

# 2015 ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards

## National Award Recipient



### Rebecca Peckitt

Rostrata Primary School, Willetton, Western Australia

Rebecca Peckitt is an early childhood teacher who aims to educate the 'whole child'. At Rostrata Primary School in Willetton, WA, she works towards that goal by focusing on play-based learning.

Each term Rebecca creates two interconnected play areas that relate to the topic she teaches. These play centres are designed to consolidate skills taught in the classroom.

In the 'Jungle Explorers' area, for example, the children sort animals by characteristic or habitat and record their findings in a 'Jungle Animal Spotting Book'. The children also engage in role-play experiences by dressing up as animals and acting out various scenes in the wild.

Rebecca believes social and emotional skills are the backbone to learning in the early years and the key to future success. When children feel respected and confident in the classroom, she says, they are willing to take risks and strive towards their full potential.

Rebecca has adopted the 'Kimochis' philosophy of helping children to manage, discuss and regulate their feelings through puppetry. The seven different 'Kimochi' characters represent specific personalities and each comes with three feelings pouches. Children learn why each character feels a particular way at a particular time and how to accept the feelings of others and their own. After completing the Kimochi program, Rebecca noticed a significant improvement in the overall development of students' social and emotional skills.

Rebecca's personal philosophy is to ignite the passion in young students by creating confident lifelong learners who have a zest for learning and believe that they can reach 'mountains' if they just believe. As quoted by Dr. Suess, "Kid you'll move mountains!"

Rebecca's National Award is for Innovation.

POSITION	OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES	CATEGORY	SUBJECTS/LEVEL TAUGHT	YEARS TEACHING
Teacher	Member of School Board, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Coordinator	Early Childhood	Prep/Year 1	6
YEARS AT THIS SCHOOL/CENTRE	SCHOOL TYPE	NOMINATED BY	TOWN/SUBURB	STATE AND POSTCODE
6	Government	Parent	Willetton	WA, 6154

#### CONTACT DETAILS:

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#### What is the most challenging aspect of being a teacher?

The most challenging aspect I regularly face in my classroom is time management and providing as much support as I would like, to each individual student. I would love to give my students more 'one-on-one' time each day. As a teacher I believe that we need to help all students, those who are struggling with a concept, those who need extension and also the children who are achieving well but could reach new heights if they are given that extra 'push and encouragement'.

One-to-one assistance is invaluable in a child's education as it enables the teacher to offer 'developmental appropriate' support and individualised teaching. I often wish that I could split myself two or three ways each day just so that I could sit with every child and help them achieve more of their personal goals as well as supporting them in becoming the best little learners that they can possibly be.

#### 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?

I believe that just as the children in my classroom learn in different ways, student teachers need to be provided with a range of opportunities to develop their skills and understandings. This is exactly the experience I was provided with. I had motivating lecturers who exhibited the passion to teach that I longed to show in my classroom one day. The lecturers all had a wealth of knowledge and they allowed us to learn from their experiences by sharing what worked for them in the classroom. Most importantly, many of these lecturers were still teachers or had recently moved from the classroom to the lecture theatre. I found their approach was theoretical but also backed up with 'hands on and practical experience'. I was given the opportunity to make resources, to trial them in the classroom, to build my understanding of theory and make connections into early childhood education.

#### How do you think teacher training could be improved?

The most valuable advice I could give any student teacher is to find a teacher on your practicum that inspires you, one who excites you and who you believe can teach you a wealth of knowledge. Draw on their experience and volunteer in their classroom as much as you can. I completed my third practicum at Rostrata Primary School, I then volunteered once a week for a year with that same teacher in 2008. That additional time in the classroom built my confidence as a teacher and principals notice dedicated teachers.

#### What advice would you give a new graduate?

Do not be afraid to ask questions or ask for help. Take advantage of expertise you have waiting for you at your 'front door', your colleagues! We have all been in your shoes and have so many stories and learning opportunities to share with you from our experiences. At the same time, have confidence in yourself and trust your gut instincts. You have fresh perspectives, exciting ideas and current theoretical or pedagogical understandings that a school needs to keep it at the forefront of education.

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

I am a passionate advocate of play-based learning and my 'dream' would be for all schools to have 'learning centres' set up in all classrooms from Years K-3. The importance of play has been recognised as a "fundamental right for children", so much so that the United Nations has recognised that "Intentional teaching and child directed play are key elements of 'best practise' in Early Childhood Education" (Duncan, 2012).

I would love to break the stereotypical view that 'play' is just for kindergarten or pre-primary and see play-based learning as a concept associated with all children up to Year three. I believe that all junior students should participate in their own self-directed learning and that play should be used to extend concepts from the curriculum.

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