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Marriage of music and learning wins national award

A teacher who strives hard to bring the joys of song and melody to early learners will receive a national award at the ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEiTA) today at a ceremony in Melbourne.

Galina Zenin, a program director with Bonkers Beat Music Kinder and Childcare (Aspendale) in Victoria will join 11 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.

Ms Zenin was nominated by parents for a Community Engagement Award for her outstanding contribution and commitment as a leader and building trust and rapport across the entire community. Bonkers Beat is Australia's first dedicated music kinder where music is the foundation of children's learning and an integral part of the curriculum.

Music is quintessential to Ms Zenin who studied at the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music and started her career teaching in primary school sector in Russia. She facilitates early learning through the power of music, wellbeing and play and the program also includes physical development, languages, literacy and numeracy, catering for individual learning and meeting the requirements of children with additional needs.

Ms Zenin says the program which exceeds the Australian National Quality Standards is having a far reaching impact.

"Countless educators and parents have said that after using the Bonkers Beat music program, children have improved their social skills, concentration, speech, language, gross and fine motor skills, cooperation, teamwork, patience, imagination, self-esteem and love of music, multicultural and social identity."

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says Ms Zenin is a wonderful ambassador for the teaching profession and her initiative is outstanding.

"Ms Zenin's teaching methods and leadership strategies are proof that if have a burning passion you can achieve anything. The success of the music and wellbeing programs has also gained state government attention, selected as two of the most innovative practices in Victoria by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in 2010 and 2011. Ms Zenin has also reached out to the community, getting parents involved in celebrations and working bee projects, collaborating with local councils and visiting primary schools to share music and meditation sessions. I congratulate Ms Zenin on her achievements and for having such a positive impact particularly through a focus on music, which establishes a basis for lifelong enjoyment of and participation in music-making."

Ms Zenin says other educators have also benefited from the program.

"I caught up with one of the teachers to see if she had used any of the techniques that were taught. She said, "If I didn't use them this year, I wouldn't have survived". We've also had feedback from many primary teachers that recognise when children came from our centres, they



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are more confident, more focussed and are generally more mature and advanced in language than their peers.”

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 Ms Zenin 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.

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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

