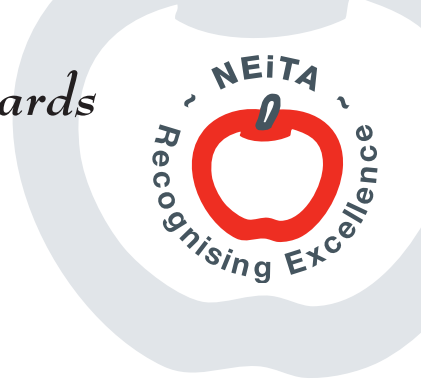


NEiTA 2009 ASG Inspirational Teaching Awards

State and Territory Award Recipient



Fiona Farren

Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education)
South Bunbury Primary School, Bunbury, Western Australia
Nominated by: Community Organisation

Position: Level 3 teacher, Program coordinator • Category: Primary • Level taught: kindergarten • Years teaching: 31 years • Years at this school: 10 years • School type: Government • Town/Suburb: Bunbury • State: Western Australia • Postcode: 6230

Why teaching?

Early in my teaching career, I met a preschool teacher who was retiring. She had the happiest face. I decided then, that if being around young children gave me smiley wrinkles like hers, I would probably like the job. I was right, and yes, it has!

I believe in the benefits of working with other people and agencies in the community for the benefit of young children and their families. The pleasure of these relationships has enriched my professional and personal life. The research and knowledge available now has challenged my practice and enhanced my belief in the vital importance of the early years of childhood.

Linking education and families to benefit young learners

With 31 years experience in early childhood education, Fiona Farren has dedicated herself to assisting all parties to work together to improve a child's early education outcomes. Fiona has developed the Linking Education and Families (LEAF) program. The program aims to assist each child in the transition to school, as well as raising parental awareness of the importance of the early years of learning.

In the LEAF program, each child receives a home visit before attending kindergarten. This provides an opportunity for the family to meet the teacher in their home setting. These visits have been particularly helpful in reassuring anxious students and parents about starting school.

Play cafés are another vital element of the LEAF program. Play cafés take place in the kindergarten on a day when the kindergarten is not used for other activities. At play cafés, parents of young children can relax, share information and develop a support network while their children participate in a variety of modelled play and learning activities.

Fiona has invited many members of the wider community to participate in her program. Visitors to her play cafés have included Child Health Care staff, speech pathologists and occupational therapists. In this way, the play cafés provide parents with easy access to early childhood development information from visiting health professionals and other family service providers.

Fiona has made an emphasis on the 'linking' from LEAF. She works hard to ensure her students' transition from home to school is pleasant and positive. The children, and their families, begin the journey to formal learning with enthusiasm, as they are already familiar with the kindergarten setting and their teacher. Similarly, Fiona knows her 'new' students and how best to cater for them. This has led to her students having a great start to their school life. Issues that could negatively affect a student's success at school are dealt with early and effectively. Fiona then nurtures and encourages students throughout the year to be creative and inquisitive learners – which is every parent's dream.

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