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Innovative leadership earns educator more national spotlight with award

A teacher who comes from humble beginnings and aims to be the voice of encouragement for her students will receive an ASG National Excellence in Teaching Award (ASG NEiTA) at an official ceremony hosted by Hon Chris Hipkins MP, Minister of Education in Wellington.

"In my family university wasn't ever discussed as my family members had not completed secondary school or continued on to tertiary education.

Katie managed to break the cycle and study teaching, being mentored by a teacher who gave her the confidence and support to complete her degree. "It took one person's voice of encouragement and I aim to be that voice for my students.

"My passion for education is at the very heart of who I am. Each and every day is an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students."

Selected from more than 200 nominations in 2017, Katie will join five other ASG outstanding educators from across New Zealand in receiving the top awards. Now in its 21st year, the ASG NEiTA awards have contributed more than \$1 million in professional development grants to inspirational teachers in Australia and New Zealand.

Katie is now a Deputy Principal and classroom teacher at Invercargill Middle School and was nominated by a parent for nurturing student success and accelerated learning.

"Katie impressed me with her ability to encourage her students to 'love learning'. And, although learning was tough at times, as long as the students persevered, they would be rewarded by climbing the stairway of success as they advanced onto their next stage of learning in all subjects.

"Katie created a visual stimulus for the classroom so each student could see and celebrate their progress. The students were also aware of and understood how to set their own goals and plan next steps, to be able to move up to their next level. This gave them a sense of responsibility to 'lead their own learning'."

With almost two decades of teaching experience, Katie is now in her seventh year at Invercargill Middle School. She was instrumental in introducing an oral strategy to the school.

"I noticed students were beginning all spoken sentences with 'because' and were constantly looking for affirmation and praise rather than feeling confident to express their ideas and opinions.

"I designed a case study based on the use of sentence stems and silent signals to build students' oral language capabilities and transfer power from the teacher to the students. So, I led staff to collaboratively set goals for oral language—including speaking in full sentences, active listening and rephrasing.

"The oral language has transferred to improved outcomes in literacy. The children are able to more fully express their own ideas and use a greater range of vocabulary when writing, and when reading they are able to understand and respond to texts. It also allowed teachers to reflect upon and assess the effectiveness of their teaching, moving away from the consequences of not being connected, looking for blame and other reasons for non-achievement.

"I have been contacted by many educators and agencies expressing their concerns regarding oral language development, which is NZ-wide concern. I hope to use my findings to develop systems and programmes that can be utilised by educators to make a difference in students' achievement and relationships.

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 onto 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

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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 \$2.5 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, with more than 1000 teachers receiving \$1,000,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.

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