

Embargoed: Until 2pm 23 February 2018

Focus on shared learning and 'Capturing the moment' earn educators national awards

Two Auckland teachers will receive national awards at the ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEiTA) today at an official ceremony hosted by Hon Chris Hipkins MP, Minister of Education in Wellington.

Daisy Docherty from Kristin Junior School (kindergarten) and Tarewa Williams from One Tree Hill College will join four other outstanding educators from across New Zealand in receiving the top awards.

Selected from around 200 nominations in 2017, the six national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching. Now in its 21st year, the ASG NEiTA awards have contributed more than \$1 million in professional development grants to outstanding teachers in Australia and New Zealand.

Tarewa Williams is the Curriculum Leader of Science at One Tree Hill College, classified as a low-decile school. Tarewa says that hasn't stopped him or his students from achieving.

He says the Māori proverb encapsulates why he entered the teaching profession, 'With your basket of knowledge and with my basket of knowledge, together we will grow'.

"I get the absolute privilege of working with the young minds that will lead the next generation, and consequently the generations to follow."

Tarewa was nominated by a parent who says he's built trust and respect among students.

"He gives them responsibility for their learning and helps them to motivate each other. He is a teacher who expects a lot from his students and at first some find that hard; after a while they all want is him as their teacher."

Tarewa who has taught around the world, also brings a broader skill-set to the class, having worked as a New Zealand army officer and a university liaison manager. He says these experiences prompted him to reflect on his own teaching outlook, finding ways to engage 'the whole learner'.

His initiatives include, creating a strategic Māori achievement plan, developing a student leadership programme and creating a science LEOTC (Learning experiences outside of the classroom) calendar for all year groups to connect science with the real world.

"It is a common mistake to then label the staff, students and family of these types of (low decile) school as low rung achievers. Coming from a similar personal background, I have the ability to make the connection with the community, and plot successful negotiation of the obstacles presented by environmental factors.

“No one walks into classes seeking to be unsuccessful. There is now even more scope to offer and access the keys to the doors of opportunity, where socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender and societal biases are not obstacles to staff and student success but challenges to be met and dealt with. I relish the opportunity to positively affect the outcomes of others.”

Daisy Docherty’s teaching practice took a shift in direction early last year, when she transitioned from teaching junior school students to teaching kindergarten children.

Kristin Junior School follows the IB curriculum, which Daisy says has been hugely beneficial to students as it focuses on inquiry-based learning.

“I found that with this age group their attention span was quite short, as was their ability to sit still. No longer could long in depth discussions take place, it was now about capturing the moment and doing it well.”

Daisy’s contribution to early childhood education already had a positive impact. Her ASG NEiTA nomination was endorsed by a parent who says Daisy has been a pillar of support for their family.

“Our family grew to a family of five and what stands out so clearly during this hectic time is how confident we felt that our daughter was being looked after at school. Daisy was the main reason for this and she just understood, without words what she needed.”

Daisy creates innovative and creative spaces where children can engage with new concepts and ask questions that lead to bigger discoveries.

“Along with my colleagues I was able to create environments that resembled typical ‘kiki summer’ activities, such as camping, beach trips and time spent on the water. The children adapted to what we had created and I also observed how they were growing in their social, language and problem-solving skills.”

The national recipients are selected by a panel of four judges comprising President NZ Schools Trustees Association, Lorraine Kerr (MNZM); John Paul College Principal, Patrick Walsh; Head of Department English, Social Sciences and Languages for Toi-Ohomai Institute of Technology, Joanne Hayes; former Vice-President Secondary Principals’ Association of NZ (SPANZ), John Day and 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 New Zealand nominated the six deserving and inspirational recipients.

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

"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, farming 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 six 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 all the ASG NEiTA recipients for their significant and personal contribution in achieving better education outcomes for New Zealand 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 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:

Penny Hartill
hPR
M: 021 721 424 P: 09 445 7525
E: penny@hartillpr.co.nz

Nicole Saleh
ASG
M: +61 404 028 794
E: ASGCommunications@asg.co.nz

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 \$2.5 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 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.co.nz