

## UNE TalentEd Conference

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Project Title	UNE TalentEd Conference for Rural and Regional Teachers. Potential to Performance: Celebrating innovations in gifted education
Project Team	Dr Susen Smith, Dr Peter Merrotsy (SiMERR NSW); Carol Davies, Mr Ray Smith, Dr Linley Cornish (University of New England); Professor Ronald Laura (University of Newcastle).
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Funding Agency	SiMERR
Organisational Base	SiMERR NSW

### Description

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This project expanded the reach and penetration of the University of New England (UNE) Conference in Gifted & Talented Education that shares and disseminates innovative practice in gifted and talented education in rural and regional Australian schools. This annual conference currently presents to DET, Independent and Catholic teachers across the New England region. The program was expanded with additional keynote speakers, lecturers from other regional universities, teachers from other regions, UNE students, parents and contributions from people who have led innovative programs in gifted education. Schools from a broader geographic cross-section across rural and regional NSW and Queensland were encouraged to participate.

The conference aimed to share and disseminate innovative practice in gifted and talented education in rural and regional Australian schools. For example, the 'Success for Boys' program in Inverell, 'Kids Teaching Kids: Move over Batman', Tamworth, 'Scientists in schools' project, CSIRO and 'Academic Olympics - Implementation and Opportunities for Leadership', Orange. The conference was a collaboration between SiMERR NSW, UNE School of Education Gifted and Talented coordinators, TalentEd, Regional and rural NSW DET, Independent and Catholic schools. Teacher practitioners presented examples of innovative practice from their classrooms, schools and community educational contexts. The conference also provided the opportunity to present papers on the outcomes of the SiMERR NSW Enrichment programs. Parent representatives were provided opportunities to talk about the implementation of enrichment programs.

### Participants

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30 conference presenters from three educational systems, five universities, and six community organizations, 90 conference participants from nine regions across rural and regional NSW and Queensland, Principals, K-12 Teachers, consultants, G & T Coordinators and teachers, specialist teachers, lecturers, parents, tertiary students and community members, and UNE students studying gifted education.

### Findings

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The evaluations of the participants provided some useful insights to inform future conferences. Some results included: Many strategies were gleaned from the conference presentations and most participants indicated that they would implement ICT strategies, dynamic differentiation, project based learning, micro lessons, philosophy, acceleration, academic Olympics and they wanted to revisit other known strategies such as De Bonos and Bloom's Taxonomy.

### Outcomes

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Ten presentations from the conference are currently being prepared for a special edition of the UNE Talent Ed Journal.

#### Conference presentations

- Laura, R.S., & Smith, S.R. (2008, July). Reconceptualizing relationships within high-tech social and educational contexts. Paper presented at the One Voice International Conference, The Institute of Elemental Ethics and Education, Westin St. Francis, San Francisco, USA.
- Laura, R.S. & Smith, S.R. (draft, 2009, February). Enhancing rural student learning: The re enchantment of science education to re engage gifted students. Paper submitted to the Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology, and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia's Symposium for Innovation in Rural Education (ISFIRE): Innovation for Equity in Rural Education, University of New England, Armidale.
- Smith, S.R. (2008, July). An ecological framework for dynamically and inclusively differentiating the curriculum. Paper presented at the One Voice International Conference, The Institute of Elemental Ethics and Education, Westin St. Francis, San Francisco, USA.

SiMERR NSW funding supported the improvement of the collaboratively planned and implemented annual UNE Gifted & Talented Conference program. With the addition of keynote speakers, greater variety in presentations, involvement across nine regions and three school systems, several universities, increased participants, administrative support and community organizations, the conference far exceeded expectations. Plans are in early stages to co-organise the conference across regional universities and Australian Gifted & Talented Associations. The conference provided a forum for sharing effective differentiated teaching and learning strategies. Overall the UNE TalentEd Conference showcased current innovative practices and research for K-tertiary teachers and students that provided motivational and relevant opportunities for practitioners to share new strategies for supporting gifted and talented students in rural and regional contexts.

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