SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

SUBMISSION MADE BY BOX HILL HIGH SCHOOL, WHITEHORSE ROAD, BOX HILL 3128

Lead author: Vanessa Reynolds, Gifted Education Co-ordinator.
Contributing authors:
- Parents of SEAL students through meetings and the Review blog.
Introduction

Box Hill High School (BHHS) is an award winning, multicultural, co-educational high school. It was founded in 1930. Our reputation has been built on a long tradition of academic excellence, on the commitment of our staff and on the quality of care of the individual student. The school’s enrolment continues to grow and is currently at 1009 students, 40% of whom are gifted students. The school has extremely high demand for enrolments and has long waiting lists, but unfortunately has to limit enrolments due to the extremely small physical size of the school grounds, and the large number of portable classrooms that do not allow the school to make the most effective use of its limited space.

The school offers a unique educational approach for students in Years 7-12, in a coeducational environment which benefits all students who attend the school, including our large cohort of gifted students. The students have traditionally travelled long distances to get to the school because of the programs it offers and also because of its close proximity to major transport hubs. The school’s population is multicultural with forty-nine languages represented.

Students at Box Hill High School are strongly encouraged to live up to the school’s motto “Ad Altiora Certamus” which means “we strive for higher things.” Students at Box Hill High School respect academic success and embrace the ideal of achieving their potential. We value both tradition and innovation and this is most eloquently reflected in the comments of the children themselves, “Box Hill High School has made me strive harder.” “Always do your best, that is what I have learned.” “I now know it is OK to be smart;” and the learning environment at Box Hill High School “inspires me to do better.”

Supporting our philosophy, one of the strengths of the school is the wide variety of programs it offers to our students. These include:

- A SEAL (Select Entry Accelerated Learning) Program that has been operating since 1994.
- An International student fee-paying program.
- A strong instrumental and performing arts program.
- The Faculty of Engineering Technology – an innovative approach to Engineering and Technology, including Model Solar Car Program, Aurora Solar Car Program and Robotics.
- SATERN (Science and Technology Educational Resource Network) – an innovative community-based project comprising Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Universities.
- The ACE (Active Challenging Experiences) Year 10 program, which involves Year 10 students in a range of educational, outdoor educational, vocational and personal development activities in addition to their elective program, every Wednesday.
- Studies of languages other than English. All students study two languages other than English at Year 7, namely Mandarin Chinese and German. They have the opportunity to continue both languages until Year 12. Indeed 49% of Year 12 students in 2010 study a LOTE.

A further strength of the school is its academic results. In terms of VCE results our students continue to achieve outstanding results in their final exams. The following statistics for 2009 highlight this point –

- The top ENTER score was 99.8. Two of our girls achieved this score.
- 26% of our students achieved an ENTER score over 95.
- 46% of our local students achieved an ENTER over 90.
- 4 perfect scores of 50 were achieved, including 2 Premiers Awards, and 111 individual study scores of over 40 were also achieved.
- The median ENTER score for our local students was 87.7.
- The top overseas student achieved an outstanding score of 97.1.

These outstanding results reflect the quality of our teachers and the hard work of our students. They are also a result of a raft of measures that the school has put into place over the past few years when we set targets to improve our VCE results. This year also saw our students achieve NAPLAN results well over the Australian average for Years 7 and 9. In the University of New South Wales Science, Maths and English competitions our students continue to shine.

The school, despite having Stage One of its building program completed in April 2009, still faces inadequate and extremely substandard facilities in many areas. The school community now must set as a priority, obtaining funding for Stage 2, so that Science, Art, Technology, Administration and Music and Performance spaces can be upgraded. General-purpose classrooms also need to be upgraded to meet the needs of our student population. There are still 17 portable classrooms being used by our students. Many of these rooms are in an extremely poor state of repair and need to be replaced. The Hall has no cooling system and is inadequate for a school of our size. There are no rooms big enough to hold a meeting for the entire staff or student body.

All above quoted from the School Strategic Plan, Box Hill High School, Eastern Metropolitan Region, 2011-2014.

Box Hill High School’s Select Entry Accelerated Learning (SEAL) Program
The SEAL Program began at BHHS in 1994. It was modelled on the successful program operating at University High School, and continues to follow this model as most SEAL schools now do. Upon introduction, staff undertook professional development in gifted education. This continues for both new and continuing staff, with training offered every year. Several staff members have post-graduate qualifications in gifted education.

SEAL students enter the school in Year 7. They are tested for entry early in Year 6, and only those students who meet the criteria are offered a place. Students undertake the curriculum of years 7 to 10 over the next three years, called S1, S2, S3, giving them four years of curriculum in three. As well, teachers well trained in the needs of gifted children extend the students with greater breadth and depth as appropriate. At the end of the SEAL third year students usually take a three year VCE program, although some students complete VCE in two years and finish school after five years instead of the usual six. SEAL students are grouped together for all their core subjects for the three years, but take elective subjects and sport with their age peers in years 8 and 9 when they are in S2 and S3.

Parents of SEAL students are supported through regular Parent Support group meetings, held six times a year in the evenings. These meeting have guest speakers, raise questions for discussion, offer readings and research articles for consideration and give parents a strong connection to the school and a forum for discussion and support. Parents also have unlimited access by phone, email or personal meeting with the Gifted Education Co-ordinator. No other SEAL school offers such extensive parent support.

Students in the SEAL program have access to a trained Student Welfare Co-ordinator who has specific responsibility for SEAL students, acknowledging that they have particular needs. With a large cohort of SEAL students this very high level of resourcing comes from the depth of understanding of gifted students within the BHHS principal class and teaching staff. Mainstream students are supported by another trained Student Welfare Co-ordinator. Both the Student Welfare Co-ordinator and Gifted Education Co-ordinator positions are at Leading Teacher level, indicating the strength of the commitment to gifted students at BHHS.

Defining giftedness for this submission.

The definition used throughout this submission uses the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) developed by Françoys Gagné, as supported by DEECD in its policy on gifted students. When we use the term gifted student in our submission, we mean intellectually gifted students who meet psychological definitions of giftedness, whose intellectual ability is above 125 IQ, positioning them among the top 10% of the population in intellect. Without significant support in the form of an appropriate curriculum and trained educators, such potential may never come to fruition.

The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent explains the distinction between giftedness and talent, and helps to explain the many factors which can support or hinder the development of gifts into talents. Such factors include self-esteem, learner motivation, cultural and socio-economic factors, and the capacity of schools to identify and cater to the learner’s giftedness. For some gifted students characteristics of giftedness, such as perfectionism, feeling different from their peers, acute sensitivity, may lead to depression, loneliness, social isolation or stress.

This submission and its organisation.

This submission addresses each Term of Reference in turn, detailing our experiences and knowledge about each. There are recommendations about each Term of Reference derived from what has been submitted about each one.
Term of Reference

(a) the effectiveness of current policies and programs for gifted and talented students, with particular consideration of, but not limited to:

(i) identification of gifted and talented students;

Response to this Term of Reference.

The experience of BHHS in running a successful SEAL program since 1994 is that current policies are highly ineffective in identifying many gifted students during their primary schooling.

1. Current policies are highly ineffective in identifying gifted students because:

− Most of the students who apply for our SEAL program have been identified because the parents have become aware that their child is different from other students.
− Parents tell us that the responses to their requests for investigation or consideration of giftedness in primary schools range from hostility and denial to occasionally understanding and support. Lack of knowledge and understanding of giftedness in primary schools is widespread.
− Hostility to the needs of gifted students is also widespread, in primary schools in particular, and among teachers in general.
− Girls are extremely unlikely to be identified as gifted under current policies. Our experiences over the past 17 years confirm much of the research available which acknowledges girls as being under-identified for gifted programming. Data to support this shows that over the past 6 years, applicants for the BHHS SEAL program have been consistently two thirds boys and one third girls. Gifted students accepted into the BHHS SEAL program have followed this pattern fairly consistently. We acknowledge that there are several girls-only schools around BHHS, but we believe that these do not account for the under-representation of gifted girls among our applicants. Our experience indicates that social issues are a major influence on gifted girls’ choices about education, which is in line with current research.
− Boys are more likely to be identified as gifted in primary school if they show their boredom through disruptive behaviour. Girls are less likely to disrupt their classmates, preferring instead to apply their gifts to the social aspects of the class. Robinson and Noble’s (1992) article tells us that according to Reis and Callahan (1989), “gifted girls receive the least amount of attention in classes, whereas gifted boys more often are called upon, praised, and given opportunities to participate in ‘hands-on’ activities crucial to future success in the sciences.” (p. 69) Kerr (1994) also tells us, “the major shifts in psychological needs of gifted girls (at adolescence) probably account for the conflicts felt by so many eminent women as adolescents. It is likely that society’s emphasis on the impossibility of combining love and achievement forces many gifted girls to become preoccupied with their relationships rather than with personal achievement.” (p.304)
− Parents tell us that few primary schools use standardised testing or competitions as a means of identifying gifted students. Very rarely have parents been informed by their child’s teacher that NAPLAN results in the very top band indicates a high probability of giftedness. For schools which allow or encourage students to participate in competitions such as UNSW Science, English, Maths and so on, it has been extremely rare for them to tell the parents that a High Distinction or Distinction in these standardised tests indicate giftedness. Many primary schools have actively discouraged participation in such competitions, although this has been changing recently.
− There is a great confusion among teachers at all levels of the difference between gifted students and talented students. Using the Gagné model, DMGT 2008, to understand the differences is very important to the programs which are offered to gifted students, for both identification and programming choices.
− Parents of SEAL students have told us how important it has been to their child to be among like-minded peers, and how important it is that programs for gifted students should not be diluted with students who do not meet the criteria for giftedness. Such criteria should be clearly established and programs such as SEAL should meet the criteria for selection of students.
− Parents have also told us that it is critical to ensure that all gifted students have access to programs specifically designed for gifted students, such as SEAL, and that there must be sufficient places for all properly identified gifted students.
− We also believe that gifted programs should be available regardless of
  − Socio-economic status;
  − Cultural background;
  − Geographic location.
− Parents of SEAL students also feel strongly that identification of giftedness should be accompanied by appropriate explanation, counselling and support for both parents and students.
− Parents also wish to be knowledgably informed by their child’s school or teachers as to the range of options if their child is identified as gifted, especially in moving from primary to secondary school. Many parents have felt very let down by their primary schools in this regard.
BHHS evidence shows clearly that there are gifted students who are not told of the range of options available to them for secondary schooling. When our SEAL program is filled at Year 7 level, there are rarely vacancies, but we test about twenty students per year for a post-Year 7 place in our SEAL program. We are usually unable to accommodate all the gifted students identified in this process within our SEAL program due to lack of vacancies.

Evidence from parents of SEAL students also shows clearly that many teachers regard programs such as SEAL as elitist, taking the top students away from the local high school that they believe they should attend. Over forty years of research supports the need for gifted students to be grouped with other gifted students and taught appropriate curriculum, which cannot happen in a fragmented manner in all local schools.

2. Current programs such as SEAL increase numbers of gifted students being identified in their primary schooling, although many gifted students remain unidentified at this stage of their schooling, and often throughout their school education.

- SEAL programs can only identify gifted students from among those who apply for the SEAL program. Experience at BHHS tells us that there are gifted students among our mainstream applicants who do not know about our SEAL program. When these students are identified, they are given the chance to move into the SEAL stream. At this point, the parents usually tell us that no-one had ever suggested giftedness to them about their child, nor suggested programs such as SEAL as being appropriate for their child, even when knowledge of the program was common in that primary school.

- SEAL program leaders can help primary students and their families to understand gifted characteristics and identify gifted students when given the opportunity to speak with families about the program during the transition process. Many primary schools do not allow or invite secondary schools from out of the immediate geographic area to address their parent information evenings even when that SEAL program is the closest to their school. This also hampers the identification of gifted students.

3. Current programs in primary schools help to increase the numbers of gifted students being identified at this level. These programs are offered in a very limited number of primary schools by external fee-for-service providers, and the total number identified is therefore very low.

- BHHS knows of several private providers offering fee-for-service programs for gifted students in primary schools.

- Two providers known to BHHS test all students at the selected primary schools using sound selection procedures. This process identifies the gifted students and these students are then offered the opportunity to participate in regular withdrawal programs run at that school. There is a fee for the program and not all parents are able to afford the fee, even when offered some reduction.

- One provider offers programs based on teacher selection according to program topic. Research tells us that unless the teacher has been trained specifically in gifted education, teacher identification is one of the least reliable methods of identification of gifted students. The programs offered by this provider are also withdrawal programs, and many parents tell us that often they were of little value to their gifted child because many of the other children participating were not gifted – the selection had been poorly made.

- While such private providers help to identify gifted students in primary schools, their value in identifying all gifted students is very limited. They are not available enough as programs in all primary schools, and some schools refuse to offer their programs due to notions of elitism in catering for gifted students.

- There is often little other provision for these gifted students in their primary school, as the school considers such withdrawal programs to be sufficient for the identified gifted students. Such schools often claim to provide for gifted students while showing little understanding of the emotional and social needs of the gifted students.

- Such withdrawal programs are of some benefit to the gifted students, but are often insufficient, as they offer a part-time solution to a full-time need.

- Current programs in a very, very few primary schools are effective in identifying gifted students.

- In the BHHS SEAL program, we regularly receive applications from particular schools. It has become clear that these schools, currently there are about three, identify and subsequently cater for, the gifted students attending them. In general, these few primary schools endeavour to set policies which will support the needs of gifted students rather than applying one-size-fits-all programming to gifted students. These schools use a range of measures, programs, extra-curricular activities and extension to cater for the diverse needs of their gifted students. While they identify gifted students well, they also attract many gifted students who have not been well catered for at their previous schools.
Recommendations

The BHHS community believe that implementing the following recommendations would improve substantially the provision of gifted education in Victoria.

The enormous need for earlier identification of giftedness must be addressed urgently. Some means to achieve this include:

- Professional Development for all teachers, especially primary school teachers about gifted education;
- Formal information to parents to accompany outstanding NAPLAN results with follow up by the child’s teacher mandated;
- Clear understanding that gifted education is a right, not a privilege;

DEECD policy should ensure that:

- Identification of giftedness should be accompanied by appropriate explanation and counselling to both students and parents;
- Parents should be notified by the school or its teachers about their options if a child is identified as gifted;
- Gifted students are not discriminated against nor feel elitist;
- Gifted programs should be available regardless of:
  - Socio-economic status;
  - Cultural background;
  - Geographic location.
- There are sufficient places in gifted programs for all students identified via the appropriate means;
- School testing procedures adhere to defined minimum standards to ensure equity by ability not by location;
- Gifted students are not confused with high achievers;
- All provision for gifted students in Victoria must accommodate the specific social and emotional needs of gifted students.
Term of Reference
(a) the effectiveness of current policies and programs for gifted and talented students, with particular consideration of, but not limited to:

(ii) equity of access to quality educational choices for gifted and talented students and their families;

Response to this Term of Reference.

The experience of BHHS in running a successful SEAL program since 1994 is that current policies and programs do not ensure equity of access to quality educational choices for gifted students.

Our experience tells us that many teachers and schools do not agree with the precept that gifted education is a right, not a privilege.

One of BHHS’s underpinning values is that every student has the right to be able to achieve their maximum potential.

The experience of BHHS in running a SEAL program and participating regularly in SEAL Co-ordinator PD sessions is that there are not sufficient places in gifted programs for all students identified via the appropriate means. Factors which can inhibit equity of access include:

- Socio-economic status;
- Cultural background;
- Geographic location.

DEECD policies do not incorporate awareness that gifted education is a special need and that students will often require the specialised education and care provided by a gifted program.

Recommendations.

Schools must have facilities and staff to cater for the divergent social and emotional as well as learning needs of gifted students.

DEECD should undertake proactive promotion of gifted programs in government schools as a credible alternative to independent education to ensure equity for all gifted students.

Primary school Transition Co-ordinators require special training in order to be able to recommend to parents/students a direction that will meet the gifted student’s needs.

Primary schools have an obligation to explain to parents their options with regard to an appropriate program or recommended direction when students approach the end of primary school.

Gifted students with learning difficulties should have the support in place to make it possible for them to participate in accelerated programs in their areas of strength.
Term of Reference
(a) the effectiveness of current policies and programs for gifted and talented students, with particular consideration of, but not limited to:

(iii) impact on the learning, development and wellbeing of gifted and talented students;

Response to this Term of Reference.

Current programs such as SEAL are absolutely vital for the continuing positive impact on the learning, development and wellbeing of gifted and talented students. Parents of children in our SEAL program tell us that it is far more beneficial than trying to accommodate gifted students in mixed ability classes, which fits also with many years of research on this.

Parents support the need for some formal accreditation of SEAL programs, and a clearer definition needs to exist of what a gifted program such as SEAL entails.

The current policies for the Years 9 - 12 selective schools disadvantage genuine SEAL schools who take students from Y7. The historic anomaly of the Year 9 entry has an impact on the learning, development and wellbeing of gifted students because these students have the normal transition impact in moving from Year 6 to 7, then have the same impact from Year 8 to 9. Research shows that when a student moves schools, their learning regresses by about 6 months. The logical answer to this impact on these students is to acknowledge and change the historic anomaly and implement the fully selective schools at Year 7, to prevent the further disruption to their education.

Specialised programs will have the best impact on the learning, development and wellbeing of gifted students when the curriculum is designed along lines indicated in the latest gifted research and allows opportunity to explore topics in a more holistic, interesting and in depth manner suited to gifted students.

Schools with gifted programs must also be able to accommodate the specific social and emotional needs of gifted students. Current policies regarding access to specialised psychological services in schools formally lower the needs of gifted students.

Teachers in schools with gifted programs need specialised training in the learning, development and wellbeing of gifted students, including understanding how gifted students learn and what giftedness entails so that it does not pass them by.

There is an enormous need for earlier identification of gifted students, because the negative attitudes and “dumbing down” are already formed well before students are eligible for a gifted program in year 7.

There are huge social pressures on girls to underperform in mixed ability classrooms even during primary schooling, which can have a great impact learning, development and wellbeing of gifted girls.

Primary schools should all have & use a Gifted Policy which is INFORMED by understanding of the learning, development and wellbeing needs of gifted students.

Primary school Transition coordinators should be specially trained in order to be able to recommend to parents / students a direction that will satisfy the student’s needs, both intellectual and social-emotional.

Recommendations.

SEAL programs should be continued, and enhanced by improved support which targets the wellbeing of gifted students in SEAL programs.

Fully selective schools should take gifted students from Year 7 to reduce the detrimental impact of another change of school only two years after the transition from Year 6 to Year7.

Fully selective schools should take gifted students at year 7 to negate the detrimental impact on SEAL schools, which already provide appropriate programs and policy for gifted students.

DEECD should establish a specialised research unit in gifted education to support all schools in providing the very best curriculum and learning environment for gifted students. Such a research unit should conduct research as well as disseminate the very best research from around the world.
All schools, and particularly schools with specific programs for gifted students, must ensure that each year some staff undertake Professional Development in the learning, development and wellbeing needs of gifted students.

DEECD curriculum policy must directly address the curriculum needs of gifted students, in an accessible and transparent manner which makes clear the expectation on schools.

DEECD should require all schools to have a policy on gifted students which is informed by current knowledge about the learning, development and wellbeing needs of gifted students.

DEECD should ensure that all Primary Transition Co-ordinators have explicit training in the needs of gifted students and of their role in advising parents and students of secondary school options appropriate to the needs of gifted students.
Term of Reference
(b) the scope, coverage and effectiveness of current policies and programs for students from both metropolitan and regional school communities, school leaders, teachers and parents and carers to support gifted and talented students;

Response to this Term of Reference.

The 36 SEAL schools throughout Victoria cater extremely effectively for gifted students in regional & metropolitan Victoria.

There needs to be a great increase in awareness of SEAL schools among parents, teachers, and principals as many are completely unaware of the needs of gifted students and how SEAL accommodates them.

No further increase in the number of SEAL schools should be considered except in specific metropolitan and regional areas to ensure equity of access. Formal programs for gifted students should ensure that, using Gagne’s definition of giftedness, about 10% of the school population have access to specialised gifted programs. This should be a criterion for becoming a SEAL school.

Schools which offer non-SEAL programs that claim to cater for gifted students mislead parents about the expertise of staff and the suitability of their program to cater for genuinely gifted students. Many such schools breach current statewide Transition Guidelines by offering places to primary school students well before the date set across Victoria for informing Grade 6 families of their secondary school placement.

Primary schools require far better programs for gifted students across both regional and metropolitan communities, again using the expectation that such programs should accommodate about 10% of the school population.

Current policies are ineffective and inadequate at recognising the special needs of gifted students, such as perfectionism, girls doing Maths and or Science or understanding that it’s ok for boys to be smart, not just a sportsperson.

Current policies are ineffective in recognising that regular curriculum cannot meet the needs of gifted students, and much needs to be done to ensure that teachers are knowledgeable in curriculum for gifted students.

Recommendations.

DEECD should research where SEAL schools should be available to accommodate under-served gifted students. Any new SEAL programs resulting from this research should be given support as needed to ensure that all suitable gifted students have genuine access to these programs.

DEECD must support and sponsor processes which spread the knowledge and understanding of SEAL schools and their ability to cater for the needs of gifted students.

DEECD should investigate all current non-SEAL programs to verify their appropriateness for gifted students, and to ensure that Transition Guidelines are not breached by such programs to the detriment of formal SEAL programs nearby.

Primary schools should be encouraged to develop rigorous, appropriate and informed policies and programs to cater for the needs of gifted students.

Primary schools should be encouraged to cluster with other schools as appropriate in order to provide a geographical spread of provision for gifted students.

DEECD must ensure that all their policies address the special needs of gifted students, including their particular social-emotional and affective needs. Such needs include perfectionism, sensory and emotional intensity, a sense of justice, a preference for older playmates or intellectual peers.

DEECD must ensure that all policies address the fact that regular curriculum is unable to meet the needs of gifted students.

DEECD must address the lack of knowledge of gifted education among staff in government schools through a targeted program of professional development for teachers.

DEECD must work with teacher-training organisations to require that all students in teacher training receive substantial training and assessment in gifted education. This requirement must be implemented into teacher training urgently.
Term of Reference
(c) opportunities and strategies for enhancing support for gifted and talented students, their parents and carers, teachers and school leaders;

Response to this Term of Reference.

Support for gifted and talented students will be enhanced by ensuring that there are enough places in SEAL schools for gifted secondary students, based on 10% of the school population.

Support also will be enhanced by ensuring all teachers, but especially primary teachers, gain greater training in identifying gifted students and in how to support and meet the special needs of gifted students and their parents.

An opportunity for giving better information to parents is to use NAPLAN to direct parents to more information if their child is in the top 10% of their age group in any one of the test categories.

An opportunity for DEECD and schools to enhance support will be to develop a centralised repository of information, research and policies about gifted issues and the SEAL system including material not currently readily available.

An opportunity for research which would enhance support is to investigate the distance between students’ homes and their SEAL school or nearest SEAL school, including gifted students who don’t attend SEAL, in order to assess accessibility to SEAL programs.

An opportunity to enhance support is to lobby to loosen the unhelpful tax laws regarding FBT for teacher professional development, so that School Councils can fund the post-graduate qualifications of their staff in gifted education.

Recommendations.

Many of the recommendations made under earlier Terms of Reference are opportunities to enhance support. These will not be repeated here. In particular, issues of identification and program opportunity for gifted students must be addressed urgently to improve support offered to gifted students and their families.

DEECD should enable quality research about opportunities for enhanced support for gifted students within the school system. Such research should address deficiencies in the system currently, and proactively commission research to enable Victoria to become a world leader in outstanding provision for gifted students within a school system.
Term of Reference
(d) opportunities for improved educational offerings for gifted and talented students through collaboration across all school sectors and with community, business and industry.

Response to this Term of Reference.

Opportunities are needed for gifted students to present their work to a wider audience, recognising the great need of gifted students for genuine audiences for their learning, for example – other gifted students; business; universities; TAFE; Government departments; non-government organisations (NGO’s). One example from ten years ago is the Horizons program, which used School’s Television as the medium to engage gifted students with outside experts in a real time discussion and forum.

Opportunity exists for issues and subjects under study, which usually originate from teachers, to originate from business; universities; TAFE; Government departments; non-government organisations (NGO’s).

Opportunities are needed for schools to share their innovations, one example being Creative Commons licensed documents as output.

Collaboration across all school sectors and with community, business and industry will enable the development, to higher level, of education of gifted children.

Opportunities are needed for all schools to share facilities, including those of business, government departments, non-government and other government schools, for the well-being and development of our gifted children for the benefits to society and country.

Recommendations.

DEECD should develop broad audiences outside of school education with whom gifted students may engage. The huge range of modern media available must be harnessed and effectively used to achieve this possibility.

DEECD should research and establish avenues for the development of curriculum materials specifically for gifted students which is generated from involvement with the world outside of schools. Genuine connections between schools and business, universities and similar should be facilitated by DEECD.

An environment of support and sharing for the benefit of gifted students should be actively developed within DEECD and between SEAL schools. This requires dedicated support for SEAL schools, and a clear commitment to ensuring that SEAL schools are not in competition with each other or with nearby schools offering imitation SEAL programs. Competition is inimical to enabling schools to genuinely share resources, materials and innovation, and will only be achieved by policies which clearly define suitable gifted programs and which promote those programs as DEECD endorsed.

DEECD should actively enable sharing of facilities which may be underutilised, to benefit the education of gifted students. In particular, DEECD should address major barriers to access to external facilities which may exist, such as insurance, experienced personnel and security issues.

REFERENCES
