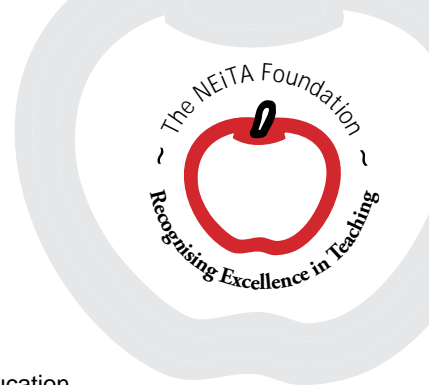


# 2007 NEiTA National Teaching Awards

## NEiTA Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



## Denise Rundle

Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood), Graduate Diploma of Drama in Education

Boroondara Kindergarten, Richmond, Victoria

Nominated By: Kindergarten Management Committee

Position: Early Childhood Teacher • Level taught: Early Childhood • School type: Government • Town: Richmond • Category: Early Childhood • State: VIC

### Addressing 'English as a second language' challenges

For the past five years, Denise Rundle has run the Boroondara Kindergarten, a preschool with the special challenge of having 84 per cent of its families speaking English as a second language, and many children having experienced extreme disadvantage including being from refugee, asylum seeker and homeless backgrounds.

Denise employs a wide range of innovative and supportive programs to build relationships with her students and their families. Denise introduced 'learning stories' to capture the various ways in which the children learn individually, and with each other. Using photographic documentation, Denise records the achievements of each child. Denise then writes about the students' learning, which is then translated into the child's primary language. This method greatly increases the opportunity for families to become more involved in their children's learning experience.

Denise works with a number of bilingual assistant teachers from the local community. In this way, students are provided with the opportunity to maintain their first language while learning English as their second language. One of the most important elements of the learning story process is that children have the opportunity to reflect on their learning and have this recorded in their first language by the assistant teachers.

The implementation of these types of approaches has resulted in greatly increased attendance and enrolment levels, and far greater family participation at the kindergarten. Boroondara Kindergarten is now perceived as a model multilingual preschool, with Australian and international teachers, academics, and university lecturers visiting the centre.

### Insight

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

A: A good teacher learns as well as teaches. They create positive learning opportunities for children, families, colleagues and themselves.

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

A: By being an active participant in the journey of learning with children – I share their joy of discovery, as well as my own.

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

A: A greater understanding of the diversity of families and how communities can be supported.

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

A: Balancing the competing demands of bureaucracy, regulations and paperwork while creating an exciting and challenging learning environment.

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

A: Staying healthy both physically and mentally and maintaining a balance between the competing work demands.

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

A: There has been an increase in the number of children and families suffering traumatic experiences that require counselling-style discussions and referrals. Also, the increased support families require with parenting issues.

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

A: Listen openly to students' ideas without judgment and provide honest responses that allow them to take the lead as appropriate.

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

A: Introduce free and accessible early childhood education for children two years prior to entry into school.

*Q: What keeps you awake at night?*

A: Any caffeine drunk after 4.00pm.

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

A: Funny/laughs, cheeky and helpful. These are words that children use to describe me.

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