

Strictly embargoed until 12 September 2016, midnight

Invercargill educator who promotes multicultural values wins national award

A teacher who values the importance of strong family connections and multicultural values will receive an 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.

Rebecca Hansen who teaches at Grassmere Kindergarten (formerly Otatara Preschool) in Invercargill, will join five other outstanding educators from across New Zealand to receive an ASN NEiTA award. Selected from more than 200 nominations, the six national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching.

Rebecca has made a significant impact in her short teaching career of just three years. She was nominated by a parent for empowering children and giving them the confidence to lead their own learning, and develop life skills from their preschool years.

Of Samoan descent, Rebecca teaches her culture to the tamariki and the kaiako in her centre. Her team has participated in Polyfest for the last three years and all whanau are learning waiatas action songs and instructions in Samoan.

"My dad said, 'life begins at home.' In other words, if his children didn't know or feel love, trust, care, respect and kindness in the family environment, then they may never experience these qualities, and what a dejected start in life that would be for any child or individual.

Because of my upbringing, I believe in accepting all nations, their languages and customs. We should not be ignorant and decide what is best for children and their families. This can only be achieved when teachers build a relationship with them and empower them to contribute their knowledge and views in a community of shared understanding," said Rebecca.

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says Rebecca Hansen is a wonderful ambassador for the teaching profession who has earned the respect of the wider school community.

"This is what ASG NEiTA is all about; recognising the love, passion and drive of teachers who constantly encourage and support our students to have a better tomorrow. In Rebecca's short teaching career, she has implemented many wonderful teaching strategies such as getting children to understand their emotions; using social coaching; and adopting proximal praise, where children choose to make more positive choices on their behaviour.

Rebecca's classroom is also full of excitement and laughter, as she dresses up as 'Aunty Lollie' and shares her family's history through Samoan songs and stories. This is a magical time each month for the children and their families, as Rebecca plays the ukulele and takes her audience to a happy place. I congratulate Rebecca on her positive contribution to teaching and her holistic approach in delivering a well rounded education," said Mr Blewitt.

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.



Media Release

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 Rebecca 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

For more information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact:

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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.

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

