

2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Peter Rouse

Master of Special Education, Master of Art Education, Bachelor of Art Education, Bachelor of Fine Arts

JJ Cahill Memorial High School, Rosebery, New South Wales

Nominated by: School Parent Association

Position: Special Education Teacher • Level taught: Special Education • School type: Government • Town: Rosebery • Category: Secondary • State: NSW

Creating positive futures for special needs students

When he became special education teacher at JJ Cahill Memorial High School, Peter Rouse was presented with the challenge of restructuring the entire support faculty for special needs students. His successful restructure now has the faculty concentrating on the social, behavioural and academic outcomes of students that translate into real life, functional skills. Under Peter's guidance, the school has achieved a 64 per cent increase in student work experience. Peter has shifted the culture of the support faculty from low expectations of students' future employment to creating learning-driven workplace opportunities. Students now see themselves on a career path that is not only valued within the community, but one that will give them job satisfaction and gainful employment.

Parents of Peter's pupils say that they have had their hopes for their child's future life options raised, and seen their aspirations for post-school options given practical form. Students with disabilities currently enjoy work experience placements at a wide range of public companies, small businesses, private and government employment service providers, and local charity organisations.

Peter has also showcased his innovative practices to other teachers and support staff, holding workshops with participants from 38 other metropolitan schools.

Peter is now teaching at Fairvale High School.

Insight

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

A: Someone who is passionate about a future created by today's children and who can develop positive relationships with others.

Q: How do you maintain your enthusiasm for teaching?

A: By seeing each student and teaching event as a new challenge and a new opportunity. In this profession every day is different.

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

A: Practical teaching experience. I believe that teacher training should operate on an internship model combining on the job training and education theory.

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

A: Matching expanding curriculum and community aspirations with diverse students' learning needs. This may not be a new thing, but the rate of change is.

Q: What is your greatest challenge as a teacher?

A: Convincing students and parents to take advantage of the opportunities that my colleagues and I place in front of them.

Q: How has teaching changed over the years?

A: Teaching has changed for the better. Teachers have a greater knowledge about how learning occurs and the 'mechanics' of teaching. This can only improve our work.

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

A: Be consistent. Be fair. Always actively listen to what students have to say regardless of the situation.

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

A: Raise the profile of teaching in the community. Have the Education Ministers focus on the job of teaching and learning. I think I need more than a week!

Q: What keeps you awake at night?

A: Nothing. I start my day at 4:25am.

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

A: Helpful, funny and nice - I had someone ask them.

Contact Details:

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