

2015 ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards

National Award Recipient



Galina Zenin

Bonkers Beat Music Kinder and Childcare Aspendale, Aspendale, Victoria

Music is quintessential to teacher Galina Zenin. As director of Bonkers Beat Music Kinder & Childcare Aspendale she works hard to bring the joys of song and melody to early learners. Teaching children through music builds social bonds and enlivens the soul, she says.

Galina grew up in Russia, where she studied at the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music and then began teaching at primary schools in Moscow.

In 2006 she opened Australia's first dedicated music kinder- Bonkers Beat in Brighton East, Melbourne, believing that the earlier children are exposed to music the sooner their journey towards the fulfilment of their potential can begin.

Galina facilitates early learning through the power of music, wellbeing and play. And while the Bonkers Beat incorporates music as an integral part of its curriculum, it also focuses on physical movement, languages, literacy and numeracy.

The Bonkers Beat outdoor area has two yoga decks and a Balinese hut for kinder children and toddlers to participate in regular yoga classes. The area also includes a jungle walk and reflexology path, built with parents' help and providing the children with a totally sensory experience.

In 2010, the Bonkers Beat Music Kinder in Brighton was selected for the E4Kids study conducted by DEECD and the University of Melbourne. The Bonkers Beat Music Kinder & Childcare Aspendale was selected as a pilot centre for the National Quality Standard and in 2012 received an overall rating Exceeding NQS.

Galina's National Award is for Community Engagement.

POSITION	OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES	CATEGORY	SUBJECTS/LEVEL TAUGHT	YEARS TEACHING
Program Director	Educational Leader	Early Childhood		30
YEARS AT THIS SCHOOL/CENTRE	SCHOOL TYPE	NOMINATED BY	TOWN/SUBURB	STATE AND POSTCODE
6	Independent	Parent	Aspendale	VIC, 3195

CONTACT DETAILS:

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What is the most challenging aspect of being a teacher?

Each day there is the challenge of creating a stimulating, caring environment for the children. It can also be a challenge to get to know and understand each and every child in the centre. It takes time, but it is our job to find out about a child's interests, concerns and dreams. By introducing them to many different experiences, we can help them discover the world and, therefore, discover their passions and strengths.

It can also be a challenge to find educators who are passionate and enthusiastic. It takes time to build a like minded team and positive culture, where our educators feel like they can openly discuss their feelings, emotions, their problems and their views, which are always valid.

It can also be a challenge to involve parents, but their participation is crucial for a sense of belonging. That is why we provide many opportunities for families to contribute and participate in a wide range of activities and support our programs at home.

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?

In 2009, with introduction of the new National Quality Standards many things started changing and that made me quite excited. But, at the moment we are experiencing a lack of qualified teachers. And some of the training organisations are not providing a high level of training, which is critical when we talk about the quality of education. We don't want to employ people, who just have the qualification, but no passion for early childhood or understanding of a child's development.

How do you think teacher training could be improved?

Students should be encouraged to get out of their comfort zone and not just do work placement, where they have a friend working or which is close to home. Even after getting their qualifications, especially kindergarten teachers, all graduates should get at least 12 months experience working side by side or under supervision of a passionate and experienced mentor.

I think teachers need to learn a wide variety of skills, so they can pass these on to children. Their training should include compulsory units in how to introduce music, musical games, wellbeing practices, arts and craft experiences too. They need to teach children courtesy lessons and good manners. And in short, they need knowledge, skills and passion.

What advice would you give a new graduate?

To be open to learning and do some research. There are many different approaches to early childhood education, so it is important to understand and learn about Montessori approach, Reggio Emilia, Steiner, Vygotsky and others. We need to be committed, lifelong learners and be open to different educational philosophies. They may make you think about things in a completely different way.

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

I think we need to have a holistic approach to education. We need to see each child as unique and different. Children, just like adults, have multiple intelligences and learn in different ways through listening, drawing, music, movement, building, making, creating and so on. Therefore, we need to teach children differently and offer more learning opportunities to enhance their multiple intelligences.

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