Submission to the “Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students”

The ACE (Accelerate, Challenge, Excellence) program at Glen Eira College

The ACE program at Glen Eira College operates from Year 7-9, accelerating gifted and talented students through the curriculum and affording opportunities for deeper learning during this time. These students progress through senior studies seamlessly as the year 10, 11 and 12 blocks are aligned to allow students to choose a highly individualised path rather than following the strictures of choosing subjects within one year level. These students also enter senior school well prepared for the demands of VCE and this is borne out by some of the outstanding ENTER results achieved by these students in recent years.

The Glen Eira College ACE program provides:

- A faster paced curriculum, with less repetition, in English, Humanities, Science and Mathematics
- The opportunity to work with more abstract and complex texts and issues
- The opportunity to work independently and cooperatively with students with similar interests and abilities
- Development of higher order thinking skills
- Facilitated opportunities to advance successfully to tertiary studies

Entry into the program is based on a test administered by Edutest which assesses verbal and mathematical reasoning ability, English comprehension, computation skills and written expression. In addition, information from the applicant’s primary school and parents is required. The college may also request an interview with applicants. Testing is arranged annually in early May. Additional testing sessions may be scheduled later in the year.

Review 2011

This program has shown to have a positive effect overall on the learning, development and well being of gifted and talented students. The ACE program was reviewed in 2011 and students, teachers and parents were resounding in their support for the program.

An online survey was conducted with teachers and students, while a questionnaire was sent by mail to parents of students participating in the survey. The surveys consisted of a selection of multiple choice questions on a scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There were also questions that required written responses.

- All parents rated their satisfaction with the progress of their children as high or very high.
- Approximately 80% of staff rated their satisfaction with teaching in the ACE program as high or very high.
- 70% of the ACE students surveyed rated their satisfaction as high or very high.
• All parents surveyed indicated that Glen Eira’s ACE program was a strong factor in their choice of secondary school for their child/children

Parents said:

*It keeps my daughter interested. She is with students who like challenges like her and are motivated.*

*It has been a positive environment where she feels supported by staff and her peers. I have seen so many smart girls “dumb down” so they can be part of the group or be ostracised because they are so smart and “nerdy”. This is what I was hoping to avoid.*

*I also like the way the ACE program is integrated into the regular school community.*

*Many parents in Melbourne pay HUGE sums of money for the individual attention that my daughter has had as a member of the ACE group. We don’t have huge sums of money but we have been able to secure her an excellent education. Hats off to GEC & ACE!*

Students said:

*Three things I felt were very well incorporated into the program was the way in which subjects were taught at a high level with "big "expectations, the environment in which students were able to learn in and the ability to undertake VCE studies in an earlier year so that students are given the option of gaining more subjects under their belt by the time they leave school.*

*It is challenging. I learn more and the content we cover is interesting.*

*The classmates are usually polite and intelligent. It is a quiet and easier work environment and more of a challenge than the standard class.*

The review recommended a number of strategies for improving the educational offerings and support for ACE students;

• Systematising a process for monitoring student progress in the school.
• Liaison between the Teaching and Learning Leader and the Extension Coordinator in regards to competitions and extracurricular activities to ‘stretch’ students beyond the normal assessment and reporting schedule.
• A review of the pathways ACE students take into senior school. This includes developing a three year plan for students in Year 9 ACE during course counselling and an analysis of the impact fast tracking students has on their educational experience.
• A review of the ACE curriculum to promote greater depth of learning.
• Referring the students’ request for more timely and useful feedback to the Teaching & Learning Team and the Leadership Team.

*The college is strongly of the view that provision of quality extension and acceleration programs like ACE are integral to attracting parents to the public secondary education system.*

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