

2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Jenni McDonald

Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood), Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)

Caravonica State School, Caravonica, Queensland

Nominated by: Parent Committee

Position: Early Childhood Teacher • Level taught: Early Childhood • School type: Government • Town: Caravonica • Category: Early Childhood • State: QLD

A burning desire to teach one and all

Not only does Jenni McDonald inspire a thirst for knowledge in her preschoolers, but she also creates a great desire to learn among parents and even other teachers. Jenni's classroom is one that encourages interaction and participation from all her students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, celebrating the strengths of all involved. Through an active process of motivating and encouraging, Jenni aims to bring out the best in each and every student. Through close interaction with parents and students, Jenni has turned Caravonica Preschool into a hands-on learning environment, inspired and created by the children, which gives the students a great feeling of ownership.

Her infectious enthusiasm for teaching has not only been popular with students. Parents too have flocked to her workshops on a wide range of learning issues such as *Multiple Intelligences* and *Maths and Language Development*. She has also conducted very popular workshops for parents on children's behaviour management.

Local teachers also benefit from Jenni's drive and enthusiasm, especially through her role in co-establishing an Educational Resource Shop that provided materials, advice, and above all, inspiration for local teachers, parents, students and children.

Jenni also contributes her energies to developing and reviewing programs to enhance literacy in Indigenous communities. She helped to create the PaL (Parents and Learning) program for Indigenous parents and children that aims to promote parents' confidence and belief in their abilities to act as important contributors to the early education of their children through an integrated literacy approach. This program now operates in three Australian states.

Insight

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

A: The 4 L's - a willingness to listen, laugh, love and learn from the children, parents and other staff members and form a great team.

Q: How do you maintain your enthusiasm for teaching?

A: Never stop learning - learning through the children, parents, peers, professional development opportunities, discussion groups and reading and then sharing it with anyone who wants to listen.

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

A: I wish they had supplied a troubleshooting manual, which could be used to help solve all the day-to-day issues.

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

A: Fitting it all in. There are so many ways to get children excited about learning that I want to use them all in one day.

Q: What is your greatest challenge as a teacher?

A: Recognising when I've done a good job. At the end of the day I always wish that I had done just that little bit more.

Q: How has teaching changed over the years?

A: With the advent of the World Wide Web, access to current information is now at our fingertips - brilliant for keeping teachers and children motivated to learn.

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

A: Listen - listening in order to understand rather than listening in order to reply. Small voices have powerful messages.

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

A: Forums would be held where children, parents and teachers share their thoughts on what makes a great school. This information would then influence future decisions.

Q: What keeps you awake at night?

A: How to provide an education that every child needs to be a success in our ever-changing world.

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

A: Fun, silly and kind.

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