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WA teachers scoop ASG NEiTA awards

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

Joyce Michael from Lynwood Senior High School (Parkwood), Brooke Haendel from All Saints' College (Bull Creek), and Rebecca Peckitt from Rostrata Primary School (Willetton) will 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.

Ms Michael whose school has over 1000 students with a diverse cultural mix, was nominated by a school parent and will receive a Leadership and Development Award for developing and implementing strategies to support students with disabilities and learning difficulties. As the Learning Support Coordinator, Ms Michael also focuses on developing students' literacy skills and has been at the forefront in leading teachers through their teaching practice to adopt a whole school approach by embedding literacy within their subject areas.

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says he applauds her commitment to ensuring student engagement and success.

"Ms Michael's teaching and leadership methods allow her to respond to individual students' needs. Students need opportunities to develop skills and achieve educational outcomes that will lead them to realistic and rewarding post secondary studies. Ms Michael has also been proactive in establishing the Building Independent Skills (BIS) program where students with disabilities gain vital skills, such as learning how to use public transport and behave appropriately in public. These initiatives contribute to students succeeding in a mainstream environment and are appreciated and valued by the wider community. It's another credit to the value-add our ASG NEiTA teachers bring to education."

Ms Brooke Haendel from All Saints' College was nominated by a parent and will also receive an Innovation Award for designing and implementing 'The Forest House Developmental Program' an education program developed at her school. As the health coordinator, the program which is framed by educational philosophies such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development and Bandura's Social Learning Theory equips students with knowledge, understanding and skills to see them manage the pressures from society and peers to conform.

Mr Blewitt says the program is highly innovative and addresses values-based issues which can be confronting for adolescents.

"Topics such as decision making, masculinity, assertiveness and supportive relationships are really insightful and provide an avenue for having really healthy discussions and the opportunity to challenge some stereotypical ideas. This can really make a difference to young people's lives as they question their own values and the choices they make. It also allows them to manage their behaviours as they apply their learnings to practical situations. I applaud Ms Haendel on the success of these initiatives with different themes picked up across the varying year levels."



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Rebecca Peckitt from Rostrata Primary School was nominated by a parent and will receive an Innovation Award for adopting the 'Kimochi' philosophy to help teach emotional intelligence by helping children to manage, discuss and regulate their feelings through puppetry. Children learn why each character feels a particular way at a particular time and how to accept the feelings of others and their own.

Ms Peckitt believes social and emotional skills are the backbone to learning in the early years and the key to future success.

Mr Blewitt says Ms Peckitt's strategy is having a positive impact on children and parents.

"A parent affirmed that Ms Peckitt goes above and beyond their expectations and is a brilliant teacher. In adopting the 'Kimochi' philosophy the prep/year one teacher sought to find a solution to a problem when she noticed many of her students were struggling to solve conflicts and having difficulty in expressing their emotions. She felt compelled to adopt this teaching philosophy and now wants to share it with the junior school teachers to create a common language and achieve a holistic approach that focuses on developing the whole child."

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 Michael, Ms Haendel and Ms Peckitt 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

