

2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Peta Cave

Diploma of Teaching, Associate Diploma in Teacher - Librarianship
Maleny State High School, Maleny, Queensland
Nominated by: School parent

Position: Behaviour Support Teacher • Level taught: Secondary School • School type: Government • Town: Maleny • Category: Secondary • State: QLD

A builder of bridges

Through her work as the behaviour support teacher at Maleny State High School, Peta Cave helps to build the character and confidence of her students. She encourages goal setting, teamwork, and resilience.

Peta has designed and implemented the widely acclaimed *Building Bridges* program. This program empowers the students through a series of outdoor activities and proactive strategies. Outdoor education techniques are utilised, such as mountain climbing, canoeing, abseiling and wilderness treks. Students are taken out of their comfort zones and face many challenges. In a series of follow-ups to these activities, they are encouraged to see the connection between the challenges they faced during the program and the challenges of everyday life. This helps to foster a positive mindset for the students, and a feeling that they can and will overcome any obstacles in their path throughout life.

Surveys of students who had participated in Peta's programs show improved figures for school attendance, stronger relationships with their teachers, more enhanced student goal setting abilities, and a more focused attitude towards their own education.

Insight

Q. *What makes a good teacher?*

A: The ability to create a climate of mutual respect and provide learning opportunities that allow individuals to experience a strong sense of personal and communal achievement.

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

A: Believing that what I have to offer is worth something and that those students I work with are more self-aware than before we met.

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

A: There was not enough practical teaching. It's all about getting out there and being involved and immersing yourself and your students in meaningful, learning experiences.

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

A: Dealing with the effects that the growing number of dysfunctional families have on students' readiness to learn and feel positive about themselves and the world.

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

A: Creating as many opportunities as possible to provide students with lessons and programs that help them to discover their strengths and unlock the potential within.

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

A: We've moved from a teacher-centred chalk and talk mentality to becoming the facilitators of learning, requiring a shift in control for both teacher and student.

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

A: Be genuinely interested in developing and maintaining a positive relationship and conveying that I am there to help them to learn and grow.

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

A: The effectiveness and availability of meaningful community involvement that allows mentoring to occur for students dealing with any form of personal challenge or hardship.

Q. *What keeps you awake at night?*

A: Trying to come up with new and innovative ways to reach out and positively affect those students who experience issues with their behaviour and hence, barriers to their learning.

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

A: Friendly, happy and sincere.

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