

In 2007, Jenni McDonald was the recipient of a National NEiTA (National Excellence in Teaching) award. The Australian Scholarships Group www.asg.com.au formed the NEiTA Foundation in 1994 www.neita.com.au to conduct a program of national awards honouring exemplary teachers in Australian schools and early childhood centres.

The awards promote public recognition of the teaching profession and specifically those teachers whose inspirational approach to teaching stimulates student learning.

All children are gifted – some just open their presents earlier than others

I believe my gift is being able to see the potential in every child that I teach and allowing them to share and celebrate that with others.

My strong interest over many years has centred on finding out more about the potential in all of us and how we all tick.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, Glasser's Choice Theory, Education Queensland's Productive Pedagogies and more recently, our school implementation of the You Can Do It! Education program, have all had an impact on my teaching.

I have studied the patterns between child learners and adult learners and how these can impact on even career decisions that are made. This is all through the work of Peter Burow and Shelley Evans-Wild and the application of the NeuroPower™* framework.

What makes the NeuroPower™* framework so powerful is that all that I've previously learnt can be integrated with Burow's findings.

Burow's detailed research has come down to identifying that there are six thinking functions (also referred to as Intelligence Centres) that we all share. ONLY SIX! And the links between childhood patterns and later adult personalities is phenomenal. The program implemented in my classroom used Burow's insights to harness the student's NeuroPower™ and access their thinking functions.

The children now have a language that they can use to identify and share their gifts by talking about their preference for each of the six. This all sounds pretty complicated for young prep-aged children, but they relate to this very quickly when we use the animals associated with each of these thinking functions.

Ways of processing information

I teach the children about the two different ways we can process information.

As a **WOMBAT** – slowly, methodically and step by step. These are the children who like to know what's happening next and like to complete tasks before moving on to their next activity.

As a **JAGUAR** – quickly and wanting to do our best. These children are good at winning games and taking things in quickly.

Creativity

How do we use creativity? We are all amazingly creative beings but we can divide our creativity into two areas (animals):

RABBITS – these children enjoy laughing and having fun. These are the children who need to be moving whilst you're talking, and can't sit still for too long as they want to be out there discovering new things.

We cater for these children by providing a range of activities for the children to choose from and encourage their input when doing brainstorming sessions.

EAGLES – need the space to vision, imagine and project into the future. These children may look out the window when asked a question as they need the time to think it through before answering. These children also ask the 'hard questions' in our class – "What will happen when all of the world's oil runs out?"

We provide space for these children by setting up a 'Dreaming Space' in our room – one chair looking out across the cane fields where the child is able to take the time to be alone if they wish and just think.

Receiving data

OWLS – like to learn through remembering lots of things, being quiet and watching. These children may not be the first to jump in to a new activity as they wish to know how it all works first before having a go. They love to read.

TURTLES – need connection in order to learn. They will often try to imagine how other children are feeling and be the first there if someone is hurt or in distress. They are the most committed gardeners and animal carers in our group

They are also the children who need reassurance that their sensitivity and ability to connect is a great asset to have. It is not sissy, it is not weak, it is a great asset to have!

Applying Neuroscience

According to Burow, we're witnessing evidence in our corporate and government world where we're lacking in vision (EAGLES) and our emotional intelligence and teamwork (TURTLES).

But we're talking about children, aren't we? Not corporate business? Where will these children be in 12 years time?

I feel it is our responsibility to ensure that those 12 years are spent catering for all of the thinking functions so that each child is able to access them when required. Part of my learning journey is to share my knowledge with as many people as I can.

The inclusion of parents in our program is vital for the success and development of each child. As well as regular contact with each of the parents, I run a parent workshop each term to help build the knowledge base of the parents (and myself).

Sir Francis Bacon once said, "Knowledge is power but it is the application of that knowledge that makes you powerful". So all of the workshops incorporate a very hands-on approach so that parents can go home and use the strategies the next day (or that night) if they desire.

All children are gifted. Some just open their presents earlier than others. It is my commitment to ensure that we as teachers and parents celebrate and enhance those gifts together so that the child's educational journey is a success for all involved.

Article written by Jenni McDonald, recipient of a National NEiTA award for teaching excellence (2007).

* The NeuroPower™ framework, created by Peter Burow, takes insights from both neuroscientific and philosophical perspective and intertwines them in a way that is both insightful and practical. In his groundbreaking book, "NeuroPower™", Peter takes us beyond traditional books on personality and neuroscience and provides readers with a deeper understanding of both themselves and others, and how we can discover what it means to be fully human and fully alive. NeuroPower™ is used in the fields of therapy, corporate training and coaching, consulting and research.

Shelley Evans-Wild, Managing Director of NeuroPower™ Learning and Development, is author of Raising Parents and Raising Teachers - two programs that have been integrated into the NeuroPower™ Parenting and Education arm of the business. Her vision is to raise the consciousness of corporate Australia by improving the mindfulness of young people through the application of everyday neuroscience in classrooms.