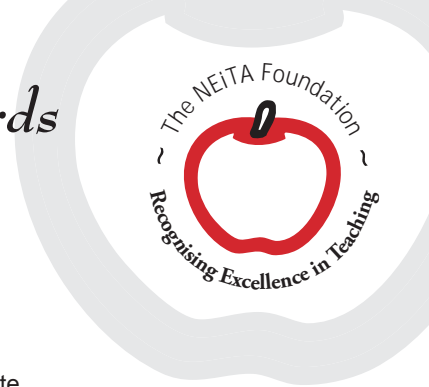


2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Gayle Williams

Diploma of Teaching, Bachelor of Education, Tasmanian Teaching Certificate

Scottsdale High School, Scottsdale, Tasmania

Nominated by: School parent

Position: Secondary Teacher • Level taught: Secondary School • School type: Government • Town: Scottsdale • Category: Secondary • State: TAS

Helping students find their voice

Throughout her 15 years at Scottsdale High School, Gayle Williams has promoted a love of public speaking and debating. Debating has become an extremely popular extra-curricula activity, with four teams competing in the Northern High Schools Debating Competition in Launceston. In a small rural school such as Scottsdale, this requires numerous hours of Gayle's own time, helping students prepare their speeches and travelling long distances to attend competitions.

Gayle has taken Scottsdale High School from having little success at public speaking, to being a major contender at national competitions. She has now coached students who have cumulatively won four state championships in various public speaking competitions.

With the aid of Gayle's mentoring and encouragement, one of her English students won the *Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize* and was rewarded with a trip to Gallipoli for Anzac Day 2006.

Insight

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

A: A good teacher must genuinely like and respect children and have the ability to connect with them. A passion for teaching is also important.

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

A: Every year there is a new group of students to take on an educational journey. They all have unique personalities, gifts and needs.

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

A: Detailed instruction on how to explicitly teach literacy skills such as reading, writing and speaking in a structured, sequential way.

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

A: Helping disadvantaged students who are disengaged from education. Helping them realise that a good education is one of the key factors that will help them achieve success in life.

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

A: Ensuring that my teaching areas (English, SOSE and Library) are interesting, relevant and helpful to all students.

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

A: Teaching has become less 'teacher directed' and more 'student centred'. There is less emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and more on deep understanding and developing thinking skills.

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

A: Take a personal interest in them and provide them with individual attention. Find out about the background of each student e.g. family, work and sport, and talk with students about their interests.

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

A: I would provide specific funding to rural schools to help them inspire and assist country students to continue on with further education.

Q: *What keeps you awake at night?*

A: The hurdles many disadvantaged students have to overcome, and how I can help them develop the qualities of resilience and tenacity.

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

A: Caring, dedicated and passionate.

Contact Details:

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