

2015 ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards

National Award Recipient



Drew Roberts

Emmanuel Christian College, Rokeby, Tasmania

Drew Roberts teaches IT, Technology, Mathematics and Social Studies at Emmanuel Christian School in Rokeby, Tasmania.

Drew began his career in a small rural school that encouraged him to further develop his generalist teaching skills. A passionate educator who believes that humans are lifelong learners, he is dedicated to helping his students grow both within school and outside of it.

In addition to his formal teaching duties, Drew conducts an after-school robotics sessions for secondary students. He has recently extended this initiative to include a coding club that teaches computer-programming languages including Scratch, Python and HTML/CSS.

A devotee of cooperative learning, Drew cultivates an educational environment in which students are free to make—and learn from—their mistakes. He promotes peer-tuition in which inter-student interaction helps problem solving by talking issues through with other students.

Drew also involves parents in their children's learning. He invites them to help their children prepare for a regional competition over a public holiday. Drew keeps abreast of advancing technologies, particularly when they add value to a teaching task. He's in the process of becoming a Google-certified teacher and has found learning management systems, such as Google Classroom, to be an effective means of disseminating learning material—even for students who might have been absent from school.

'I understand that not all students are the same', Drew says, but 'I believe we need to foster a learning environment that caters to all student needs'.

Drew's National Award is for Innovation.

POSITION	OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES	CATEGORY	SUBJECTS/LEVEL TAUGHT	YEARS TEACHING
Teacher	Code Club	Secondary	Digital Technologies, Design Technologies, Physical Education, Maths	12
YEARS AT THIS SCHOOL/CENTRE	SCHOOL TYPE	NOMINATED BY	TOWN/SUBURB	STATE AND POSTCODE
6	Independent	Parent	Rokeby	TAS, 7019

CONTACT DETAILS:

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What is the most challenging aspect of being a teacher?

From a personal viewpoint, trying to keep up with current and the fast changing face of technology. Another challenge is knowing what value certain software or programs will add to the school's learning programmes to improve student outcomes.

Disengaged students are also a battle, we are living in a society that wants instant gratification and at times students can become disconnected from the learning process very quickly.

There is a lot of discussion at the moment around improving teacher training and teacher quality. What are your thoughts around this? Do you think teacher training and teacher quality needs to be improved in Australia?

One distinct feature I have noticed is that many teaching staff are happy to continue teaching the same way they did when they were graduates. This is not having a dig at past and present colleagues because I have taught with some rippers who have really helped and mentored me over my short career, however, in the 21st century we need to facilitate learning programmes that suit the Z generation of students that we are currently teaching.

At a recent STEM conference I attended, the keynote speaker was a gentleman by the name of Chris Betcher. Chris was a very inspirational speaker who shared some very interesting facts regarding Australia's position in world rankings of mathematical literacy. In 2003 Australia was ranked sixth and in 2013 we were ranked 13th. When it came to scientific literacy, we had slipped from fourth in 2006 to sixth in 2012. These results would indicate that we certainly need to be thinking about our practices. Another interesting snippet was that 40 per cent of year 7-10 mathematics classes are taught by teachers who do not have mathematics qualifications. We all know that maths hasn't changed, but the kids of today have so we need to adapt our teaching to suit this generation.

How do you think teacher training could be improved?

When I was at university, everyone would really look forward to the practicums and the excitement would spill over to the week when we all returned to university.

Even now when I am fortunate enough to have pre-service teachers, I discuss this issue with them and they always appear to enjoy being in a school more so than university.

I am not sure if my trade background shapes my thinking here, but I believe that universities need to flip the set-up they traditionally have always adopted. Instead of 70 per cent of time spent at university and 30 per cent in schools, maybe we need to have pre-service teachers at the coal face, spending 70 per cent of their academic year and 30 per cent of the time at university learning the required education theory. Maybe the colleague teacher needs to be an exemplary teacher nominated by principals, and one who has met the criteria for a lead teacher in the AITSL standards.

If there was one aspect of teaching you would like changed, what would it be?

So therefore, the change I would be trying to implement would be around the way teachers and students approach their learning. Something that my current principal has been leading my school with is, 'growth mindset'. A growth mindset deals with the way that we respond to a certain situation that we find ourselves in. Something as simple as when we see a problem that we are unsure of, we can say to ourselves, "Nah too hard" or we can say, "This looks tough but I am sure I can work this out!" Growth mindset is a simple idea that can benefit us all in our motivation and productiveness.

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