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Inspirational Teachers Receive National Excellence in Education Awards

Six teachers spanning Early Childhood, primary and secondary education 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.

Selected from around 200 nominations, the recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contributions to teaching.

The recipients are: **Karen Barkle**, deputy principal at Ongaonga School in the Hawke's Bay; **Daisy Docherty**, early childhood education teacher at Kristen School in Albany, Auckland; **Glenys Parry**, head of art at Craighead Diocesan School in Timaru; **Katie Pennicott**, deputy principal at Invercargill Middle School; **Helen Peters**, early childhood education teacher at Kidsfirst Kindergarten in Beckenham, Christchurch and **Tarewa Williams**, Curriculum Leader of Science at One Tree Hill College in Auckland.

Tarewa Williams says his school's low-decile rating doesn't stop him or his students from achieving.

"It is a common mistake to 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."

Helen Peters says she looks for moments of wonder that children experience as they grow and develop physically, socially, and intellectually. "I respond creatively to the potential of these moments, nurturing each child in their learning, and encouraging their sense of self-worth and discovery."

Katie Pennicott didn't let her difficult start in life stop her from achieving her goal of becoming a teacher. "In my family, university wasn't ever discussed as my family members had not completed secondary school or continued on to tertiary education," says Ms Pennicott.

Katie herself was mentored by a teacher who gave her the confidence 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."

A former associate teacher to **Glenys Parry** nominated her for this award. "I am absolutely certain I wouldn't even be teaching today, doing what I love, if it wasn't for Glenys. Watching Glenys teach and interact with young people was incredibly inspiring and a real eye opener for me in terms what I wanted to do with my life. It made me realise what great leadership entails."

Glenys has been teaching for 35 years and says she still gets a sense of pride and excitement when she sees young people develop through art.

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

Karen Barkle encourages students to find their passion and it has made huge changes to their lives.

Karen is an advocate of 'student agency'; self-directed learning by students, giving them the freedom to make choices about subjects and contexts, and the direction they want to take. "The teacher's role is to facilitate and help guide students manage their own learning process," she says.

"This has been very successful and many students who found learning difficult suddenly were engaged, enthusiastic and proud of their achievements," says Ms Barkle.

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."

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.

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 recipients.

They will each receive a \$5000 professional development grant. 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. More than 1000 teachers have received \$1,000,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.

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