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Department of
Education





Rewriting the future

**WA PREMIER'S PRIMARY
TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

Ten years ago Jodie Schicker received a wedding invitation. The vivacious primary school teacher, who boxes for fitness and runs 12 kilometres for fun when she's not shaping dazzling science experiments for her students, undoubtedly has no shortage of social requests.

This was something different.

"It turned out I taught this young man in my second year of teaching," Jodie recounts.

"He had a fairly troubled home life at the time and things went off the rails for him in his early teens. He went over east and developed a drug problem."

The young man later returned home to Western Australia to visit his family. The chance discovery of a card, written to him by his teacher Jodie Schicker years earlier, changed everything.

Jodie wrote: 'Remember, life isn't just about chance, it's about choice' and encouraged him to keep up his passions for playing the guitar and writing songs. Jodie penned an end-of-year card to each of her students that year, as she still does every year.

"It really resonated with him. He told me that, from that point on, he got himself into rehab and turned his life around – he got clean, met a lovely young lady and they were getting married."

Jodie accepted the wedding invitation with great pride.

"The moment was a real validation for me that my teaching had made a difference," she says.

Being a teacher is a big part of her identity as a person and was always her career goal.

"I have a sign in my house that says 'do what you love every day' – and that's what I do. My best days are in the classroom," she says.

A staff member since 1998 – "Bungaree Primary School has a piece of my heart" – Jodie has been the science specialist since 2011.

"The students love science – that discovery and curiosity about the world," she smiles.

"I love their quirky questions – they will ask 'do flies have eyelashes?' and 'will spiders' teeth grow back if they fall out?'"

Her road to Bungaree, a suburb of Rockingham where some are doing it tough, saw her teach in Toodyay and Leda before travelling though America, Africa and Europe with her now husband. Her travels led to some interesting experiences working as a supply teacher – the same as our relief teachers – in all corners of London.

"As a young teacher I think that sets you up quite well to handle pretty much any situation that is thrown at you!" she laughs.

Her childhood in Kwinana, steered by her tenacious single mother Frances, shaped the way she inspires her own students.

"My mum worked really hard to make sure I always had what I needed and she was my role model," Jodie says.



“I WOULD LIKE MY STUDENTS TO LOOK BACK ON THEIR TIME IN SCHOOL AND REMEMBER THAT I CARED.”



WA Premier’s Primary Teacher of the Year winner
 (1) Jodie Schicker, Bungaree Primary School

WA Premier’s Primary Teacher of the Year finalists
 (2) Brigit Wall, Tuart Rise Primary School
 (3) Celeste Cunningham, Dalkeith Primary School
 (4) Elizabeth Beament, Karrinyup Primary School

“Mum studied accountancy and bookkeeping as a mature aged student at TAFE and she showed me that, if you work hard, you can achieve.

“Some of our students have limited life experiences and one of the things I try to do is steer them towards careers in science and the digital technologies that will be the jobs of the future.”

She says her mother’s personal ethic matches the motto at Bungaree Primary School – ‘excellence through effort’.

“I show my students that circumstance doesn’t have to define who they are and what they do,” she says.

“A lot of our school families are working very hard just to get their children what they need, and I think education is a great opportunity for our students.

“Like every parent in the world, our parents want the best for their children. And our students are very eager to learn and school is important to them.”

Jodie’s approach is working. Her students,

from Pre-primary to Year 6, show a deft command of the vocabulary of science and its opportunities; like Katrina in Year 4 who says proudly, “I want to be either a geologist or a civil engineer”.

With a Master of Education and having gained the status of a Level 3 classroom teacher, the highest promotional step a classroom teacher can achieve, Jodie embraces learning herself and enjoys mentoring and coaching other teachers.

She is also clear that she wants to stay classroom-based, working with students rather than pursuing higher leadership roles.

“I would like my students to look back on their time in school and remember that I cared,” she muses.

“I want them to recall the time they dissected a cow’s eye, did pocket rockets or mixed chemicals to make a reaction. I’m hoping they’ll be able to anchor that science vocabulary and skill in an actual experience.”

One thing Jodie has learned is that you can do anything with the right attitude and effort.



Platinum partner

At BHP Billiton we see education as the foundation for the success of future generations, and we are proud to support a variety of education programs.

The WA Education Awards provide an opportunity to recognise all those who play a key part in delivering a high quality education to students across the State. We are proud to partner with the Western Australian Department of Education to support these prestigious awards. Congratulations to all nominees and finalists.

WA PREMIER'S SECONDARY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

A SIGN OF GOOD TIMES



“PASSION IS WHAT DRIVES ME. I'M LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE FOUND WORK I LOVE, SO WORK IS NOT WORK.”

Shenton College Deaf Education Centre teacher Dr Karen Bontempo is on a mission.

“Instead of making deaf children fit our system,” she says, “we are making the system fit those children. I think we are tipping the whole notion of inclusion on its head.”

Her extraordinary determination to break barriers for deaf students, and her international expertise in the field of deaf education have seen her named the WA Premier's Secondary Teacher of the Year in the WA Education Awards.

She has big dreams and says teaching Auslan to both deaf and hearing students is changing the minds of how deafness is viewed.

“Our hearing students will finish school with a different view of what it means to be deaf. They will be much more open-minded and they're our future legislators, CEOs and journalists so how they view and talk about deafness will influence more and more people,” Karen says.

“I have these wonderful visions of my hearing students coming out of school and going

on to studying to become doctors, lawyers, vets, counsellors and accountants and taking these Auslan skills with them.

“I can just envision the day when a deaf person turns up at their GP's office with an interpreter and the doctor says ‘I don't need an interpreter. I went to Shenton’.”

A respected teacher, researcher and interpreter, as well as arguably holding the title of the world's pre-eminent Auslan school educator, Karen spends most of her ‘working’ hours at Shenton College Deaf Education Centre.

“It's a passion,” she admits. “Passion is what drives me. I'm lucky enough to have found work I love, so work is not work.”

Good timing played a part in her first introduction to a lifelong love of Auslan, or Australian sign language. She was a teenager at university studying towards the first of her many academic qualifications, a psychology degree.

“Someone came in to give a talk about the psychology of a person who is deaf and they gave it in sign language. I immediately thought ‘what an amazing language – I have to learn it’.



WA Premier's Secondary Teacher of the Year finalists

- (1) Austin Ward, Cecil Andrews Senior High School
- (2) Ken Goatley, Broome Senior High School
- (3) Janet Silburn Barker, Shenton College

I called the WA Deaf Society the very next day and started going to classes,” Karen says.

“It was really just a snowball effect from there. I made every single university assignment about deaf people – even if it was about statistics,” she laughs.

“I have to give credit to the deaf community for sharing their language with me, for trusting me and for working with me to help them share their language. It’s a very vibrant community – just another minority in Australian society that is potentially disadvantaged by barriers, and one of the biggest barriers is obviously a communication one.”

For the past six years, Karen has focused on breaking down those barriers, not just for the 30 or so deaf students at the co-located Shenton College and Shenton College Deaf Education Centre, but for the wider school community too.

Through her own work, and the deaf and hearing colleagues who work alongside her, she has redefined the meaning of the word inclusive, not just for deaf students but for those with learning difficulties.

“Some students who are struggling in other subjects do well in Auslan because it’s a different way of learning,” Karen says.

“I send emails to parents of students with problems with working memory or dyslexia to let them know their child achieved higher than 90 per cent, and they say ‘My child has never, ever scored 90 per cent in a test. I have tears streaming down my face right now’.

“It’s interesting to see that taking a different approach to teaching than the one that kids are used to can really equalise them in many ways.”

Her classes have provided students from across the two schools with the skills to communicate with one another, build relationships and develop lifelong friendships.

With more than 100 students, most of them hearing, studying Auslan at Shenton College – and a waiting list a mile long – it’s clear her work is having an impact.

“For the most part, a deaf student comes to Shenton after being the only deaf kid in a sea of 600 hearing children in primary school. They have always been the different child. They’ve usually only had one person to communicate with at school and that’s their interpreter,” she says.

“Then they come to Shenton and deafness is just not an issue.

“To come somewhere where they don’t feel different because many hearing students can sign – and there are seven other kids in class who are the same as them – must be very empowering. It must really change how they feel about themselves.”

Karen works tirelessly at State, national and international levels to develop courses that bring deaf and hearing students together through the power of a public school education.

She is chief writer of the soon to be released Australian Curriculum: Auslan, and developer of the Year 11 and 12 ATAR Auslan course which will see students studying the language for the first time at the highest level in secondary school.

Karen loves her job so much she readily confesses it’s not like going to work at all.

With an attitude like that, it’s no surprise her surname, Bontempo, loosely translates to mean a ‘good time’.



Platinum partner

A CLEAR VISION



WA PRIMARY PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

Frank Pansini was principal of a coastal Perth primary school when what he describes as the opportunity of a lifetime came knocking.

It was the chance to be foundation principal of Aubin Grove Primary School and build it from scratch which was, he says, simply irresistible.

He had enjoyed the buzz surrounding a new school when he was previously a teacher at Atwell Primary School, and it was something he wanted to be part of again.

“Atwell Primary School had just opened when I was teaching there and I heard so many exciting stories coming out of the school,” he recalls. “People were just so happy to be working hard, creating something from the ground up.

“I remember thinking, if I ever get my chance, if that’s ever me one day, I’m going to remember what real enthusiasm and passion felt like.”

He remembered well. And when his time did come, he took on board what he had learnt at Atwell and poured his heart and soul into creating the award winning Aubin Grove Primary School.

When the school opened in 2011, there were just 315 students. Under Frank’s leadership it has flourished and is now Western Australia’s largest primary school with more than 1100 students.

“I thought if I was lucky enough to open a school it needed to have some sort of social glue that was simple but powerful – and really enabled everybody to buy in to,” he says.



WA Primary Principal of the Year finalists
 (1) Douglas Cook, Wembley Downs Primary School
 (2) Russell Hahn, Joondalup Primary School
 (3) Edward Nastasi, Caladenia Primary School

“WE HAVE FOUR SIMPLE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE THE WAY WE ALL ACT TOWARDS EACH OTHER.”

“We have four simple principles that guide the way we all act towards each other: to be there for each other; to make each other’s day; to choose your attitude; and to play.

“These principles are respectful and positive, and have been incredibly successful. It’s not complicated. If you can do those four things you’re well assured the place is going to be a happy place.”

No one can argue with that – certainly not his students. Frank can often be seen greeting them in the morning when he says they are fresh faced and excited about what the day may hold.

“We’ve been able to create a standard that people want to be a part of, so they come to our school or seek to work at our school because they want a challenge and they want to work in this kind of environment,” he says.

“I’ve got a clear vision of what I want the school to be – I had it before I even got the job – and everybody has to be clear about the fact that we are here for the kids first and every decision that we make is student-centred.”

He is this year’s WA Primary Principal of the Year in the WA Education Awards and his peers call Frank a born leader, but it wasn’t always clear to him that he was going to teach.

A brief stint in the public service was not for him, but it wasn’t until he attended teachers’ college that he realised he’d found his calling.

“I went to public schools and I’m lucky because I had a history teacher in secondary school, and a Year 3 or 4 teacher who has only recently retired, and they were people I really related to,” he says.

“I remember I actually loved being with them so much. That relationship I had with them is something I try to keep in mind with the kids now. It’s what attracted me to teaching and education because I admired those people who had such an impact on me.”

Frank has cemented the school’s reputation for high standards of achievement and excellence. After becoming an Independent Public School in 2012, he was one of only 20 principals selected for the prestigious Independent Public School Principals’ Fellowship Program for 2016-17.

An extensive course at Harvard University was part of the program and was, Frank says, an incredible opportunity.

“It brought 20 of us together,” Frank explains. “We bounced ideas off each other and learnt so much and now I have an incredible resource to draw on.

“I now know principals in Brooklyn, Beijing and other places around the world so it was really fantastic.”

Frank says one of the biggest lessons he learnt at Harvard was about school culture and how difficult it can be to maintain a successful culture once it is achieved.

But he’s not perturbed by this success. He sets high standards for everyone and that is something he will never change.

“A quote I heard while at Harvard was ‘every single thing a leader does, matters’,” he recalls.

“I always make sure that the standard has to be set high and if I’m asking for people to be involved and positive and to build positive relationships with people – it doesn’t matter what is going on, everyone will always see me doing that.”



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In perfect harmony

WA SECONDARY PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

Canning College principal Alan Genoni is passionate about music. He's an avid guitar player and was even in a band when he was younger.

The guitar, he says, is an instrument he plays badly but with great enthusiasm.

"I'm a failed musician. I thought I was going to be the next Eric Clapton but I never quite made it," he laughs.

"Music is a great interest of mine, all sorts of music too – jazz, classical, rock, the whole gamut. There is a jazz festival in the south of France, the Marciac Jazz Festival, which is the greatest in the world and the musicians there are just extraordinary. I've been there once and I'm going back again next year."

His love of music is undeniable – much like his love of teaching – and his ultimate goal is to further his knowledge on the subject as well as, he adds quickly, owning five acres in the State's southwest.

He has a real affection for regional Western Australia which most likely stems from his days as a graduate teacher at Norseman District High School in the Goldfields.

"It was a tremendous experience for me to go to Norseman as a 20-year-old. I had to work hard, there was no short cut. As a graduate you

just have to be prepared for hard work and prepare for your classes well," he says.

"Another important lesson I learnt as a young teacher was something that didn't come hard to me and that was to enjoy the company of the young people you work with. I think it's absolutely critical to being a teacher. I always have and I hope I always will."

Alan flourished in his regional teaching posts, which included positions in Merredin and Bunbury. What he particularly enjoyed, he says, was the progress his students would make throughout their education and beyond.

He recalls fondly his time teaching Aboriginal students at the then Merredin Senior High School which was one of the many highlights of his career.

"Actually seeing a change in the lives of students and watching them take on new opportunities because of their education, that is really special," he says.

"Working with Aboriginal students in Merredin and seeing them progress in their schooling and achieve success have brought a great sense of satisfaction to me.

"After I left Merredin, some of those students came to Perth and I continued a rapport with them which was truly rewarding."

Alan has been a principal for 15 years,



"THAT'S THE THING ABOUT EDUCATION – THERE CAN BE TREMENDOUS AND REWARDING OPPORTUNITIES."



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WA Secondary Principal of the Year finalists

(1) Everal Pearce, Southern River College

(2) Damian Shuttleworth, Carine Senior High School

(3) Cheryl Townsend, Ballajura Community College

previously at North Lake Senior Campus and now at Canning College where he has been for 10 years.

The Independent Public School is unlike most secondary schools in WA. Students are generally 18 years of age and older, and come from both the local area as well as internationally to complete their secondary schooling and attend university in Perth.

It's a popular choice for many. There are about 1500 students enrolled this year and the oldest is a 75-year-old, proving that it's never too late to learn.

"Everyone here is beyond compulsory school age, or nearly beyond it, but they're here because they have made a decision to be here, to continue their schooling. So it's a very different situation and a very positive environment," he says.

"From this year's group we'll send about 350 students to university next year. We have a very different curriculum. We offer the mainstream Western Australian Certificate of Education curriculum but we've got a range of others that offer pathways to university and those curriculums are developed with universities."

It is Alan's exceptional work in this positive environment that has earned him the

title of this year's WA Secondary Principal of the Year in the WA Education Awards.

In 2015, the number of his local students to achieve Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks equivalent of 90 and above almost doubled, and one third of his international students achieved ATARs equivalent of 95 and above.

Canning College staff praise Alan for the personal interest he takes in the welfare and development of students. His commitment to their education begins by meeting each student when they are new to the college, establishing a rapport with them and encouraging them to call on him at any time.

But Alan speaks just as highly of his colleagues – both past and present. They are the reason, he says, that he has enjoyed such a significant and fulfilling career.

"The people I work with here are outstanding educators and it's inspirational to be at a school where you have so many dedicated and competent staff," says Alan.

"Coming up through the ranks as a younger teacher, I've seen great leaders go about their jobs and I've appreciated their work and learnt from them. I've also been offered great opportunities that have kept me inspired throughout my career like the Churchill Fellowship.

"I've loved the schools I've worked at, the people I've worked with and the chances I've had. That's the thing about education – there can be tremendous and rewarding opportunities."



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WA BEGINNING TEACHER OF THE YEAR

ON THE BALL

“IT’LL BE GREAT IF IN 10 OR 15 YEARS I SEE MY STUDENTS GO ON TO COMPLETE SECONDARY SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY.”



It would be hard for ardent soccer fans to imagine a better job than working for the world famous Arsenal Football Club.

Lunching with star players like Thierry Henry and Patrick Vieira, attending games and consulting on statistical data was the lifestyle Mark McClements once enjoyed ... until he discovered a love for teaching.

“When I moved to Australia with my family I initially thought I’d continue working in football but it wasn’t such a great fit,” Mark says.

So he returned to university to study teaching and, while he was doing a school placement, he found the perfect fit.

That was at Challis Community Primary School where Mark has been teaching since 2014. He has an infectious energy and a clear zest for teaching.

“Last term my Year 1s were learning *The Three Little Pigs* and I brought in my wife’s hairdryer and put some wolf ears on it to see which of their pop-stick houses could stand up to the big bad wolf,” Mark laughs. “The children were so excited; it was a lot of fun.”

It seems Mark was somehow always destined for teaching.

After leaving Arsenal, he travelled the world and met his future wife Kirsty – also a teacher – before returning to London to coach elite young football players.

He believes he caught the travel bug at a young age because his dad was in the airforce and, by the time he was a young adult, he had lived in Germany, Cyprus, England and Scotland.

He realises now the skills he learnt while coaching put him in good stead for teaching a class of young children.

“You have to be pretty savvy and street smart to make sure everyone is coming along on the ride,” he says.

Mark’s exceptional efforts have earned him the title of WA Beginning Teacher of the Year in the WA Education Awards.





WA Beginning Teacher of the Year finalists

- (1) Anita Piccioni, Canning Vale College
- (2) Steven New, Roebourne District High School
- (3) Sharna Dallywater, Bunbury Senior High School



This accolade comes as no surprise to principal Lee Musumeci who believes Mark’s impact in the school over the last three years has been nothing short of remarkable.

She highlights his work in introducing a new program to the school, Talk for Writing, which uses exciting visual and practical methods to teach children how to write.

“Talk for Writing helped improve our Year 3 NAPLAN results in 2015, with 84 per cent of students achieving above the national minimum standard,” Lee says. “Mark’s work on this program has been extraordinary for a beginning teacher.”

Initially struggling to find a fun and engaging way to teach writing, Mark says he had a ‘light bulb moment’ when he found the Talk for Writing course.

“I walked away thinking now I know exactly how to teach writing!” Mark says.

It certainly helps that the program fits with Mark’s personality as it’s a hands on and exciting way of teaching.

He says his peers would describe him as enthusiastic, loud, funny and passionate. And they would be right.

“When I started teaching my students *The Three Little Pigs*, we didn’t just sit down and learn it. I kicked it off with a ‘hook’,” he says smiling. “We played games with it, we did it in silly voices, we acted it out and did some drama. We even pretended to interview the pigs and the wolf, so it’s quite immersive.

“Once the children know the text, I then teach them the structure of a story and we brainstorm different ways to start a story. They then go off and write their own.

“We’ve had parents come in and see their children writing and wonder if it’s the same children. They’re blown away and that’s great.”

Mark doesn’t take this positive feedback as a reason to slow down; he blames his background in competitive sport for why he’s always looking to improve.

“I love learning and I’m always looking to do better, and I think that rubs off on the students,” Mark says.

“It’ll be great if in 10 or 15 years I see my students go on to complete secondary school and university. My mission is to provide excellent teaching so my students can achieve skills that are really going to benefit them throughout their lives.”



Edith Cowan University (ECU) congratulates all finalists who have made a significant contribution to the teaching profession and to the students who they teach. We are delighted to sponsor the WA Beginning Teacher of the Year category and firmly believe in supporting and nurturing new talent in the classroom. ECU has been at the forefront of teacher education for over 100 years and has a great reputation for the quality of its graduates.



Great expectations

WA EDUCATION ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR

Stephanie Lee tells a good story – and has she got a lot of them to tell. An education assistant at College Row School in Bunbury, Stephanie has dedicated the last 20 years of her life to showing students with disability that they are capable of more than anyone ever dreamed possible.

It's her students' stories – their successes – that make it all worthwhile.

"I had a student a few years back who was severely intellectually and physically disabled. He could walk, but only had a tiny bit of vision so he was classified as blind," Stephanie says.

Stephanie saw something in him that sparked an idea.

"I have been a swimming teacher in the past so I decided to get him into the pool," she recalls. "It was great, he had no fear – I wondered if it would be possible to get him to float.

"We kept at it and in a few weeks that little boy who 'could do nothing' was swimming up and down the pool. He was on his back with an odd stroke, his nose and mouth just out of the water – but he was swimming laps!"

His teacher invited the boy's mother to come to the school to see for herself.

"I knew she wouldn't believe that he was actually swimming. She and her husband came along and I looked over at them and they were crying, sobbing at the side of the pool.

"I thought, 'wow, this is emotional'. I knew it was amazing but I didn't realise how emotional it would be for them.

"It turned out that his mum and dad had never learnt to swim, and here – their little boy – could do something that they had never been able to do themselves.

"Millions of those sorts of things go on here, that's why I love my job."

Stephanie has worked at College Row School for students with disability since 1993.

"I must be the longest-serving staff member here now – I've had a lot of different roles. I did ICT for a time, as well as implemented a method of teaching called Active Learning," she recalls.

Danish psychologist and educator, the late Lilli Nielsen who founded the Active Learning program, is her guru.

"I came across Lilli at an in-service in Perth when she first came to Australia – it blew me away," she says.

"We always found it hard to put together a curriculum for our students with multiple disability, and there it was – Lilli had it!



"WE TAUGHT HIM TO SIT UPRIGHT ON THE FLOOR – FROM THAT POINT HIS LIFE CHANGED. HE HAD A WHOLE NEW WORLD."



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WA Education Assistant of the Year finalists

- (1) Marie Walker, Beverley District High School
- (2) Susan Deane, Belridge Secondary College
- (3) Jacqui McNamara, York District High School

“Her philosophy was that you have to engineer environments for the children to be able to operate in. To say they can’t do something isn’t an option – you have to think about how to make it happen.

“Art is a good example. We make frames with sauce bottles hung upside down with elastics and fill them with coloured paint. A student just has to move their hand a little bit to get the bottles swinging – and they are painting!”

The Active Learning approach has brought about many defining moments for Stephanie’s students.

“A huge success we had was with one of our students who had never sat out of his wheelchair. He had a primitive reflex that he thrashed backwards all the time. That’s all he could do, all the time,” she says.

“We taught him to sit upright on the floor – from that point his life changed. He had a whole new world.

“Whenever I get caught up worrying about the little things – feeling like not much progress is being made – I think back and say no, keep going, things will happen. It’s our failure if we stop trying.”

It’s this outstanding will to improve the lives of students that has seen Stephanie named WA Education Assistant of the Year at the WA Education Awards.

There is no slowing down for this passionate educator who is now in her sixties.

She is in the midst of bringing in a communication program for her students.

“I’m putting together pod books of images for each child. They are learning to point at different things in the book to communicate with us,” she says.

“We’re getting some amazing results. Instead of having a behaviour explosion, the students can ask for something using their pods. The frustration is taken out of the event for them – it is just wonderful.

“I was here for the 25th anniversary of this school and we had a party. In five years’ time it will be the school’s 50th anniversary.

“I would love to be here for that anniversary and for all our dreams for these pod books to be realised. I hope they are fully embedded in the school by then.

“I hope that students take our pod books with them when they leave school and use them to help them become active members of the community.

“That would be my greatest success – giving the kids a voice.”



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A NEW CHAPTER

WA ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER EDUCATION OFFICER OF THE YEAR



“I WANT TO SHARE MY HAPPINESS AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH THESE KIDS.”

A Riverside Primary School student has made a remarkable change. He once struggled to read – hated it even – but now he can’t put a book down.

That’s the impact of Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer Ashlee Otway’s ‘never say die’ attitude.

“I have a little boy in class who likes to think he’s pretty macho and didn’t like to read,” says Ashlee. “After working with him I saw that he wasn’t a confident reader and had been putting up that gruff exterior as a defence mechanism.

“So I found some books called *The Bad Guys* which feature Mr Wolf, Mr Shark, Mr Snake and Mr Piranha. These stories really captured his attention and changed his attitude to reading. Now, when reading time’s up, he just wants to keep going which makes me feel like I’ve really helped.”

It’s this persistence that has seen her re-shape the role to being a vital part of the school and the community – and has won her the title of WA Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer of the Year in the WA Education Awards.

Ashlee reflects on the moment she found her true calling to work with children.

“I was facilitating a Noongar children’s playgroup and thinking how I really enjoyed being with the kids,” she says. “I had mostly worked with adults so that’s when I thought about taking up teaching.”

It took time to reach this defining moment. She worked in retail when she was younger and then worked with her aunty as a family support worker.

“This helped me grow into the person I am now,” says Ashlee.

“My aunty pushed me for all the right reasons, but at that time my natural reaction was to run. Looking back, she taught me so much.”

While Ashlee may consider herself as humble, dedicated and encouraging, her colleagues and the local community think she’s one of the best things to happen at their school.

Her enormous sense of pride in her Aboriginal culture has seen her introduce small changes such as raising the Aboriginal flag, acknowledgment of country at assemblies and including cultural events in the school calendar.



“These small changes not only make me feel proud to be a Noongar woman, but also give my students and their families the opportunity to feel proud about our culture,” she says.

It’s no wonder one of her greatest achievements is supporting and connecting with parents and families.

“It can be hard for our parents to feel welcome in a school because of many issues,” Ashlee explains.

“I want parents to know that I’m always here for their kids and for them – and that the school is a welcoming environment.

“Now I have parents volunteering and helping out at school which is definitely making it feel worthwhile.”

Ashlee is now studying to become a teacher.

“I’m passionate about being the best person you can, living each day and your life to the best you can. I’m passionate about my family and my job because I actually feel like I want to make myself a better person, not just for myself but for my family and my students,” she says.

“My students always come first and I want them to believe in their abilities and their dreams.

“I’d like to think that these strong relationships are built on trust and respect which can give them the confidence to become anything they want.

“I am always here for them and I let them know that. Even when they leave me for secondary school I will always be here to give them support.

“Who knows what the future holds. I want to share my happiness and make a difference with these kids.”



WA Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer of the Year winner

(1) Ashlee Otway, Riverside Primary School

WA Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer of the Year finalists

(2) Wayne McNamara, Bannister Creek Primary School

(3) Karessa Pickett, Tambellup Primary School

BOARDING CALL

WA SCHOOL SERVICES STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR



“I DON’T LOOK AT IT AS WORK – IT’S SO SATISFYING TO MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH STUDENTS AND BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL FOR THEM.”

From a business background to boarding school head, Darryl McCart’s belief in being upfront and doing your best in every task shines through.

“Getting to know the students and gaining their respect, that makes my job as residential college manager so great,” Darryl says.

“I don’t look at it as work – you really need to want to do this as the hours are unsociable – but it’s so satisfying to make connections with students and be a positive role model for them.”

A father of two children now in their twenties, Darryl spent many years in small business before joining the education sector.

“With my own father I ran hotels in the Chapman Valley, Trayning, Morawa and beyond,” Darryl recounts.

“One of the best things I learned from this time was to have patience, patience and more patience, resilience and empathy when dealing with people.

“Working in business, I also gained strong financial skills, keeping an eye on costs and correct record keeping. All of these things equipped me well for my role today.”

In a change of pace in 2009, Darryl took on the job of residential manager at the highly-acclaimed WA College of Agriculture in Cunderdin. Its 130 boarding students come from as far afield as Derby, Leonora, Esperance and Perth.

At the college, which was WA Secondary School of the Year in 2014, Year 11 and 12 students learn agricultural skills on the 2114 hectare farm while studying academic and vocational courses.

During term time, many of the teenagers live at the college and their wellbeing rests with Darryl, a responsibility he takes very seriously.

“I’m mindful that parents have dropped off their children here from many miles away – and it’s up to me and my team to look after them and keep them safe during the term,” he says.



**WA School Services Staff
Member of the Year finalists**

- (1) Lesley Wellington, Woodvale Secondary College
- (2) Sue Barr, Ocean Reef Primary School
- (3) Lia Shavian-Siegel, Albany Secondary Education Support Centre

“When I was in secondary school, I had a teacher, Jan Walker, who would sit down and listen to everything you had to say and then give the best advice she could.

“It’s not uncommon for students here to drop into my office during the day, have a bit of a chat to get things off their chest and then return to class.

“That trust and respect is so important.”

Darryl says his business background has given him the skills to be the residential manager at the college and lead a large team of 30 staff – from cooks to supervisors, cleaners and the gardener.

As well as overseeing the entire operation and taking a keen interest in ensuring students have an ever-changing nutritious menu to choose from – the kitchen turns out 450 fresh meals a day – Darryl works closely with the teachers to make sure students are keeping on top of their study and homework.

A football fan with the utmost respect for John “Woosha” Worsfold – “he knows how to inspire people to strive for their best” – Darryl says that students graduate with great qualifications, an extensive portfolio of work and an ethic that would be an asset to any employer.

“I tell them, ‘You’re the ones who are going to reap the rewards when you graduate because you’ll have mates for life and great memories’,” he says.

It’s the level of effort that Darryl puts into the role and his open and approachable manner that have seen him named WA School Services Staff Member of the Year in this year’s WA Education Awards.

“It’s so important to me that the students feel safe and happy at the residential facilities,” he reflects.

“This can have a direct impact on how well they achieve in class.”

Kleenheat

Kleenheat has been backing local communities in WA for more than 60 years and is delighted to support the WA Education Awards 2016.

Congratulations to all award nominees and finalists for the outstanding contribution you’re making to teaching and learning throughout our State.

Kleenheat remains committed to providing WA’s schools, homes, businesses and communities with reliable and competitive energy services and support.

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School Pride

WA PREMIER'S EXCELLENCE IN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AWARD



Moving from a remote community to a busy city is a big step for anyone.

But that's exactly what one Aboriginal student has done because he was determined to get into university.

And that determination has paid off.

This year, he'll graduate from Mount Lawley Senior High School and go into the Aboriginal orientation course at The University of Western Australia.

"His whole face just lit up when he found out he'd been accepted into university," says the school's Follow the Dream coordinator Bridgid Lafferty.

"He's so proud. All he wants to do is go back to his community with the qualifications to help out kids like him."

His story is one of many successes of Aboriginal students to come out of the school over the years. Aboriginal students are selected from across the State to attend the school; there are now more than 30 students.

"I think what marks the school's position in terms of Aboriginal education is that we have an uncompromising expectation that students can – and will – achieve to their full potential," says principal Milton Butcher.

It's this unwavering commitment to help Aboriginal students achieve academic success as well as build a sense of personal pride and cultural connections that has seen the school win the WA Premier's Excellence in Aboriginal Education Award.

"HIS WHOLE FACE JUST LIT UP WHEN HE FOUND OUT HE'D BEEN ACCEPTED INTO UNIVERSITY."



Students have individual learning plans, participate in tutorial sessions and are involved in cultural and academic excursions. They complete an annual research project linked to cultural, historical and social topics of significance, and take part in community projects.

Of last year’s 15 Aboriginal students in Year 12, all achieved their WA Certificate of Education. Of these, 11 students went on to study at university, one was offered a place at the WA Academy of Performing Arts and another won a basketball scholarship to the Australian College of Sport in Melbourne.

“We set high goals but we focus on the small steps for each student to succeed,” says Aboriginal Excellence Program coordinator Phil Paioff.

“Many of the students come here without having a strong understanding of their Aboriginality or identify as strongly as they possibly could in terms of their cultural backgrounds and how they all link.

“Early on we take them to Edith Cowan University to see the Rock Solid Foundations. This is a tribute to the university’s Aboriginal alumni and the granites there list hundreds of Aboriginal people who have graduated from the university. Our students get that sense of success.”

Bridgid says she wants students to come back to school once they graduate.

“I’m trying to create a circle of independence where these kids give back,” she says. “I encourage them to come back and be tutors for the Year 10 students. They are role models for the younger

students and can say to them ‘I’m there, I’m doing it, I’m living it’.”

Jade Dolman is one former student taking on a leadership role and mentoring younger students. She’s the third generation of her family to go to the school – her mother is news presenter Narelda Jacobs and her grandfather is the Reverend Cedric Jacobs. Jade is now helping students paint a Baldja Maarakool mural on the school grounds.

“My time at Mount Lawley Senior High School allowed me to get a different perspective, not just as a student but as a leader,” she says. “It’s also had an impact on me since I left – in leadership roles I have taken on and the way I work and study.”

Milton says staff have spent time mapping where the school is in terms of the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework.

“It’s about setting the conditions – we want to see what we have to do to improve the whole school,” he says.

For Phil, the education of Aboriginal students is a core focus.

“When students leave here I would like them to reflect fondly on the fact that they were part of a group and they have a stronger sense of who they are, what they are about and where they want to go,” he says.

And it sounds like that is exactly what is happening.

WA Premier’s Excellence in Aboriginal Education Award finalists

- (1) Bayulu Remote Community School
- (2) Balga Senior High School

WA Premier’s Excellence in Aboriginal Education Award winner

- (3) Mount Lawley Senior High School



Platinum partner

GET INTO THE GROVE

WA PRIMARY SCHOOL OF THE YEAR



The exceptional staff at Aubin Grove Primary School might make it look easy to be the State's largest, and this year's top, primary school.

But on any given day at the southern suburbs school, teachers and leaders are busy preparing and planning – with one key focus in mind – to keep students' interests at the forefront of every decision.

From humble beginnings in 2011, Aubin Grove Primary School first opened its doors to the growing new community with just 315 students.

Now, with more than 1100 students, this bedrock on which the school was built remains unchanged.

Justine McGillivray has lived in Aubin Grove since the area was in development and has seen firsthand how the school has become a hub for the local community.

"One of the things I love most about the school is the sense of belonging and community atmosphere it brings," Justine

says. "The excitement generates from within the school, and pushes outwards to the wider Aubin Grove area."

Justine instinctively knew early on that the school would be something special, and today is proud to be a parent whose children attend the school and to take her place as chair of the school board.

Her instincts proved to be spot on. And when asked what makes Aubin Grove Primary School an award winning school, Justine finds it difficult to pinpoint one thing.

She begins by lauding the school's leadership model, in which staff are elected by their colleagues to shape the decision-making process; then moves on to the school's constant application of the LEAF (learn, enjoy, aspire, focus) principles, the quality of its teaching staff, and its strides in innovation and technology.

"Being on the board I'm privileged to see the school's leadership team, teachers and support staff in action," Justine says. "They



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WA Primary School of the Year finalists

- (1) Clayton View Primary School
- (2) Ballajura Primary School
- (3) Rosalie Primary School

all strive to achieve more, even when targets are being met; and most importantly, they make each family feel valued and an important part of the school.”

With such a large number of students, this is an impressive task.

Principal Frank Pansini says this point cannot be disputed. Twice a year students are assessed on their English and mathematics skills and the data is used to plan for not only the whole class, but for smaller groups and individual student programs. Throughout this process, parents are kept closely involved.

“Parents can actually see how far their children have come in important areas of writing and reading, for example,” says Frank. “Teachers can not only see what their students’ strengths and weaknesses are, but this information can inform them about what sort of teaching and planning needs to occur.”

Like Justine, Frank has been lucky enough to be involved in the school since its inception. As principal of the Independent Public School he believes “anything is possible if you work hard enough.”

“You end up with a ‘why not?’ attitude rather than a ‘why?’ and that in itself creates its own momentum and people realise that this is a place where you can try things and be innovative,” he says.

It seems this positive attitude has seeped into every aspect of the school. Teachers are often seen video recording their own classes to seek honest and constructive feedback from their peers, while other staff gather in groups to learn and develop from each other’s particular skills.

Students are not left out. At Aubin Grove Primary School every Year 6 child is a student leader.

“YOU GET THE BEST OUT OF PEOPLE BY EXPECTING THE BEST FROM THEM AND MAKING A POSITIVE CONNECTION WITH OTHERS.”

Frank says he feels the responsibility to build every student into a successful person. “It’s not just about learning the core academic subjects,” he says.

“Once a term, a small group of Year 6s will come to talk with me about what’s working well, or not so well in the school,” Frank explains. “From that, they present suggestions and make recommendations.

“They all get a badge and take on their responsibility. I’ve seen kids grow and rise to the occasion and think – why would I deprive any child that opportunity?”

He makes no apologies for having high expectations of everyone at the school, himself included.

“You get the best out of people by expecting the best from them and making a positive connection with others,” Frank says. “When you make that connection you really want to work hard for the person who believes in you.”



3



TOP PERFORMERS

WA SECONDARY
SCHOOL
OF THE YEAR



When a chemistry teacher talks passionately about creativity, innovation and imagination... about children flourishing and the arts providing a wonderful set of skills and tools for life, you know something special is happening.

That's how assistant head of science at John Curtin College of the Arts in Fremantle describes the ethos of developing students in this arts specialist college that is just that and so much more.

"It's like no other school I've worked in," says Nathan Curnow. "Arts are challenging and involve high level thinking. We use the arts as the context and enrichment tool for students who are naturally capable and naturally creative to empower them for their futures."

"The student who's up on stage performing one night is there in class the next day getting top marks in a test and showing that the world is their oyster."

'The surprise package' is how principal Mitchell Mackay describes the college.

"People just don't expect what we deliver; they have preconceived ideas about an arts school," he muses. "But it's the arts that give students confidence and resilience and self-esteem – and they love school and want to do all these amazing and interesting things here."

"Many of our students have been holding back in primary school – they're gifted underachievers. They haven't been with 'like' children and they come here and they take a huge breath. They're here with all these other children who are quirky and different and interesting. They're able to be the best they can be because they don't have to hold back any more or hide."

This high energy college has been rewarded





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3

WA Secondary School of the Year finalists

- (1) Melville Senior High School
- (2) Australind Senior High School
- (3) Ashdale Secondary College

for its unique approach to education by winning the WA Secondary School of the Year in the WA Education Awards.

Mitchell says the college uses strong quality data on student performance to constantly assess what it does and the impact on student learning.

“We never say we can’t do something,” he says. “We always explore and consider options and opportunities. We don’t think we’re there yet – there’s always room for improvement.

“When we recruit, we look for really high quality teachers, with lots of energy and passion about children because that’s what we’re about. We want teachers who really believe in children doing well and are happy to investigate their teaching techniques to deliver what their students need to succeed.”

Achievement is a huge part of the college.

“It’s OK to do well here. It’s about celebrating the best you can be rather than being at the top of everything. When you’re on stage there could be 20 people up there, not just the best person,” Mitchell says.

“The view that all our students are off to WAAPA and NIDA is just a myth. Only about 10 per cent of our students go into the arts as their final point, the rest are going into medicine and law and engineering and science. In fact, we’re a finalist in the WA Governor’s awards for science, technology, engineering and maths.”

For science teacher Nathan, he says he likes being able to challenge the students and being challenged himself.

“I love coming into this school every day and being with students who are warm,

friendly, personable and very diverse in their interests, abilities and strengths,” he says. “They’re always grateful for the teaching and they’re hungry to learn and try new things.

“I’ve been given an opportunity as a teacher to really grow and develop my craft. I’ve been pushed and challenged to find new and exciting and different opportunities that suit our students and where we want them to go and what we want from them.”

Mitchell says the school board plays a vital role in the college.

“Over the years we’ve had university academics, company managers and parents on the board who challenge us and push us to do better,” he says. “We’re not looking for a board that is passive. We want a board that has a strong role in governance and improvement.”

Growing to 1600 students next year – the school has a further 800 students applying for places and not being successful – Mitchell is excited about the opening of Fremantle College.

“With the new school on one side of us and Melville Senior High School on the other side, all giving wonderful options for parents as high quality public schools in the area, I couldn’t be more pleased,” he says.

Nathan’s final comments sum up why the college is a winner.

“What drives me is making sure that we as teachers, as a school and as a community do justice to what our kids bring to the table and I think we do that really well,” he says.

“I think we create well rounded citizens who are exceptional role models for others in the community.”

“IT’S OK TO DO WELL HERE. IT’S ABOUT CELEBRATING THE BEST YOU CAN BE RATHER THAN BEING AT THE TOP OF EVERYTHING.”



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