

2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Allan Dornan

Diploma of Teaching
Cowaramup Primary School, Cowaramup, Western Australia
Nominated by: School parent

Position: Primary Teacher • Level taught: General Primary • School type: Government • Town: Cowaramup • Category: Primary • State: WA

Education through inquiry learning begins with questions

Allan Dornan utilises students' strengths and knowledge to enhance their learning at Cowaramup Primary. He successfully uses the Inquiry Process, a dynamic process that encourages students to discover, investigate, create connections, discuss new ideas, and reflect on their learning to create a stimulating environment in the classroom. Morning studies consist of the usual core subjects, but afternoons are given over to Inquiry. Base activities are created and students can choose those that best suit their learning styles. Student results have been outstanding with excellent class attendance and students testing well above state averages. Allan also emphasises oral work, drama, and sporting activities to build confidence and basic social skills. He implements further programs that deal with regional topics such as history, flora, fauna, climate, and coastal environments.

Insight

Q: In your opinion, what makes a good teacher?

A: A good teacher shows respect for the children, creates a safe learning environment and caters to all styles of learning.

Q: How do you maintain your enthusiasm for teaching?

A: By being positive, having supportive administration, peers and school community, and the challenge that every student, every day is different.

Q: In hindsight, what do you wish your training provided you with more of?

A: Twenty-seven years ago we were given a very solid base in all learning areas, at all school ages, and with quality practical teaching time.

Q: What is the most difficult aspect of teaching today?

A: The administrative pressures with ongoing curriculum change.

Q: What is your greatest challenge as a teacher?

A: Adapting to a changing world of technology, and social, environmental and political environments, while putting it into a learning context for children.

Q: How has teaching changed over the years?

A: Teaching trends and focuses tend to be cyclic but socially, with working parents, we seem to be more values-focused, and the liability factor limits out-of-school activities.

Q: What is the single most important thing, you as a teacher, can do to connect with individual students?

A: Make them feel valued as individuals and team members by finding their strengths and weaknesses and letting them learn from these.

Q: If you were the Minister for Education, Science and Training for a week, what would you try to change?

A: Make sure the system you are trying to implement has been thoroughly tested so the teacher is confident in applying and communicating it to parents.

Q: What keeps you awake at night?

A: Except for the Dockers, nothing. I sleep very well but I do get nervous with assembly items, graduation night, camps and sports days – all the ones I organise.

Q: If your students could describe you in three words, what would they say?

A: Bad joke teller.

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