I understand that a comprehensive review of the Select Entry Accelerated Learning (SEAL) program was conducted by the Department of Education in 2005. This review looked into the extensive international research literature on the education for students of high intellectual potential. I would respectfully suggest that the starting point for your inquiry should be this review.

On behalf of the School Council of Box Hill High School, I wish to put the following comments regarding the SEAL program at Box Hill High School before the inquiry:

Learning culture

The incorporation of a SEAL program into the programs offered at Box Hill High has lifted school performance considerably. Parents report to us their satisfaction with the learning culture at the school, that achievement is highly regarded and that this ethos characterises both ‘accelerated’ and ‘mainstream’ students.

Student connectedness

Students report that they feel that they fit into the school, that there are other students just like them and they are not isolated as they were at their primary school. A school with a SEAL program provides a peer group for high-achieving students. Further, parents particularly appreciate the positive attitude that their children display to their schooling through participation in the SEAL program.

Teacher support

Involvement in a SEAL program places higher than usual professional demands on teachers. At Box Hill, as many staff as possible teach in the SEAL program so as to spread the benefits of hosting a SEAL program to mainstream classes. In rising to this challenge, teachers have higher professional development needs, in both curriculum content and in pedagogy, with the extra administrative burden that ensues as teachers take part in professional development. There should be recognition of this with an extra allocation of support to allow teachers the time away from classes to undertake this professional development. This provides a benefit to not only the entire school in the lifting of professional standards but to the provision of public education state-wide. This should not be at the expense of the school.
Access to professional networks

In concert with the capacity for teachers to take part in the required professional development for successful programs, system wide support should be available for the provision of such professional development through teacher’s professional networks. Professional associations have high credibility within the teaching profession – support for a Gifted Teaching Association of Victoria (as distinct from the well-regarded Geography Teacher’s Association of Victoria, so a different acronym is needed perhaps) will leverage the voluntary contributions that teachers make to their professional development through participating in professional associations. Access to relevant international research, assistance for participation in conferences and seminars where innovations in curriculum and pedagogy are discussed and support in the production and dissemination of teaching materials are education system contributions that should be made to such a professional associations.

Thank you for the opportunity to make these comments. The SEAL program is an extremely valued component of the education provision at our school, we have a strong commitment to such programs and we look forward to the continued successful operations of the SEAL program for many years to come.

I would be pleased to speak further about the SEAL program at Box Hill High School if your committee wished.

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