



Department of
Education and Training

Media Statement

Attention: Editor/Chief of Staff

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Award finalists cream of the public education crop

Four extraordinary teachers – each dedicated to their role well beyond the call of duty – have been named as finalists in the WA Education Awards 2009.

The teachers, from metropolitan and country public schools, join an elite group of principals, school support staff and schools in the annual awards program.

Department of Education and Training Director General Sharyn O'Neill said the awards recognised the valuable contribution of educators and school staff, while also showcasing the achievements of schools that had improved learning opportunities for students in science, numeracy and literacy.

Ms O'Neill said the calibre of nominations was very high, making judging difficult.

"We are pleased that so many talented and dedicated people are working in our public schools, delivering education that is making a difference," Ms O'Neill said.

"A common thread running through the nominations was the commitment to student learning and a dynamic, innovative approach to education.

"Reading through the nominations, I was extremely encouraged for the future of teaching and education in Western Australia."

Four finalists in contention for the Premier's Teacher of the Year are:

- Karen Augustson, a kindergarten teacher at Little Grove Primary School in Albany;
- Julie Boston, science teacher at John Curtin College of the Arts in Fremantle;
- Auriol Heary, a primary school teacher at Ardross Primary School; and
- Elisa Williamson, an English teacher at Mindarie Senior College.

"While each of the finalists is unique in their abilities, they are all committed to excellence in teaching and have a positive and enthusiastic approach to their work," Ms O'Neill said.

Leadership attributes will be recognised through the WA Principal of the Year Award to one of four principals from Challis Early Childhood Education Centre, Hedland Senior High School, Churchlands Senior High School and Woodvale Senior High School.

Support staff working in information technology, gardening and assisting students with a disability are also among the finalists.

Teachers, principals and support staff members nominated in the WA Education Awards are in the running to win \$25,000 in each category. Finalists receive \$2,500 each.

Nominated schools are in the running to win \$15,000 in each category and finalists will each receive \$2,500.

Winners of the WA Education Awards will be announced at a presentation breakfast at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre on Monday 7 December.

The WA Education Awards are sponsored by Edith Cowan University, ExxonMobil and Teachers Credit Union.

More information about the WA Education Awards can be found at det.wa.edu.au/educationawards.

(ENDS)

Note: a list of finalists follows

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Finalists for the WA Education Awards 2009 are:

Premier's Teacher of the Year

- Karen Augustson, a kindergarten teacher and volunteer tutor, **Little Grove Primary School**.
Karen is a professional and effective teacher who helps all teachers at Little Grove Primary develop individual and unique programs for students at educational risk. She has a fun and engaging approach to learning and allows students to take risks. Her classroom is a bright and dynamic place to visit and all students are motivated and energetic participants.
- Julie Boston, science educator, **John Curtin College of the Arts**.
Julie has a positive and enthusiastic approach to education, which has inspired her students to strive for excellence. She has had a profound effect on the direction of education at the school, professionally developing staff in improved teaching and learning techniques, integrating information technology in the classroom and rewriting the curriculum. In five years she has significantly contributed to improving the college academically from 77th to 18th out of all schools in WA.
- Auriol Heary, teacher, **Ardross Primary School**.
Auriol leads the Future Problem Solving program at the school and uses it as a basis for a critical thinking classroom. The problem-solving methods encourage students to analyse the information they receive, enabling them to express their ideas in a cohesive, fluent manner.
- Elisa Williamson, English teacher, **Mindarie Senior College**.
Elisa is an exceptional English teacher with eight years experience, who is seen as an authority in her learning area. She ensures that everything she does helps to improve student achievement. She has become a role model in the college, particularly for girls.

WA Principal of the Year

- Carolyn Cook, **Hedland Senior High School**.
Carolyn arrived at Hedland Senior High School in 2007 and immediately focused her energies on creating a safe and supportive school environment to improve student learning and behaviour. Under her leadership, the school has increased the staff retention rate by improving the school's teaching environment. Her focus on providing professional development to the teaching staff through mentoring has resulted in emerging leaders involving themselves in community-related issues for the greater benefit of the town.
- Neil Hunt, **Churchlands Senior High School**.
In his six years as principal at Churchlands, Neil Hunt has not only maintained the standards which enabled the school to stand out as one of the leading schools in Western Australia, he has also raised the bar of those standards. Neil is passionate about educational excellence. He has consistently promoted and modelled excellent teaching and learning.
- Paul Leech, **Woodvale Senior High School**.
Paul is a highly visible and innovative principal who has encouraged wide school involvement from the local community. Decision making is transparent with all aspects of the school being driven by working parties and committees including parent, student and teacher representation. Student feedback about Paul is that he is highly visible and approachable, they feel listened to through the number of committees with student representation and the close work he conducts with the student council.

- Lee Musumeci, **Challis Early Childhood Education Centre.**
Lee is an outstanding principal who has developed a reputation throughout the State as a leader in early childhood education. She is at the forefront of education in Western Australia, being called on to advise policy makers to ensure that early intervention becomes embedded in educational practice. Her influence in early childhood education is transforming future policies.

WA School Support Staff Member of the Year

- Caroline Evans, Education Assistant, **Sawyers Valley Primary School.**
Caroline is passionate about teaching and working with students with a disability. She believes it is a privilege to lead young students along their learning journey and works tirelessly to provide highly successful, innovative, and individualised programs for students. She is often found after-hours supporting families through face-to-face meetings and by telephone to provide counselling, advice and a listening and willing ear for problem solving.
- Jenny Lamb, Education Assistant, **Yangebup Primary School.**
Jenny displays all the skills and talents you would expect from an outstanding educational assistant and always maintains an exemplary level of professionalism. Staff can allocate any task to Jenny with the utmost of confidence that it will be completed in a way that meets, and often exceeds, all expectations. It is, however, in the extra duties that Jenny takes on, that her true strengths and outstanding contributions to student wellbeing really shine.
- David Ross, Manager of Information and Communication Technology Support, **Mindarie Senior College.**
On arrival at Mindarie Senior College, David totally renovated the ICT services, the IT network, all software and hardware, help desk support processes, and classroom and administration support services. The resulting services totally revolutionised access and service quality to all IT users of the college.
- Geoff Warren, Gardener, **Dwellingup Primary School.**
Geoff is exceptionally competent in carrying out all aspects of his duties and he efficiently manages his budget. His shed is immaculately clean and all equipment receives timely routine maintenance. He is warm and exceptionally humorous, genuinely caring about people, the environment and the community. He is the initiator and driving force behind the school's environmental program and has a vast knowledge of horticulture and animals. He has an excellent rapport with students and organises activities such as mini-golf and can recycling around town.

WA Science School of the Year

- **Applecross Primary School.**
Students at Applecross are excited about science and are often found talking to visitors to the school about what they are doing in the subject. This enthusiasm is complemented by strong results in the annual Statewide science testing and requests from other schools for information about the strategies used. Parents, community organisations and local businesses are also actively engaged in science at the school.
- **Ardross Primary School.**
In 2008, students raised more than 2,000 drought resistant species and planted 400 of the shrubs, ground covers and trees locally. The remaining seedlings were sent to Wheatbelt farms for planting as wind breaks.

- **Badgingarra Primary School.**

The school's enthusiasm for science is seen in the many projects scattered along the eight kilometre drive from the town to the school, including a model of the solar system, an arboretum with trees from the local area and signage pointing to local fauna on a walking trail.

- **Esperance Primary School.**

Year 6 and 7 students have monitored climate change and its effects on flora, fauna, wetlands and macro invertebrates. By making a decision to focus on science and ensuring that students could engage in hands-on, real life science using passionate local experts, the school has made science exciting and relevant. There has been a greatly improved attitude by staff and students to science and a genuine excitement about community-based science projects. Student achievements in the statewide science testing has been outstanding and the school was also one of three finalists in the 2008 Eureka Science Awards.

WA Literacy School of the Year

- **Beachlands Primary School.**

Beachlands Primary School has an outstanding approach to developing the literacy levels of all its students. Its national test results are clear evidence that the school has taken an innovative approach to literacy. All teachers volunteer to be on literacy committees and other teaching and learning committees.

- **Exmouth District High School.**

Over recent years, Exmouth District High School has actively improved the literacy performance of all students, prioritising literacy in all school and learning area plans. The school performs above sSte averages in national testing across all areas of literacy, which is testament to its strong literacy focus.

- **Kalgoorlie Boulder Community High School.**

The school has developed a whole school literacy plan which has resulted in improved literacy results for students and increased literacy expertise of staff. One of the objectives of the plan is to work towards closing the literacy achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The school has developed programs and initiated parent involvement in literacy groups, which has resulted in improved attendance and literacy achievement.

- **Riverside Primary School.**

Riverside Primary School serves a low socio-economic community and puts significant energies and resources into supporting the low achievers in literacy. The teaching and learning focus for each student is planned and implemented through well developed individual education plans and these students are supported through the school's many programs. There is a clear whole school belief and expectation that these students can succeed and that they are appropriately supported to do so.

WA Numeracy School of the Year

- **Beachlands Primary School.**

Beachlands Primary School has a strong leadership culture within the school, which has supported the development of a cohesive school staff. School staff work collaboratively and are committed to all aspects of improving student learning outcomes. All teachers at Beachlands volunteer to be on numeracy committees and other teaching and learning committees, which is a sign of their professionalism and commitment to student learning.

- **Donnybrook District High School.**

Donnybrook District High School has set out to establish a whole school approach to both the teaching and learning of numeracy. Central to the school's approach has been the development of a common belief and an underlying commitment to supporting student learning in numeracy. Student achievement has shown a steady improvement as a result.

- **Huntingdale Primary School.**

Huntingdale Primary School has made enormous progress in numeracy over the past five years. The school has developed and implemented whole school policies relating to planning, teaching and assessing of mathematics which has resulted in a more focused and consistent curriculum for the students.