

2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Felicity Roberts

Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Science
Kirwan State High School, Thuringowa Central, Queensland
Nominated By: School Student Council

Position: Senior Biology and Junior Science • Level taught: Secondary School • School type: Government • Town: Thuringowa Central • Category: Secondary • State: QLD

Making science a real life experience

Felicity Roberts shares her boundless passion for the teaching of all things scientific with her students. Through her role as Head of Science at Kirwan State High School, she creates real world contexts in which students explore the scientific world. She works with students to develop strategies to assist them in critical understanding and to bring science to life.

Felicity has developed a mentoring program in which members of the wider scientific community come to the school and perform practical experiments. This has furthered the students' knowledge of complex issues, such as the structure of DNA. Such is her passion for teaching science that Felicity also offers outside school hours tutoring for her students to provide them with additional assistance.

Many of Felicity's former students have gone on to follow pathways in science at university, and the Kirwan State High School recently won the Peter Doherty Award as Science Success School. The school is also one of ten Biotechnology Education Centres in Queensland, and has recently been announced as one of six Queensland Science Centres of Innovation and Professional Practice.

Insight

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

A: Someone who inspires. The teachers who have impacted on my life profoundly are those who inspired me to pursue my dreams, by providing challenges and allowing me to solve problems.

Q: How do you maintain your enthusiasm for teaching?

A: Simply because I love it! I am passionate about always learning new things and teaching is a profession that provides new challenges every day.

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

A: This is a difficult question because I loved both my science and education degrees.

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

A: The multi-faceted lives of students and the personal, social and cultural challenges they bring to the classroom.

Q: What is your greatest challenge as a teacher?

A: Keeping up-to-date with the rapidly expanding wealth of knowledge we acquire in science. For me, a curriculum that connects with the real world of science is paramount.

Q: How has teaching changed over the years?

A: Teaching is no longer about 'filling empty vessels'. As the pace of discovery accelerates further, teaching needs to be more about 'processes' than 'products' – posing problems to students to investigate and solve.

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

A: Care about them and allow them the opportunity to negotiate their learning and the curriculum.

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

A: If it were only for a week, I would celebrate the successes of teaching (rather than trying to change it – it is after all only 5 days)!

Q: What keeps you awake at night?

A: A good book and those ideas that pop into your head.

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

A: Super-organised, passionate, and dedicated.

Contact Details: Principal: John Livingston
Phone: (07) 4773 8111

Teacher: Felicity Roberts
Phone: 0416 111 393
Email: fbarb4@eq.edu.au; dafethanbrae@bigpond.com

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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