

**Strictly embargoed until 12 September 2016, midnight**

## **Leadership and innovation the key to Auckland educators receiving national awards**

Two Auckland teachers who have fostered innovative learning and collaboration will receive 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.

Diane McKissock-Davis, Head of Faculty of Visual Arts at St Cuthbert's College, and Nick Johnston from Marshall Laing Primary School in Mt Roskill, join four other outstanding educators from across New Zealand to receive their national awards.

Selected from more than 200 nominations, the six national ASG NEiTA recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching.

'From the Sage of the Stage to the Guide on the Side,' the title of her application essay, Diane reflects on 41 years of teaching and says she has seen parallel shifts in teaching practices and leadership approaches from the principal through to classroom relationships.

Diane says "I think the strength of our department is that as a tight knit team who trust one another, we can face change with an open to learning mind-set. Students and staff bring their own knowledge, cultures, contexts and skills to the table and that enriches all of us.

The emphasis is on seeing ourselves as learners and improving our practice rather than considering our combined decades of experiences as proof enough that we have it as experienced teachers." Technology has further tipped that relationship balance between teacher and student. Whilst our department has become comfortable with a wide range of these technologies and social network platforms, we still frequently rely on students' expertise and guidance," said Diane.

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says Diane McKissock-Davis is a wonderful ambassador and mentor for the teaching profession, who has earned the respect of her colleagues and the wider school community.

"Diane was endorsed by the principal and school council for always offering students with learning experiences, which challenges them to reach a high level of personal excellence and constantly search for improvement. She also goes beyond the call of duty, continuing to mentor and support her students long after they have left school and have embarked on art careers.

Her humble and strong belief that teachers need to be lifelong learners has been the foundation on which she has been able to provide outstanding leadership and run a dedicated and innovative visual arts department. Her commitment to art education is exceptional and Diane also shares her expertise with art teachers at other schools, giving freely and generously," said Mr Blewitt.

The second ASG NEiTA recipient, Nick Johnston, introduced innovative e-learning into his classrooms, increasing students' engagement and excitement through digital tools such as SMART Boards and Google Apps for Education.

Mr Blewitt says Nick has created a sense of wonder among his students, inspiring student led-learning through using digital tools to satisfy their curiosity.



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"These digital tools have the capacity to provide students with authentic learning opportunities. In Nick's classroom the students bring their own device (BYOD) to school and he has observed a real shift, particularly, in boys' attitude to writing, now that they can utilise images, artwork and videos in their writing, all of which they find visually stimulating.

It is really positive to see how parents are also more engaged in their child's learning and development. Nick has created a window into his classroom where parents can connect through a mobile app and observe their child's behaviour, and be sent messages and photos of what is happening throughout the day.

To support the home school partnership around learning, Nick built a Google website which he shares with students and parent to set the focus and support from home each week. Parents are also provided with links about how they can best facilitate home learning and know the school's expectations. This transparency and openness into Johnston's classroom gives parents a sense of the academic and social stage of their child, which is refreshing and somewhat reassuring," 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.

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 Diane McKissock-Davis and Nick Johnston 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](http://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.*

*For more information visit: [www.asg.co.nz](http://www.asg.co.nz)*

