

NEiTA 2009 ASG Inspirational Teaching Awards

State and Territory Award Recipient



Sarah Briggs

Bachelor of Teaching
Westdale Public School, Tamworth, New South Wales
Nominated by: Parents and Citizens' Association

Position: Stage 3 Coordinator • Category: Primary • Level taught: Year 6 • Years teaching: 13 years • Years at this school: 11 years • School type: Government • Town/Suburb: Tamworth • State: New South Wales • Postcode: 2340

Why teaching?

I have always wanted a career that made a positive impact on a person's life and teaching makes this possible. At the end of each school year, I wonder if I will form as strong a bond with the students in my next class. I always do.

I enjoy getting to know my students – their personalities, their dreams and their stories as we embark on a learning journey together. I love 'those moments' when a student achieves their goals, whether it be overcoming their fear of public speaking or beating their time when completing their times table grid for the first time. This is what makes teaching worthwhile because together we make a difference to their future. It is a pleasure to come to school each day.

Encouraging leadership, literacy, and a love of the environment

Westdale Public School is situated in Tamworth and has more than 400 students, 20 per cent of whom are from Indigenous backgrounds. To encourage engagement and inclusion in her classes, Sarah Briggs uses student-directed learning techniques. Sarah works with the students' interests to provide educational activities that are stimulating and relevant. She encourages her year 5 and 6 students to support each other in the classroom, which engenders a sense of responsibility in her students. Students are placed in charge of the cleanliness of the classroom, and also set the class behaviour policy. This gives students a sense of ownership of their classroom and helps create a learning environment where the students feel safe and respected.

Sarah has developed and implemented the school's leadership program. This program encourages all year 6 students to be actively involved in leadership experiences in the classroom, in the school, and in the wider community. This assists students as they transition from primary to secondary school. The students participate in leadership training in areas such as public speaking, community care and school service.

Sarah is the team leader of the Together A Literary Experience project that focuses on boys' education within the school. This has involved Sarah attending and presenting at regional and state conferences, developing learning plans and then trialling, monitoring and assessing these plans. Her work has resulted in significant improvements in literacy outcomes for boys at Westdale.

Sharing her passion for the environment, Sarah has initiated the Westdale Gardening Club that has given students the chance to learn, through hands-on experiences, about sustainability. Students have worked with members of the wider community to design and build gardens around the school, as well as a vegetable patch and worm farms.

Sarah is an innovative teacher who has helped to implement new technological practices at Westdale. She has mentored both students and other staff in how to use interactive whiteboards and video conferencing equipment. Sarah is dedicated to using whatever means are at her disposal to achieve the best educational outcomes for all her students.

Contact details:

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