

Strictly embargoed until 12 September 2016, midnight

Tauranga educator who believes in 'risky play' wins top teaching award

A teacher who promotes the importance of children's 'risky play' will receive a national award at the ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (ASG NEiTA) on September 13 at an official ceremony hosted by Hon Hekia Parata MP, Minister of Education, in Wellington's Parliament Buildings.

Natalie Bell from Maungaarangi Kindergarten and Whanau Centre will join five other outstanding educators from across New Zealand to receive an ASG NEiTA award. Selected from more than 200 nominations, the six national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching.

Natalie also introduced motorbikes into the centre. A motor cross instructor coaches the children once a week, outside kindergarten hours, with parents in attendance. Through riding, children have learnt empathy for each other, care for their environment and bikes, and gained confidence.

She was nominated by a parent for the 'wonderful characteristics she possesses, shares and teaches, and for her ability to tune into children and follow their passions and interests.

Natalie says education is not about rote learning or academic competitiveness, but having a 'spare key,' which can either open or close the minds and hearts of children.

"It is really important for teachers to support and encourage children who are risk takers. It has been recognised that children who keep on trying again and again become successful lifelong learners. This is a concept that excites me and it was a big step to introduce bike riding at the centre, but it has allowed our children to realise that learning does not only happen sitting in the classroom.

This idea of a trusted companion is integral to my philosophy, where each person looks after and supports one another to reach their full potential. Working with children to gain their trust and companionship can be hard when children's lives can be so chaotic. Through allowing the children to experience risk, such as riding bikes, climbing our big beautiful trees or by being allowed to simply be with someone who cares, supports and trusts them, they become capable and competent learners. This is the spare key that all teachers should have when teaching the young minds of the future," said Natalie.

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says Natalie Bell has also created opportunities for children to extend their risk taking skills through community engagement initiatives.

"Natalie has also tapped in to the wider community, by inviting motocross instructors to show off their skills to the children. They discuss safety aspects, bike maintenance and practice bike tricks at the local BMX park, which has led to these children being leaders, keen to show off their new manoeuvres.

This engagement with the wider community allows children to experience something they may not have had the opportunity to and get this extension on their learning. It is vitally important that teachers pursue all avenues of learning for their children and I congratulate Ms Bell for turning these moments of learning into magic, joy, inspiration, trust, confidence and respect as testified by a parent," said Mr Blewitt.



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Parents, grandparents, secondary student councils, school boards, councils, parent associations, committees of management and community organisations throughout New Zealand nominated these six, inspiring national recipients.

Chief Executive Officer of ASG NEiTA John Velegrinis says the ASG NEiTA recipients represent quality teachers who through their dedication and passion for education, motivate, encourage and inspire an appetite for lifelong learning in their students.

"I congratulate Natalie along with the other ASG NEiTA recipients. Parents have high aspirations for their children's educational successes and the six national recipients have a fundamental and collaborative role in helping young people find their true passions, nurturing their strengths and ensuring they enjoy their learning experiences. This is the foundation on which young people will continue to embrace their education into adulthood, as they potentially change careers or retrain throughout their lives, adapting to changing markets and demands for specific skills and knowledge.

It is in this spirit that we say education is one of the most critical investments that parents, families and communities make and a pillar of nation building. So it is crucial that we recognise and thank our ASG NEiTA recipients who are at the heart of education and help turn dreams and aspirations into a successful and rewarding future. They are education heroes in their own right and the impact they have in supporting children's education has also been felt in their local communities, engaging with parents from all cultural backgrounds, knocking on the doors of charity organisations and community groups and opening their classroom doors through new lenses," said Mr Velegrinis.

ASG NEiTA has been embraced by communities throughout New Zealand for the last 20 years, marking a significant milestone in recognising the achievement and wonderful contribution of early learning educators, centre directors, principals and teachers.

The six national recipients will each receive \$5000 professional development grants. For more information and to view their ASG NEiTA profiles go to: www.asg.co.nz/neita

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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 30,000 teachers have been nominated by the community in the two countries, with more than 1000 teachers receiving almost \$750,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.



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For more information visit: www.asg.co.nz



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