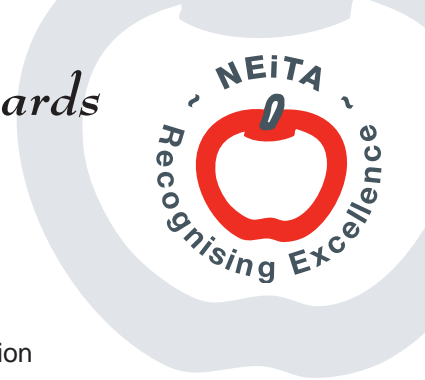


NEiTA 2009 ASG Inspirational Teaching Awards

State and Territory Award Recipient



Vicki O'Rourke

Diploma Of Teaching, Bachelor Of Education, Master Of Education
Zig Zag Public School, Lithgow, New South Wales
Nominated by: Parents and Citizens' Association

Position: Teaching principal, Stage 3 teacher • Category: Primary • Responsibilities: Western Gateway Educational Community member, NSW Western Region Gifted & Talented Committee member, Mentor i-extend program • Level taught: K - 6 • Years teaching: 23 years • Years at this school/centre: 2.5 years • School type: Government • Town/Suburb: Lithgow • State: New South Wales • Postcode: 2790

Why teaching?

It is the students who have inspired me to be the teacher I am. Much of my professional learning and successful teaching experience has been the result of a wish to inspire, engage and to cater for the talents of all students in my classes.

In order to provide them with these engaging experiences to support their talents and abilities I have continued to challenge myself to learn and develop new skills. Using these skills and seeing students succeed maintains my enthusiasm to teach.

Thinking big in a small school

As teaching Principal of Zig Zag Public School, Vicki O'Rourke believes in providing every educational opportunity to her small school community of 41 students. Vicki links her students' learning to real world experiences and develops in them the desire to actively seek out knowledge. Her classroom is a busy and exciting environment.

Vicki is keenly interested in the education of gifted and talented children. She has written and introduced individualised programs for Zig Zag Public School's gifted and talented students. She has also been involved in the establishment of the Regional Virtual Opportunity Class. In this virtual class, selected gifted and talented students from remote areas can interact in a live, web-based learning space. This provides extension and enrichment opportunities for students without them having to leave their hometowns.

Vicki is recognised for her work in literacy having worked extensively with the NSW Curriculum K-12 Directorate over the past ten years on a variety of projects, from writing online literacy courses for teachers across NSW to being an online mentor, leading teachers through a process of action research to explore their own teaching. She has also developed lesson plans and units of work for publication to highlight 'best practice' in English curriculum implementation.

Vicki employs the concept of Connected Outcomes Groups in her teaching practices. This program emphasises the connection between syllabus outcomes across the Key Learning Areas, highlighting how literacy and numeracy can be taught in context. Vicki helps to mentor other teachers in the Connected Outcomes Groups, and she has presented workshops about the project at several schools in the Western Region and beyond.

Each year, Vicki coordinates the Western Gateway Community of Schools Professional Learning Day. This involves surveying the needs of teachers from the nine schools in the Gateway, organising guest speakers, and overseeing the program for the day. These professional development days not only provide valuable opportunities for the teachers, they also help to give the schools a sense of community. The schools can band together to provide greater educational resources for their students.

Conscious of the importance the physical environment plays in the learning process, Vicki has paid close attention to her school's facilities. The school is set in a picturesque parkland setting. As principal, Vicki has sought grants and funding to provide the latest technology for the staff and students and to resurface the tennis court. The heritage building has been repainted and the school is about to construct a new school hall.

Zig Zag Public School may be small, but its dedicated and inspiring principal encourages its students to think big and strive to realise their full educational potential.

Contact details:

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