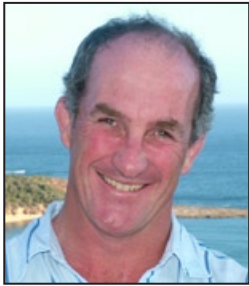


2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Daniel Spillane

Diploma in Teaching, Bachelor of Education
Deepwater Public School, Deepwater, New South Wales
Nominated by: School Parent Association

Position: Primary Teacher • Level taught: General Primary • School type: Government • Town: Deepwater • Category: Primary • State: NSW

Responding to the needs of small rural communities

Danny Spillane has more than 25 years teaching experience and now brings his considerable focus and drive to his role as teaching principal at Deepwater Public School. Most of the students at the school are from small rural communities and Danny has worked tirelessly to bring them the same learning opportunities as their big city counterparts. He has greatly expanded the school's sporting and artistic programs, and has raised literacy and numeracy skills with 90 per cent of his students testing at, or above, the state benchmarks.

Danny initiated a music program that has encouraged 360 students from small, isolated schools to build and learn to play their own musical instruments. The program has been so successful that it culminated with the students showcasing their musical talent in performances at the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Entertainment Centre.

Insight

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

A: Someone in tune with the specific needs of their students, parents and community and who is flexible and can adapt to change within the profession.

Q: *How do you maintain your enthusiasm for teaching?*

A: By continually investigating new ways to provide students, both in my school and others in associated networks, with stimulating and educationally rewarding experiences that build self-esteem.

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

A: With a major focus on involving students in a state performance group, and being totally self-taught, I wish that I had accessed more formal music training.

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

A: Dealing with the social and emotional handicaps that many students bring to school and ensuring that these have little impact on their school life.

Q: *What is your greatest challenge as a teacher?*

A: Keeping abreast of change, particularly technology. With my full-time administration and teaching loads, effective time management is essential for this to occur.

Q: *How has teaching changed over the years?*

A: Predominantly in the areas of technology, the breadth of the curriculum, the level of parent involvement, the roles and perceptions of teachers and school based financing.

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

A: Let them know that you are genuinely interested in their welfare and this is achieved most effectively by giving them regular opportunities to succeed.

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

A: To introduce a revised sliding school staffing scale. Instead of losing a teacher when enrolments drop, schools would only lose a percentage proportionate to losses.

Q: *What keeps you awake at night?*

A: As a teaching principal, I often complete administration work at night. I develop ways to create sound and plan how students can utilise instruments I make.

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

A: Caring, approachable and motivational.

Contact Details: Principal: Danny Spillane
Phone: (02) 6734 5395 or 0428 356 768
Email: danny.spillane@det.nsw.edu.au

For further information, please contact:

Janet Thomas, Public Relations, ASG on behalf of the NEiTA Foundation.
Telephone: (03) 9276 7758 Mobile: 0402 837 758 Email: publicrelations@asg.com.au

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