs. (NHS staff member)

Parents/guardians visiting Nossal High School were posed the question at Parent/Teacher/Student Interviews on 110511 (see Appendix B).

**Why did you choose a Select Entry School for your son/daughter?** The following statement is an example of parent voice:

To put her in a learning environment that challenged her ability and encouraged to push her boundaries. (Nossal parent)

**Conclusion**

Nossal High School is a community of practice, a learning organisation that has high expectations about quality teaching and the distinctive needs of gifted students. Our school continues to develop transparency of practice and encourages its entire community to reflect carefully and deeply so that it may take full responsibility for improving the student outcomes for the 21st century.

Roger Page  
Principal

Toni E. Meath  
Assistant Principal
Bibliography:


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Rehnen, K (2011), Phone conversation Monday 10th January, 2011


Wilson, P. (1996). *Challenges and Change in Policy and Thinking in Gifted Education in Australia*, Hawker Brownlow Education, Australia
Appendix A
Qualitative data collected from Nossal High School students 24/05/11

What is your experience at Select Entry School so far?

- I feel as if I have a challenge for once. It’s a whole new experience.

- Brilliant. Never before have I been in a learning environment that has actually promoted flexible learning.

- The experience at Nossal High School for me has been more than terrific. Besides the friendly students, enthusiastic teachers, it has enabled me to challenge my knowledge and has made me try to stay a step ahead. Overall, my experience at Nossal has quite literally changed my life from taking me out of a slow-paced education environment (for me that is) to a challenging and fast-paced education environment.

- I like being in a Select Entry High School because there is more opportunity for career pathways.

- So far my experience has been amazing. I thought going to a school that specialises in academics would be boring but it has actually offered me so many opportunities and opened so many new pathways.

- Nossal has given me many opportunities. Staff are hard working. Students are happy.

- You have a better learning environment and more opportunities to do more and improve socially, mentally and academically.

- I’ve found that I’ve learnt a great deal more than if I still attended my previous school.

- My experience so far of attending a select entry high school is a spectacular one. I have enjoyed all the activities put forward and I like the atmosphere, environment and students of this school.

- At Nossal I’ve experienced a challenge, it isn’t just the education that’s challenging it’s also the students. In the past I was accustomed to being number one; but at Nossal things are different, we all want to be number one. We all aspire to be the best and it’s the competition this provides which pushes us to do our best.

- The different types of facilities have impressed me. The vast majority of activities provided give me a chance to improve and challenge my abilities.

- The experience has been awesome.
• It is DEFINITELY DIFFERENT from my past school experiences and there is more pressure to do well but I see it as a challenge for myself and I like it here.

• Being in a selective school is a great experience for me. However, there are lots of pressures through exams, tests and homework.

• The experience has been amazing so far because the environment is so comfortable and friendly that learning is fun. I enjoy school every day.
Appendix B
Qualitative data collected from Nossal High School parents/guardians 11/05/11

Why did you choose a Select Entry School for your son/daughter?

- To give my daughter a school that provides a challenging education and at a reasonable cost. This academic challenge was driven by my own daughter who recognised that she wasn’t challenged in her previous school. Thank you for the opportunity.
- Our son is very gifted academically and was not thriving in a general entry school or a private school because he was not sufficiently challenged and because he did not have peers at his level.
- We chose the selected entry school due to high academic results achieved by students from this school in the past on consistent basis. This means that the method of teaching and quality of teachers in these schools is superior than other public schools.
- At previous school my child was in a class of low achieving students. The work provided no challenge and lead to my child becoming a distraction. He was also used to being taught in sets or streams with other like minded students. This move meant a return to this.
- Because this school caters for children who want to achieve more than they would if they attended a ‘minded ability’ school. There is a level of ‘healthy competition’ and so children are pushed out from this ‘comfort zone’ and achieve their full potential.
- Select entry schools give right education for gifted children. Discipline wise SES best for high school children and subject wise more demanding subjects introduced in SES.
- For the peer group, quality of students, and the high expectations.
- Being a parent of a gifted child, we felt that the normal education system was too basic for his needs. We couldn’t afford to send him to a private school. Sending him to Nossal was affordable and easy because we live by.
- To give my son better environment for learning and challenging study targets to excel in his future career and create better opportunity in his life.
- To facilitate his understanding of his giftedness, intelligence and to further improve on his scholastic pursuits. This is a distinct possibility in a select entry school where the environment is very conductive for self improvement, academic excellence and developing a well grounded character.
- To put her in a learning environment that challenged her ability and encouraged to push her boundaries.
- Because it provides better educational programme. Looks into the needs of students who are keen to work.
- Our son had made up his mind that he wanted to go to a select entry school when he was in primary school. We supported him in his decision and were
• I choose a selective entry school to my son for quality education and to study in comparison of top students of the city. A good quality education in a competition environment will help my son to build his future.

• I chose a selective entry school for my daughter because of the level of education- very high, respect for the students, challenging tasks and ability to achieve your goals.

• For the opportunity to explore full potential without the restrictions that are inevitable within mainstream education. The unequivocal chance provided at Nossal is far beyond anything we could have hoped for.

• According to me learning with other gifted students is interesting. They have to spend more time on their study so less time for using internet. People always say that the cost of education in selective schools is cheaper than private schools to receive the same thing.

• I have chosen a select entry school for my son’s education, dream and future. To further enhance his academic opportunities and achievements. In addition, Nossal provides a most welcoming school fee, suited for our finances.

• Better education in all of perspective. More competitive.

• The school offers a unique learning environment for students to learn in. The competition culture encourages students to maximise their potential by giving their potential by giving their absolute best. In addition to this, the competent, caring teaching staff is available and capable of guiding students and assisting them to make the most of not only their high school but also to put them in their right path for the rest of their lives.

• To provide the best possible education as his original school could not stretch him enough.

• Good academic environment- little distraction with extra curricula activities. Efficient and uncompromising teachers. Much less costly than private school.

• Australia’s main stream education system does not cater for children who are gifted and require a higher level of learning. I believe it would have been permanently detrimental to my children’s future if I had not given them the chance here to receive the best education.

• We chose a select entry school to provide our child a better or the best education. Our child loves a challenge and by being in a selective entry school it brings out an interest, challenge and opportunities. Other students all have better goals and influences better every day. It’s nice to see that some recognitions in the abilities of our child and giving this opportunity to better himself. Thanks to you.

• So that he can study with other gifted students who are at the same level as him. Select entry schools will help him work at his highest potential and help him learn more.

• For a better future, better careers prospects, better VCE score. Studying in a competitive environment. Better facilities for practical learning. Better teaching tools, innovative technology.

• We chose a select entry school for my daughter because of their high academic result for VCE. Which will help my daughter have a chance to get a career she wants.
• My daughter had shone to be the bright in primary school, so we discussed her sitting the test for the SEAL at her local high school. I broached the subject of her trying out for a select entry school, and she was very keen when it came time to apply. The decision, however, was my daughter's. She felt that it would be a good environment and that there would be like-minded people there. My thoughts were that it would be a good opportunity for her to be challenged, that the other students would help her to be engaged in her learning, something that she struggled with in primary school and to a certain extent year 7 and 8. The select entry school has been such a fantastic environment, my daughter is really thriving. It’s not just about the VCE results either. She will spend 4 years at the school, so it has to be enjoyable and engaging, which it is proving to be.
• So that my son could learn with our students that want learn and not made fun of that he wants to learn.
• A better education and to achieve a solid ATAR result (like Melbourne and MacRob have been doing for years).
• I believe a newly built school will be equipped with the new, modern technology which enables my children improve and maximise their learning abilities. Selective schools gather students who have some potential learning abilities. It will be easy to further develop their gifted skills. Every child in the selective school sees study (academic) as first priority that what I would like my children to do. Selective schools raising future leaders in all areas.
• We believe that a move competitive environment would compel our child to strive for better performance.
• As the students are pretty much at a certain academic level, there is more challenging work and higher expectations from the teaching faculty. That was the primary reason for choosing a select entry school as I found this a miss in a public school. Also the fact that I feel the faculty in select entry school is of a higher calibre.
• Select entry schools have good education and they provide a lot of opportunities.
• I chose a select entry school for my daughter because I wanted her to receive a good education and I wanted to expose her to challenges, I think that learning in a competitive environment will benefit her.
• Because she want something more challenge that the old school.
• We recognised our son has the ability to deliver above average results, given the opportunity. Sending him to a selective entry school was for him to apply his ability with similar like-minded kids and improve his ability to be on the top 90% level.
• Maybe because the teachers are ‘good’ facilities are new, therefore must be efficient.
• Because he is keen to achieve better and he wants more challenging approach.
• Our son, even though being placed in a high achievers class at his previous high school was not being challenged enough to match his skills and expectations. We felt a select entry school would provide a more stimulating and challenging environment for him. We also would not have had the budget to afford high fee paying schools in the area that may also have provided a similar stimulating learning environment.
• It has been important for our son to grow in an environment that encouraged him beyond what he achieved in a regular school, among students with a similar desire to excel he is challenged and motivated to continue to grow intellectually as well as socially.
• It is good opportunity motivate and get higher education their future.
• Because Nossal seemed like a challenge and the technology here is modern and sophisticated.
• We did choose a selective entry school or the opportunities of better improved educational offerings. More competitive educational environment. Higher quality teachers and teaching programs and chance of higher achievements and performance within the school.
• Nossal High School, the select entry school, the name says it all. The school, which is full of selective students. I always wished for my daughter to be the part of such a selective students group; where she can realise her place. She should know this fact that there are so many brilliant students and she should be ready to take extra efforts to make her career at higher levels. Here she has lot of competition so she has to study hard to cope up. Second reason is school teachers. We did not know the teachers before getting admission, but of course after one term end we realised the quality of their teaching which is very detailed and systematic. Studying in Nossal is also prestigious for the student as well as her family. Wherever we go, people think ‘oh…she is studying in Nossal… she must be smart student’, that’s all I can say at the moment.
Appendix C
Qualitative Data collected at Nossal High School Staff Meeting 23/05/11

Why do you think there should be Select Entry Schools available for gifted and talented learners?

- To give our highest achieving students an opportunity to maximise their potential and extend them in ways that may not be possible at a regular school.
- To allow these students to have schools catering to their learning, which has been shown to be effective in both select entry and mainstream schools.
- Gifted and talented learners require different learning experiences to other students.
- Select Entry Schools are important because they are able to cater appropriately for these students-gifted and talented learners who deserve to be challenged.
- We as a society deserve to be articulated by the engaged and inspirational leaders who result.
- A quality education system should cater for the individual needs of academically gifted students.
- Like minds can inspire and lift each other.
- Some of these students can feed socially ostracised of “ordinary” schools. Being at a school together can help them to feel more secure or part of a group.
- Healthy competition can raise them to a new level.
- Without the possibility of extending their learning with students of like ability then there is the very real danger that these students will be discouraged.
- Within the “ordinary” school environment, SEAL or not, there is a real difficulty with building meaningful relationships with higher educational facilities and the business community.
- To give such students an environment in which they can flourish and achieve their potential.
- These students have special needs and as such need special programs. Not only academically challenging courses are required, but a place where they ‘fit’ in not to be the ‘freak’. They can develop their interests, risk-take in a safe environment.
• To allow students to be surrounded by other similarly minded students and to continue to develop their thirst for knowledge and enhance their amazing gifts

• Some gifted and talented students feel isolated in their school as they have no one else to share their higher order thinking.

• At a Select Entry School excellence is applauded and appreciated, therefore students don’t feel inhibited by shining.

• Is a chance for students to learn in an environment conclusive to likeminded opportunities for advancements.

• Likeminded students in the one school breeds a culture of excellence.

• It allows those students to be in an environment with likeminded students, as opposed to being one of a few wanting to really learn in a non Select Entry School.

• Select Entry Schools need to be made available for gifted and talented students as they don’t always get challenged or meet their potential in a “normal” classroom, as teachers focus on the lower end rather than extending the higher achievers properly.

• The challenging curriculum that we can deliver to gifted students cannot be delivered in another school with mixed ability students.

• Gifted and talented students benefit academically and socially from being in a learning environment with likeminded individuals. It is one of the few areas where gifted and talented students are given specific support for their needs.

• Provide a learning environment in which likeminded students can thrive educationally.

• Students are encouraged by their peers like they have never been encouraged before.

• Students do not feel uncomfortable as they have in the mainstream system.

• Academic success is celebrated in the school by every member of our learning community. Both parents and students have said that they have found the Nossal experience to be the best educational environment they have had the opportunity to be involved in.

• Likeminded students are inspired to achieve even greater things when working in a safe, creative and stimulating environment.
• Provide the opportunity for likeminded students to communicate, be challenged and achieve as equals, in a positive and mutually supportive environment

• All students deserve to learn at their full capacity, however, for gifted and talented students, this cannot always occur at a mainstream

• Socially they need likeminded peers

• They need a learning environment especially suited to their particular learning needs

• These schools give students a better opportunity to accelerate their learning in a cohesive, dynamic and safe environment

• Talented and gifted students often aren’t effectively catered for in schools with the attitude of “they will do well regardless” often still prevailing, even though there is ample research to prove this is often not the case

• Gifted and talented students especially need to be challenged so they don’t become bored with “education”, disengaged or ultimately “behaviour management” issues arise

• Socially the students can feel ostracised in general schools, therefore it is such an important opportunity for students to feel like a valid and “normal” member of the group where they don’t have to dumb themselves down or be considered a geek

• Gifted and talented students have special needs which can best be met in a specialised environment

• Students benefit emotionally, psychologically and academically from learning with a group of peers, during these formative and sensitive years

• Select Entry Schools allow staff to focus their teaching and professional learning on enrichment and gifted curriculum and assessment

• Personalised, appropriately scaffolded educational opportunities, can be designed and delivered in a structured sequential learning process that focuses on highly academic students.