

Friday 10 March 2017

Science songs, wholesome kindy and a school of scientists win national awards

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

Tracey Marsden from Yidarra Catholic Primary School (Bateman), Jacob Windle from St Paul's Primary School (Karratha) and Guy Stapleton from Melville Senior High School will join 10 other outstanding educators from across Australia in receiving the top awards.

Selected from more than 1350 nominations in 2016, the 13 national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching.

Early childhood teacher Tracey Marsden who is a firm believer in holistic approaches to learning will receive an ASG NEiTA Leadership and Development Award.

Ms Marsden has been instrumental in kindergarten's philosophy of 'learning how to learn' through cultivating the personal, social, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions of very young children through a holistic model of education.

The kindergarten has been selected, as a 'Centre of Excellence' for the upcoming Early Childhood Learning and Development Conference. Delegates will be able to observe their daily kindergarten practices such as 'open morning tea time,' an initiative which gives young children the freedom to continue learning and playing in their environment without the constant interruptions of traditional regimented routines. Each child chooses when they would like to visit the 'Kindy Café', which is staffed by a teacher to engage with the children and help develop their language skills in a social and safe environment. Once finished, the child then chooses to participate in a new learning activity or returns to what they were doing.

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says Ms Marsden stands out as a quality educator.

"I congratulate Ms Marsden for recognising that the success of holistic education lies firmly within the partnership of families and educators. The early years are critical to laying the foundation of lifelong learning and through her 'wonderful enthusiasm' and 'bubbly kindy class' Ms Marsden skilfully draws out the curiosity and creativity of children which requires intelligence, environmental support and motivation."

Jacob Windle whose mission was to get his students passionate about science when he first started teaching at St Paul's Primary School will receive an ASG NEiTA Innovation and Leadership Award.

Challenged by widely assumed misconceptions that 'science was for the academically gifted' Mr Windle also challenges his students to believe that 'everyone is a scientist'. Through hands-on practical experiments, he has been able to demonstrate that science is about discovery and intrigue.



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"I took science out the textbooks and got it into the hands of the students. I don't hand out science homework but rather encourage students to be the captain of their own learning journey."

Mr Blewitt says Mr Windle's passion for sciences and STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths) is preparing students for the future and hopes to integrate robotics and coding into every classroom.

"I congratulate Mr Windle for making St Paul's Primary a school of scientists. He has transformed traditional and stereotypical mindsets where his philosophy was first 'scoffed' at, to getting students to discuss and share their ideas and develop a keen interest in classical sciences. Mr Windle has also garnered interest and support from the wider school community, hosting astronomy nights and connecting with local television media where some of his classes measured, recorded and reported the weather from Karratha."

Guy Stapleton from Melville Senior High School who employs music, art and theatrics to teach science concepts will receive an ASG NEiTA for Leadership, Development and Innovation. He was nominated by a Board trustee for being an 'outstanding teacher who uses innovative teaching strategies and his lessons are the most creative I've seen!'

With many young people identifying with music, the science teacher creates songs to help students retain information for topics such as 'Chemical Change' (Chemistry), 'Forces' (Physics), and 'Got to get starch into my mouth' (Human Biology).

"I performed my 'Chemical Change' song during our school's Art Week concert and it was filmed by the West Australian newspaper and placed on their Facebook page in order to stimulate student engagement with science.

I combine established routines with unexpected surprises in an engaging manner, for to be different in the classroom is to be remembered."

Mr Blewitt says Mr Stapleton has made a significant difference in the lives of thousands of students and their families over his 31 years of teaching.

"I congratulate Mr Stapleton for his high level of innovative professional practice and for extending the curriculum beyond the course requirements. When former students get in touch years later and say, 'I remember your classes' that is a really positive affirmation of the influence he has had as a teacher. A true education advocate, Mr Stapleton also hopes to partner with local universities to specifically teach and mentor student teachers in classroom management strategies to help reduce the number of Australian teachers leaving the profession in their early years due to poor classroom management."

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



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Chief Executive Officer of ASG NEiTA, John Velegrinis says the ASG NEiTA recipients have all been recognised by their local communities for making a genuine difference to education and for supporting the educational aspirations families have for their children.

"I congratulate Ms Marsden, Mr Windle and Mr Stapleton along with the other ASG NEiTA recipients. These outstanding teachers and educators have earned the respect of their communities through their hard work, building trusting relationships and ensuring their love for education gets passed on to their students, creating a culture of lifelong learning.

Teachers have an enormous responsibility and our ASG NEiTA recipients take on this responsibility with humility, striving to always be accountable for their actions, working beyond what is expected of them and expecting nothing in return. Their joy comes from the challenge of ensuring their students flourish academically and socially, giving students choices and offering holistic solutions. This is why ASG NEiTA has thrived for the last 22 years. The community thanks and applauds you for your contribution to teaching the next generation of young Australians."

The national awards are divided into four categories: leadership and development, innovation, community engagement and introducing, early career teacher. For more information on the 13 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 530,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.5 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 34,000 teachers have been nominated by the community in the two countries, with more than 1050 teachers receiving about \$940,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.

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

