

2023 Toowoomba Catholic Schools Excellence Awards

Excellence in education support



Teaching and learning support

sponsored by SPA – Salary Packaging Australia

Finalists

Annette Murdoch

Learning Support Teacher - St Saviour's Primary School, Toowoomba

Annette supports the implementation of engaging and effective learning that puts students first and helps unleash their potential. She has been instrumental in rallying staff to embed inclusive practices in their planning and teaching, to best support all students' learning whilst being mindful of class teachers' workload. Annette supports teachers in the planning, assessment and reporting for students with additional needs. She is involved in daily intervention with students and models effective pedagogy using high impact strategies.

Annette uses innovative ideas to respond to the needs of students, sourcing the best support for them. She is a respected educator who values the importance of relationships with her students, their parents and class teachers. She has demonstrated this in her calm, empathetic, professional approach to gaining parent trust and engagement in the often difficult yet sensitive process of identifying their child's needs.

Mary Neilan

Teacher Aide - St Anthony's School, Toowoomba

Mary works across the school supporting students with needs and her greatest success has been with multiple small groups of students who have been identified as requiring additional assistance with their reading ability. She has worked with these groups three days a week with truly amazing results.

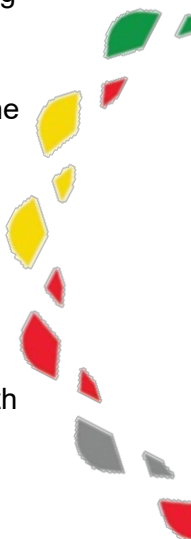
Mary knows that relationships are key to any learning, and she has always worked hard to develop ways to engage with students acknowledging their personal interests. She developed the concept of 'Reading Warriors' to create a sense of belonging for all the participating students as well as make them feel important. Mary truly models the St Anthony's Way 'love of others' pathway - being kind, fair, inclusive, respectful and honest with whomever she interacts.

Donna Nothdurft

Years 1 and 2 School Officer - Our Lady of the Southern Cross College, Dalby

Donna consistently supports the implementation of engaging and effective learning and celebrates individual students' success. Donna is responsible for managing the sight word growth of students and is an expert at using age-appropriate pedagogical tools to maximise students' learning.

Donna works collaboratively with all allied health professionals and is instrumental in assisting students to achieve their individualised social, emotional, physical and academic goals to reach their full learning potential. She is an expert at ensuring the load is lightened for the teachers with whom she works closely. Donna is a valued team member who goes above and beyond the call of duty even assisting teachers with who she isn't assigned hours - no responsibility is too difficult for Donna.



Recipient

Nicole Booth

Head of Boarding - St Saviour's College, Toowoomba

Nicole works tirelessly to ensure that the boarders at St Saviour's College have access to an equitable and excellent education within a culture of high expectations and care. She seeks out opportunities for boarders to engage in sport, recreation and faith opportunities.

Nicole is a highly passionate educator and a member of the Executive Leadership Team, giving voice to the growing numbers of boarders and is well versed in how the College might continue to grow opportunities for these young women. Enrolments at McAuley House continue to grow because families from remote communities have a firm faith and belief in Nicole's steadfast leadership. Nicole demonstrates a deep commitment to learning, but an even deeper commitment to forming young First Nations women, ensuring they have the necessary educational and life skills to set them up successfully for their pathways beyond school.



Administration, finance and facilities support

sponsored by SPA – Salary Packaging Australia

Finalists

Kirsty Eckhardt

Principal's Personal Assistant - St Mary's College, Toowoomba

Kirsty is a highly regarded member of the administration team and provides a high level of leadership and service, where her work is defined by high quality outcomes and loyalty to the College. This is reflected in the consistently high levels of feedback and regard held for Kirsty and the administration team.

Kirsty's work in enrolments has enabled the College to ensure a consistent and thorough approach to the management of the enrolment process. She performs her job with respect and consideration of families, students and staff. She provides robust executive assistance to the Principal, including staffing matters, strategy and general administration process guidance. She has a keen eye for detail and is highly knowledgeable of operations and administration - a major asset to the College.

Anthony Pope

Groundsperson - Our Lady of the Southern Cross College, Dalby

Since Anthony commenced as Groundsperson the College has received many compliments about how neat and well-presented the grounds are from both staff and the wider community. The attention to detail demonstrated by Anthony is nothing short of exemplary.

As part of a larger facilities team, Anthony provides support to other members of the College. He willingly takes on additional responsibilities when other team members are away to ensure that the College facilities still operate effectively; regularly going above and beyond to ensure that tasks are completed on time. This has led to him being highly regarded within the College community, with staff regularly commenting on his friendly nature and efficiency. Anthony has also furthered his knowledge through the completion of a Certificate III in Horticulture and is using the skills learnt to enhance the presentation of the College.

Recipients

Jodie McLachlan, Julie Robinson and Alex Sleba

Administration staff - St Saviour's Primary School, Toowoomba

Jodie, Julie and Alex are exemplary in their roles and are absolute assets to the school community. They work as one unit, consistently sharing responsibilities and working together to ensure every voice is heard and every task is complete.

As a support to the leadership team, they independently complete tasks as well as take the initiative to see needs and do something about them. They are also critical in supporting parents and visitors to the school. They use their initiative to answer questions or redirect promptly - displaying the Mercy Values of compassion and service in their actions. As outstanding communicators, being super organised, and 'think on their feet' problem solvers these ladies are a super team and are the loving presence of Jesus to the entire school community.



Volunteer support

sponsored by *Brammer Architects*

Finalists

Kylie Haywood

P&F Association President - St Thomas More's Primary School, Toowoomba

Kylie has been the President of the P&F and Chair of the St Thomas More's Parent Engagement Committee since 2021. She always contributes greatly of her time and expertise and is passionate about parent engagement. Working with the school leadership team she has been of great assistance when planning school events and supporting families in need.

Kylie embodies the 2023 school theme – 'never see a need without doing something about it'. She always puts the needs of others first and goes out of her way to support all members of the school community in any way that she can. Her positive attitude is contagious!

Rebecca Telfer

Tuckshop Convenor and P&F Association member - St Joseph's School, Stanthorpe

Rebecca (Bec) has given countless hours as a volunteer in numerous capacities and her positive attitude and effervescence are a welcome addition to the school. The service she provided through the tuckshop has been well received by students, staff and families and she has helped to ensure that this service can continue.

Bec is an active member of the P&F Association, organising and participating fully in all fundraising events. She regularly attends P&F meetings and actively engages in positive discussions and the development of ideas to support and grow the school. Bec is also the Year 8 parent representative for the school's Class Parent System which is an initiative of the P&F Association. Bec provides excellent assistance to parents and carers within the year level assisting to share information, create support and strengthen parent engagement.

Recipient

Karli Ekerick

P&F Association executive - St Patrick's School, Allora

For the past six years, Karli has held a number of different executive positions in the P&F and has been instrumental in keeping the P&F focused and active during the challenges of COVID-19. Karli has been a driving force behind the P&F's Golf and Bowls Day, a new fundraising initiative, which has been highly successful not only in terms of the family unit but also as a way of engaging the wider Allora Community and prospective parents. Karli is also the driving force behind the P&F's support of the St Patrick's Parish annual fete.

At the heart of Karli's motivation is the notion of community and she firmly believes that the fete's main objective is to bring the school and parish communities together in a sense of common belief and fellowship where relationships are forged and valued.

Excellence in teaching and learning



Early career teacher

sponsored by Unisuper

Finalists

Caitlin Matthews

Year 3 teacher - St John's School, Roma

Caitlin is a highly accomplished classroom practitioner in her second year of teaching. Her practice is characterised by a student orientated approach. She seeks to ensure that every student experiences success by aligning the curriculum with explicit learning experiences, assessment and evaluation practices. Every lesson that Caitlin delivers is shaped by explicit learning intentions and success criteria.

One of Caitlin's greatest strengths is her ability to break complex concepts and cognitions into smaller step by step blocks. This allows students to experience success and demonstrate their capabilities. She is a classroom practitioner who is data literate and uses data to inform her planning, teaching practices and intervention regimes. Caitlin is also proactive in engaging inclusion staff and parents in dialogue to develop individualised planning approaches for the students in her care.

Lucy Price

Year 2 teacher - Our Lady of the Southern Cross College, Dalby

Lucy enhances her students' learning and progress by gaining a deep understanding of their academic, social and emotional strengths and weaknesses, as well as their interests - creating a strong and positive rapport. This assists her to plan, prepare, and monitor student progress with clarity and to embrace the power of collective efficacy through collaboration with colleagues and families. Her classroom is infused with visible learning practices, ensuring students understand their current level of progress and what their next steps are resulting in students that are fully engaged and making consistent progress.

Lucy is committed to ensuring students have many diverse opportunities to take their learning into the real world through engagement in real life activities. Lucy's classroom culture fosters acceptance of differences, reflected in respectful and inclusive student interactions and through valuing the contribution of parent helpers.

Recipient

Tamara Creeley

Middle Leader Culture; Senior Drama teacher - Our Lady of the Southern Cross College, Dalby

Tamara seeks to know each student as an individual by establishing a culture of trust within the classroom. She actively engages in professional development that supports the implementation of evidence based high impact teaching strategies. This has ensured that she continues to improve and build on her classroom practices so that each student can reach their full potential.

Tamara seeks to use evidence from multiple sources, as well as student voice and teacher collaboration. As a result, she has an extensive knowledge of her students and their particular needs. Her planning for personalised learning is rigorous, effective and timely. In her second year of teaching Tamara was appointed to Middle Leader Culture and her desire to take on this role was founded upon the intrinsic value she sees in an Arts education. Tamara identified that the arts and culture domain needed to be contextual to the local needs and experiences of students, whilst still inspiring challenge, curiosity and creativity.





Primary/Kindergarten expert teacher *sponsored by Unisuper*

Finalists

Annette Colley

Year 3 teacher - St Patrick's School, St George

Annette is an exceptional classroom practitioner who refines her teaching practice based on what works best from research evidence and what works best for her students. She spends considerable time understanding the individual needs of her students through checks for understanding and carefully designing lessons to align with their needs. Annette's classroom practice is reflective of her ongoing and passionate desire to improve professionally and her enthusiasm for engaging in pedagogical professional development.

Annette actively engages with families and carers to highlight the progress of their children and develop relationships with them so that they work in partnership to develop and extend the child's learning. She has also led the discussion on how to make the curriculum content relevant to her students and she encourages her learners to think deeply about their world.

Marie Sullivan

Kindergarten Director - St Mary's Kindergarten, Warwick

Marie's faith and genuine commitment to share that faith with young people and their families is inspiring and unwavering. Marie looks for and implements innovative new solutions to support the kindergarten to achieve its goals. She has worked tirelessly to ensure the successful delivery of the curriculum. She is focused on giving all children the best possible start to their formal education and engaging intervention strategies for students who might struggle in mainstream formal schooling.

Marie is passionate about students with First Nations heritage and works with relevant local agencies to support the needs of these children and their families. She also enhances a deeper appreciation and understanding for those families with a non-First Nation background. The curriculum is a priority for Marie but so is helping make her students good people. She does this with love, compassion, empathy and wisdom.

Charmaine Tancred

Prep teacher - St Thomas More's Primary School, Toowoomba

Charmaine aims to ensure all students know what they are going to learn and what they need to do to achieve success in their learning. She always puts her students first and is an expert in using the data she collects to inform future teaching and learning experiences. By incorporating feedback within everyday teaching and pedagogical practices, she helps students to set subject specific learning goals.

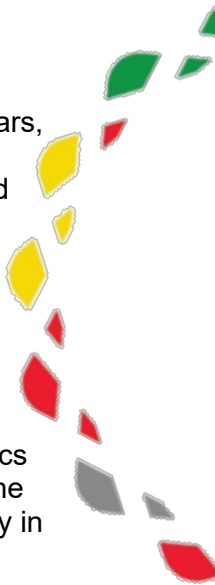
She is an innovative educator and is always open to trying new strategies in her classroom to improve student outcomes. She collaboratively leads planning with her cohort teachers every term in order to utilise the wealth of experience available. Being passionate about the early years, Charmaine works hard to establish positive and meaningful connections with both parents and children. She displays care, compassion and empathy in all interactions and is much loved and respected by children, parents and peers.

Recipient

Georgia Ford

Prep Teacher - Mater Dei Primary School, Toowoomba

Georgia uses her passion for teaching to improve student learning. Georgia has enhanced the learning of phonics in her classroom after investigating resources that could support the Phonics to Spelling implementation. The sharing of her practice has been considered in the review of the phonics to spelling approach throughout the Diocese. She has also shown outstanding integrity in leading Mater Dei in the changes in the English Version 9 curriculum.



Georgia continually advocates for best practice in early years education. Her dedication to play based learning and social and emotional development of students is exemplified in her relationships with families and children. With her focus on the development of personalised tasks for students, she also engages families in this learning through developing at home practice activities. Georgia embodies the Mater Dei ethos of 'shining our light in everything we say' and she uses this light to ignite this spirit in others.



Secondary expert teacher *sponsored by Unisuper*

Finalists

Mark Baker

Secondary teacher - Assumption College, Warwick

Mark's kind, patient and unwavering belief in the capacity of every student, is coupled with challenge and support, and a commitment to relational and high impact pedagogical practices. His ability to connect with and motivate staff assists them to remain current and confident within the exceptionally demanding subjects of the Sciences and Maths. Sharing his planning and teaching resources across Colleges, Mark is a leader in his field.

His passion for his subjects and the success of his students mean he is committed to never leaving the classroom! He is a teacher who always puts in 100% no matter the situation, he frequently gives up his free time to help with challenging schoolwork and is highly involved with the school's culture. Mark has had a profound impact on the lives of countless young students - he inspires them all to be better.

Emma Chalmers

Secondary English and Literature teacher - St Joseph's College, Toowoomba

Emma is an expert in her field through her extensive knowledge of student engagement, curriculum and pedagogy. She demonstrates strong pastoral care skills, builds meaningful relationships with staff and students, and provides support and guidance when needed. She expects a high level of engagement partnered with her provision of a high level of support at the students' level. She challenges students to be critical thinkers and encourages students to have an understanding of real-world issues through dialogue and high impact teaching strategies.

Emma demonstrates leadership skills, developing a clear vision and cohesive approach for the department and ensuring that her team is engaged in professional dialogue and growth. She happily shares her skills across subject disciplines and multiple contexts and has been an early adopter of the Subject Discipline Literacy program.

Recipient

Mary Roberts

Secondary Humanities teacher - St Joseph's School, Stanthorpe

Mary is an inspiring and passionate educator. The quality of her teaching and the impact she has on student outcomes are a testament to her commitment. A key strength is Mary's knowledge of, and ability to engage students in the curriculum. She has been integral in leading and shaping the direction of the school's curriculum framework, working with key staff and curriculum leaders in the development of new curriculum plans across Years 7-12.

Mary's planning and preparation for her learning environments is meticulous, and her practice is data rich in terms of analysing students' qualitative and quantitative data. She extensively uses student voice and feedback, as well as formative assessment to identify trends in student learning which shape the direction of her teaching.

Mary has also played a significant role in the evolution of Hybrid Learning and was instrumental in working with the leadership team to pilot the Modern History hybrid program with Dalby, and more recently, leading the transition of this established model into the TCS hybrid learning framework.



eLearning
sponsored by Unisuper

Finalist and Recipient

Hybrid Learning Program Team

St Saviour's College Toowoomba, Our Lady of the Southern Cross College Dalby, St Mary's College Toowoomba, St Joseph's School Stanthorpe, St Patrick's Primary School Mitchell, St Patrick's School Allora, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School Toowoomba and Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office

The team responsible for the Hybrid Learning Program continue to work collaboratively towards achieving TCS's Hybrid Learning vision. By providing their expertise, context, and support they have worked together to ensure the delivery of the project's objectives, identify potential opportunities and risks, validate solutions, and make recommendations for the future of Hybrid Learning.

Each member has brought their unique piece of wisdom to the table, and their ability to think beyond their school context to a system-wide approach has been an instrumental enabler of the TCS Hybrid Learning vision. As a result, they are making it a reality and ensuring it becomes a sustainable part of TCS's future; ultimately providing equity of access to expert teachers, a range of subjects and academic success for all students.

Excellence in leadership



Emerging leader
sponsored by Hayball

Finalist

Jacqui Dignon

Teacher and Literacy Learning Leader - St Joseph's College, Toowoomba

Jacqui has undertaken many leadership roles and has been an active and dynamic member of the English department. She has recently stepped into the position of Literacy Learning Leader with a smooth transition and collaborative approach. Jacqui has taken on the role of the Subject Discipline Literacy (SDL) facilitator and has already displayed a balanced and collaborative approach to working with the many stakeholders involved in this valuable project. She has an exceptional ability to create psychological safety for individuals and teams, allowing them to vulnerably assess areas of development and professional growth.

Jacqui has continued to lead the empowerment of all staff, both teachers and school officers, to strategically improve literacy through targeted intervention. Her experience in the classroom along with her realistic, active and dynamic nature, has allowed her to support staff in this growth while also holding them accountable to ensure students experience high quality learning.

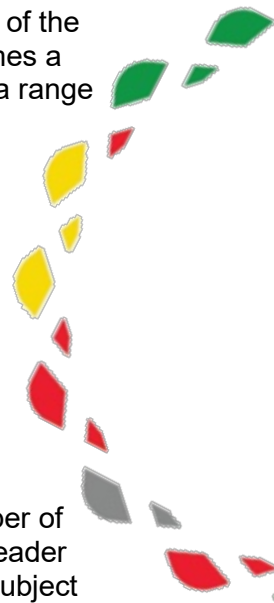
Recipient

Mark Baker

Secondary teacher - Assumption College, Warwick

Mark has an unwavering belief in the capacity of every student to gain success in their studies. He couples this with a commitment to 'teaching', always growing his own and others' abilities to build quality programs that are focused on both learning and wellbeing. Mark's students are equally challenged and supported through his commitment to relational and high impact pedagogical practices. Using formative assessment and ongoing feedback practices, Mark has supported students as they have gained exceptional results in Maths and Science alike.

As a result of the success of his students and his exceptional teaching skill, he is sought out by others to share his practices. This has led to Mark engaging in the mentoring and coaching of teachers within and beyond the Diocese – and has seen them become experts in their field.



Further to this, he has been active in the development and implementation of the External Examination Preparation Program (EPPP) – an acknowledgement of his status as an expert teacher and emerging leader. The resources he has developed for this and his own teaching at Assumption College have been widely shared and used by colleagues.



Middle leadership

sponsored by Toowoomba Toyota

Finalist

Sarah Yates

Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning - St Joseph's School, Stanthorpe

Sarah is a standout leader in curriculum and pedagogy. She is rightly revered in her school for her knowledge in these areas, her forever thirst for more knowledge, her mentoring of colleague teachers in her school and her ability to relate to all staff, no matter where their abilities lay. All this with a focus on raising them up to high quality delivery in classrooms.

Sarah has led her school, and in turn Toowoomba Catholic Schools, to national award status in visible learning and now, leads secondary teachers, using her 3L (Language, Literacy and Learning) coaching credential and professional learning circles to intricate awareness of the subject discipline literacies. Colleagues seek her out for her listening and guiding ear. Her care, interest in and support of them is second to none, culminating in an exceptional learning culture which is central to her school. Sarah is a master of growing capacity and belief in others.

Recipient

Catherine Cooper

Middle Leader: Academic Leader Years 7-12 - St John's School, Roma

Cathy has led the work of Curriculum Leaders and Coordinators across St John's ensuring that there are multiple opportunities and pathways for students to engage in learning opportunities. The underlying focus has been on embracing students' interests, abilities and meeting community expectations. Critical to the students' success has been Cathy's unwavering commitment to monitoring student progress in their chosen learning program, initiating intervention when required and acknowledging progress. She has continually managed to engage teachers, students and their parents in substantive and meaningful dialogue which is goal and student orientated.

With a proven history as an excellent classroom practitioner in both the English and Drama disciplines, Cathy continues to lead by example. She has innovative classroom practice and willingly shares her ideas with all staff, leading to improvement in the quality of teaching across Prep to Year 12.



School/Kindergarten leadership

sponsored by Schoolzine

Finalists

Megan Mahoney

Assistant Principal: Formation and Identity - St Joseph's School, Stanthorpe

Megan has a strong Catholic faith, dedication to educating students and commitment to developing staff in the Catholic tradition. As a member of the school's Leadership Team Megan has helped ensure that decisions and programs implemented in the school always take into account the values, practices and traditions of a Catholic school.

Megan's dedication to providing a quality and academically rigorous Religious Education program across P-12 has had her work closely with all teachers to implement the Illuminate Religious Education strategy in the school. She has been very conscious of improving the school's connection with its history and its founders, the Sisters of Mercy. This has helped ensure that students and staff have a better understanding of the Mercy tradition, and that students and staff work towards ensuring that the Mercy values are the lived experience within our community and in the wider world.



Trish Parker

Assistant Principal: Faith and Mission - St John's School, Roma

Trish is an exemplary leader and has challenged herself to build a culture within the school that encompasses Religious Education, the religious life of the school, school traditions and Mercy values. Trish has empowered the whole school community to embrace this Catholic identity making it a way of life, that students, staff and parents relate to easily.

Trish's leadership of the Illuminate Project across the school has had her mentor staff, model explicit classroom instruction, and enhance staff faith and formation. She has empowered teams of teachers to plan, implement and deliver meaningful liturgies across the P-12 campus and increase student engagement in Religious Education classes. Building and sustaining strong links with All Saints Parish, Trish has been active in planning, facilitating and promoting social justice activities which engage students and staff with marginal and disadvantaged groups in the Roma community – living the school's charism in life.

Recipient

Sharon Collins

Principal - St Saviour's College, Toowoomba

Sharon is an empathic, compassionate and inspiring leader. She has led the development, implementation and review of evidence-based teaching and learning strategies across the College and created a culture of care and concern for all. This has instilled in all a commitment and challenge to excellence. Her intentional creation of culture is based on the foundational Charism of Catherine McAuley. This clear leadership of Catholic identity and the ethos and charism of the school community has seen the integration of hope-filled beliefs and values into all facets of school life and learning.

Built on the belief in the dignity of each person, and based on her belief that each person's capacity for growth and excellence is God-given and deserves to be brought to life Sharon is an inspiring leader.



Toowoomba Catholic Schools

excellence
A W A R D S