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PERCEPTIONS OF EXCEPTIONAL TALENT IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR A SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM

by John I. Finocchiaro

A Field Study Report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education in the Canberra College of Advanced Education.

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I dedicate this study to my wife Marie, who patiently supported my endeavours to arrive at the completion of this study.

ABSTRACT

Questionnaires were sent to parents of three hundred and fourty six year 7 and 8 students attending an independent, comprehensive school. Parents were asked to indicate the nature and extent of talent they believed their child possessed. Their replies were used as the basis for the range of talents - some fifty two areas - considered in this study.

The questionnaire, together with questionnaires given to students and teachers, also served to identify seventy five exceptionally talented children.

The talent areas were grouped into talent 'clusters' and students representing each cluster were selected for interviews. During the interviews, parents were asked whether their son had previously been identified as exceptionally talented, and what they perceived to be the educational needs of their son.

These needs were looked at in terms of the formulation of a differentiated curriculum for exceptionally talented children.

The curriculum is described mainly in terms of three teaching modes traditionally associated with gifted children : grouping, acceleration and enrichment. Each of these is explored in relation to the stated needs of the students and their consequent applicability to designing curricula for these students.

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