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**ACT teachers earn national recognition with awards
'Teacher skyrockets her way to International Space Camp' & 'changing gears
pays for former motoring journalist'**

Two teachers from the Australian Capital Territory will receive national awards at the ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (ASG NEiTA) today at a presentation ceremony in Melbourne.

Michelle Allen from Torrens Primary School and Adam Porter from Hughes Primary School will join another 10 fine educators from across Australia in receiving the top awards.

Selected from around 1450 nominations in 2017, the 12 national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching. Now in its 23rd year, the ASG NEiTA awards have contributed more than \$1 million in professional development grants to outstanding teachers in Australia and New Zealand.

Michelle Allen teaches science and works with more than 100 international students as an English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) teacher. She's been described by a parent as having 'boundless energy and enthusiasm' and her science room is a 'room of wonder' filled with a chorus of 'oohs and aahs' from the children.

Michelle also receives the International Space Camp Award. She will spend one week at the U.S Space and Rocket Center in Alabama along with two ASG students in July this year.

Michelle says 'learning by doing' is definitely her motto.

"I love the hands-on nature of teaching science and watching students learn through full immersion in exploring and investigating their world.

"In my classroom there are no standardised worksheets in sight, but there's plenty of noise as students brainstorm, employ thinking skills to problem solve, perceive and share observations of pattern and outcomes, explain to peers what they've accomplished and that it takes to think through an idea. That idea may look like hands covered in a slime concoction, ducking marshmallows zipping across the room from catapults designed and built by the students or exploring phenomena outside.

"This is what engagement looks like; something I strongly believe is a crucial element to students achieving success.

Michelle also has a specialist role at the school to help plan and resource quality science programs for the junior school and developed STEM kits for use across the whole school, which aim to promote STEM curricular through engaging, differentiated challenges.

Parents are also invited to join science lessons as volunteers, to encourage their children's learning and achievement.

Michelle says they too have a hands-on learning experience.

"Their role goes far beyond setting up before and cleaning up after. Having been trained in questioning techniques to help guide and frame student thinking, and with a clear understanding of learning intentions, volunteers engage with students in the learning process and are an integral part of all sessions.

"They help EAL/D students find the language to describe and record observations, scribe for students who brim with ideas but struggle to record them in writing. Their commitment carefully built up over time allows further scope to truly differentiate learning and engage children at appropriate levels."

Adam Porter has been teaching early childhood education for 10 years after a high-profile career as a motoring journalist, test driving a myriad of Porches and BMWs.

He decided to change gears and teach young people after seeing the benefits of supporting his nephew who struggled to learn.

"I viewed the role of an early childhood teacher as being instrumental in the development of a child; socially, emotionally and academically."

Adam was nominated by a parent who says many of the children have thrived and responded to his exemplary teaching skills.

"Both of our sons started their time at Hughes with Mr Porter being their kindergarten teacher. They both had him up on a pedestal and the motivation he provides for children to want to learn is evident by the way children respond. He sets high expectations for his students, which are both reasonable and achievable."

Adam says he lays the foundation and creates an environment which allows his students to be the best they can be.

"I exude humour and enthusiasm in every minute of the day, encapsulating not only their interest but their ability to be independent learners who strive to be challenged. I love using puppets to support students' learning in the classroom from guiding lessons, challenging students in games, extending their thinking and even connecting with older students. I ensure that each child's opinion is valued and that students support their peers at all times."

Adam also co-ordinates the Kids' Hope Program at Hughes Primary School, a mentoring program to support students across K-6 who require additional social and or emotional support.

"It's a community based program that aligns a professionally trained mentor with a student who has been identified with social, emotional or academic difficulties. I ensure parents are involved in the process, and understand the key role the mentor plays in supporting

their child, meeting for one hour each week. This has allowed students to gain confidence, resilience and self-belief, and be active members of their cohort. This not only assists in the school setting but also within the home environment.”

A school parent credits the mentoring program to making a ‘real difference’ for at-risk students.

Adams says he’s also an advocate for male teachers within the profession.

“An important leadership role I have undertaken at Hughes Primary has been the mentoring of new educators, especially male teachers, who can consider the role of teaching in early childhood education as overwhelming.

“Male teachers are a rare commodity in the field of early childhood education, and working with a new male educator last year, I understood that my mentoring role, while providing essential advice and guidance, was also about collaboration between us.”

The national recipients are selected by a panel of seven judges comprising Director of Early Learning, Ruyton Grammar School, Sarah Denholm; Director of Collegiate Institute, Julie Rimes; Zig Zag Public School and previous ASG NEiTA national recipient, Tiffany Sirisavath; Principal, Saddleworth Primary School and previous ASG NEiTA national recipient, Sheree Mader; Director of Leadership, The Southport School and 2016 ASG NEiTA national recipient, Keith Fennell; Emmanuel Christian School, previous ASG NEiTA national recipient and Space Camp leader, Drew Roberts and ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt.

The selection process is rigorous, including a comprehensive nomination outline, a written paper and video presentation by the nominated teacher.

Parents, grandparents, secondary student councils, school boards, councils, parent associations, committees of management and community organisations throughout Australia nominated the 12 deserving and inspirational recipients.

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says the national recipients have made their mark in local communities throughout Australia.

“It’s so wonderful to see teachers being singled out by members of the community for their personal contribution to education. It’s in local townships, villages and indeed larger, city centres where our ASG NEiTA recipients can be the heartbeat of these communities. For every student they teach, they could be impacting multiple lives as they establish relationships with parents, grandparents and connect the home and school life, creating an eco-system of continued and shared learning and support networks.

“The thread that ties our 12 ASG NEiTA recipients and brings communities together are their common values and educational aspirations. Motivating students to push themselves, creating inclusive spaces, identifying specific developmental and communication needs,

and letting students take charge of their learning are the key drivers behind teaching strategies and innovative approaches happening every day in schools.

"I thank our ASG NEiTA recipients for their passion and persistence in teaching today's young people and for the communities who nominated them, in recognising their outstanding and inspirational qualities."

ASG CEO Tim Mitchell-Adams says the ASG NEiTA recipients are passing on one of the most valuable gifts a young person can receive.

"I congratulate the ASG NEiTA recipients for their significant and personal contribution in achieving better education outcomes for Australian school children. Teachers have an enormous responsibility and right from early childhood education, our ASG NEiTA recipients are putting the building blocks together so that young people are equipped to become confident and competent lifelong learners.

"As students navigate their educational and life journey, our ASG NEiTA recipients are going on a journey of their own. A journey of excitement and wonder as they see their students achieve, through taking risks, accepting challenges and breaking down barriers. Some of these teachers have seen students blossom on the world stage and have careers they love. Our ASG NEiTA recipients are a huge part of these success stories, encouraging, mentoring and leading students to map out their future and reach their full potential, regardless of what that looks like. This is why ASG NEiTA has thrived for the last 21 years. The community thanks and applauds you for the countless hours and dedication you put into teaching their children."

The 12 national recipients will each receive \$5000 professional development grants. For more information and to view their ASG NEiTA profiles go to: www.asg.com.au/neita

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Editor's 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 540,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.8 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 35,500 teachers have been nominated by the community in the two countries. More than 1000 teachers have received \$1,000,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.

For more information visit: www.asg.com.au

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