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Tasmanian teachers reach for the stars

Three Tasmanian teachers will receive national awards at the ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEiTA) today at a ceremony in Melbourne.

Drew Roberts from Emmanuel Christian College (Rokeby), Carolyn Coote from Blackmans Bay Primary School, and Narelle Henderson from Lansdowne Crescent Primary School join nine other outstanding educators from across Australia in receiving the top awards.

Selected from more than 1100 nominations in 2015, the 12 national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching.

Mr Roberts whose school is in a low socio-economic suburb on Hobart's Eastern Shore, was nominated by a school parent and will receive an Innovation Award for increasing levels of student engagement through the innovative use of technology in the classroom. Mr Roberts also expanded his after school robotics club, called Club Code to include primary school children and is leading the charge for all of his colleagues to become Google certified teachers.

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says he applauds his initiative and passion.

"Mr Roberts is really making a huge impact, making sure that all the students are engaged and tailoring their learning experiences so they can reach their full potential and ultimately be prepared for life. By incorporating dimensions of coding into his learning programs he also inspires young learners and provides them with important 21st century skills such as logical and creative thinking and high level problem solving skills. This approach to teaching is also appreciated and valued by the wider community and is a credit to the value-add our ASG NEiTA teachers bring to education."

As part of his prize, Mr Roberts will also attend International Space Camp spending one week at the U.S Space and Rocket Center in Alabama along with two ASG students. Mr Roberts' was chosen as the successful candidate with strong interest from other ASG NEiTA recipients.

Ms Carolyn Coote from Blackmans Bay Primary School was nominated by a parent and will also receive an Innovation Award for her teaching approach of negotiated learning with a differentiated curriculum.

Ms Coote advocates that children have choices about their learning and strives to bring subjects to life with a balance between theory and practical activities. The year five/six teacher also enriches the curriculum and adds a fresh dimension to the teaching program by inviting guest speakers from all walks of life into the classroom, having student teachers from university and actively encourages parent participation and communicating student successes.

Mr Blewitt says Ms Coote's teaching philosophy is bold and makes for an exciting classroom environment.

"Ms Coote's application expressed her disappointment that innovation and creativity sometimes go unrewarded, and are difficult to assess in conventional educational education systems that rely heavily on preconceived benchmarks, formulas and testing techniques. However, Ms Coote promotes the use of multiple intelligences where students are motivated to explore topics and



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concepts in dynamic ways and gives students the drive to achieve desired outcomes and have a sense of ownership and pride in processes and finished products.”

Narelle Henderson from Lansdowne Crescent Primary School was nominated by a parent and will receive a Leadership and Development Award for developing an extensive outdoor play-based education program called ‘Bush Kinder’ which aligns to the Australian Curriculum’s Early Years Learning Framework.

Ms Henderson organises regular mornings where children from birth to five years set up ‘camp’ in the bush, encouraging them to investigate their surroundings and play imaginatively. This is also a community activity with parents and friends volunteering to share their talents as the students look to nature to build shelters and cubbies, make mandalas, search for insects, listen to birds and balance on logs and swings.

Mr Blewitt says Ms Henderson’s love for nature and strategy of play-based learning is having a positive impact.

“A parent affirmed that Ms Henderson’s positive attitude helps encourage the children to see being rugged up and outside in the bush on a 10 degree Hobart day as a part of a wonderful adventure. Children involved in the program also become confident and involved learners, developing their disposition for learning through encouraging engagement, enjoyment, curiosity, cooperation, persistence and problem solving.”

Parents, grandparents, secondary student councils, school boards, councils, parent associations, committees of management and community organisations throughout Australia nominated these inspirational recipients.

Chief Executive Officer of ASG NEiTA, John Velegrinis says the ASG NEiTA recipients make supporting children’s education possible and they understand the huge responsibility of educating tomorrow’s leaders.

“I congratulate Mr Roberts, Ms Coote and Ms Henderson along with the other NEiTA recipients. It is an absolute pleasure to have them as our ASG NEiTA ambassadors and they represent the true epitome of dedicated teachers who genuinely care about the educational success and wellbeing of their students. They are education heroes in their own right and I am deeply touched when the parents tell us their faith has been restored in the education system when they had started to lose hope.

“Instilling a passion for education and a desire to learn is truly one of the greatest gifts that a young person can receive, while education is one of the most important investments that parents, families and communities can make. This is why ASG NEiTA has thrived for the last 22 years thanks to the contribution of passionate teachers.”

The national awards are divided into three categories: leadership and development, innovation and community engagement. For more information on the 12 national awardees, including profiles go to: <http://www.asg.com.au/neita>

Eleven national award recipients will receive \$5000 professional development grants with one teacher getting the incredible opportunity to go to Space Camp in the U.S. One teacher is also awarded a \$2000 Disability Inclusion Grant.
ENDS.



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Editors notes:

The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) is a member owned organisation, helping to create educational opportunities for children. ASG has been helping families and their children for more than 40 years. During this time, more than 520,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.3 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments returned to members.

The ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEiTA) started in 1994 in Australia and 1996 in New Zealand. Since inception, more than 30,000 teachers have been nominated by the community in the two countries, with more than 1000 teachers receiving about \$182,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.

For more information visit: www.asg.com.au

