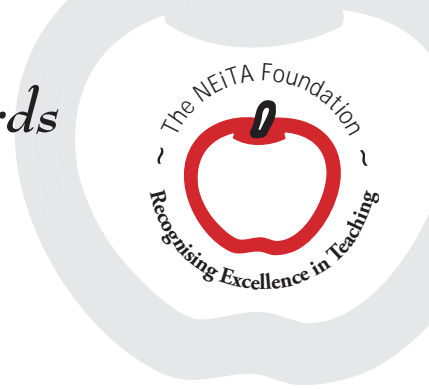


2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



David Summerhayes

Diploma of Teaching

Longreach School of Distance Education, Longreach, Queensland

Nominated by: School Parent Association

Position: Primary Teacher • Level taught: General Primary • School type: Government • Town: Longreach • Category: Primary • State: QLD

Inventive education techniques conquer the challenge of distance

One of the major challenges in distance education is fostering strong teacher and student relations. David Summerhayes uses a range of creative techniques to bridge the physical gap between himself and his students at Longreach School of Distance Education. David utilises art, music, and drama within his teaching programs, disciplines that are uncommon in distance education, where classes are broadcast over an HF radio. With no possibility of organising a school stage play, David developed and ran a highly successful student radio play. *Claymation*, chess and role-playing are also used to place David more directly into the students' home schoolrooms and lessen the children's feelings of isolation.

Instead of the usual written letter to provide feedback to his students, David uses his own time to give each pupil personal audio feedback. He has also recently been involved in the development and implementation of the inspiring new *WOW Writing* program that has helped to encourage many reluctant students to become better writers.

Insight

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

A: Someone who is understanding, flexible in their approach to teaching, able to engage and involve students in their own learning, and is a creative thinker.

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

A: I love a challenge that allows me to think creatively to plan lessons, which students enjoy.

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

A: At college, it would have been beneficial to have more contact with students and established teachers.

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

A: To keep students motivated and engaged in their own learning.

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

A: Making my contact with each student as effective and worthwhile as possible is challenging in my current position, where distances between student and teacher are so great.

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

A: The core curriculum has changed in small ways, but the approaches to teaching have really opened up, especially the increased use of technology in helping students prepare for the future.

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

A: Put students at ease with schooling and not pressure them. Students respond better if they understand why they are doing a task and the task has meaning to them.

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

A: Secure more funding to employ more teachers.

Q: *What keeps you awake at night?*

A: If I am about to teach something new, I lay awake going over every stage of the lesson. This helps me cope with anything unexpected arising in the lesson.

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

A: Fun, understanding and creative.

Contact Details:

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