

It is probably no surprise to you that not all primary schools are the same. Whilst I know that we have grounds we all adore, this is not what I'm referring to - though not unconnected. And whilst I know we have some of the most passionate and talented teachers who provide a rich educational experience, this is also not what I'm referring to - though also not unconnected. What I'm talking about is the reason why so many of your parents and carers bestowed upon us the incredibly important responsibility of educating you - that sense of belonging, of community, of tribe.

Every government primary school across the state has the same curriculum to teach, but the lessons you have all learned throughout your seven years of primary school extend well beyond the curriculum.

Over seven years, you will spend approximately 9,800 hours at school - give or take for sick days, camps and let's not talk about remote learning right now. That is more than one third of your waking hours throughout that time. The actions and interactions of the people in our school community have helped shape you, just as you have helped shape us.

Our school is proud of our community, we are known for it. Through deep commitment, our lines can sometimes become blurred. Some parents are staff members, some parents work so hard for us and with us, you'd think they were staff members. Some staff members care so much about children's learning growth, their identity feels inextricably linked to education and some students have grown so much, they're beginning to look like staff.

But it takes a community to make a community. Every student, staff member, family member and friend of Brunswick North West Primary School contributes to our culture, our history and our traditions.

Some of our graduating class have spent their whole primary school career here, while some joined us more recently after starting their journey somewhere else. Some we have known since they were in nappies, which makes me feel unnervingly old. No matter how long each of our graduates have been here, each has made their mark.

Graduating class of 2021 - we know you. We see you. We value you as individuals with your own identities and your own relationships with each other, the grown ups in this space and the land on which our school stands. As a year level, from Prep to now, your cohort has also formed a collective identity and will be remembered by many of us for what makes you special.

For me personally, you will always be the littlest humans I met the morning I landed back in Australia after living overseas. I was so excited to return to this very special community and start in my new role as assistant principal. I had been off the plane for less than two hours before I was walking into the undercover area to meet many of you, just six months into your first year at big school. So many of your small smiling faces will be etched into my mind for the rest of time - and a couple of tiny grumpy faces too.

I can't comment on the relationships you have formed with others, but I can confidently say that you, as a cohort, will be remembered through time as the year level who were so exceptional in the way you learn, play and grow, that we had to create new set of awards to satisfy our need to celebrate everything that makes you YOU.

We have reviewed our values this year - getting insights from students, staff, families and friends to truly understand what makes our community unique, what makes us special, what brings together the tribe.

From many many hours of conversations, we have four values. Four values that represent us, that unify us, that celebrate who we are - who you are.

These values were due to be announced next year, but as I said earlier, your cohort will forever be remembered as being so outrageously great that we needed to add more awards! And we couldn't think of a better way to unveil our new values, than to celebrate four students from our graduating class who embody the values that make BNWPS us.

Our first value is **AUTHENTICITY**: Authenticity is not something we have or don't have. It's a practice - a conscious choice to live in a way that matches our values and beliefs and stays true to ourselves, no matter what the rest of the world might say or think. Authenticity is about knowing who you are and being brave enough to live it. ***The Grade 6 Class of 2021 Student Award for demonstrating authenticity goes to Eden Worland.***

Our next value is **RESPECT**: Respect is a word we use often, but as often happens with words we use regularly, this word can mean different things to different people. Sometimes when people talk about respect, there is a sense that it includes looking up to someone or something that you think is extraordinary. But I like to think of respect as something much more commonplace. Sometimes respect is used when tolerating differences in others, but I'd like to think it goes beyond just tolerating these differences - to a point of truly valuing these differences, knowing we are better for them. ***The Grade 6 Class of 2021 Student Award for demonstrating respect goes to Phenyx Tearetoa.***

Our next value is **CONNECTION**: The past two years have certainly reinforced how important connection is - we've always known a sense of belonging is essential to people thriving, now we all know first-hand what it can feel like to lose our sense of connection. Connection does not just describe the link between ourselves and others, but also our connection to the earth, the space around us and our learning. Connections help us grow, develop and make sense of the world. ***The Grade 6 Class of 2021 Student Award for demonstrating connection goes to Mitsuki Tanaka.***

Our next value is **CREATIVITY**: Creativity is the ability to generate new ideas, alternative possibilities and find new paths. In order to be creative, you need to be able to view things in new ways or from different perspectives. Without creativity there is no innovation, no problem solving, no improvement or joy - imagination and creativity can change the world. ***The Grade 6 Class of 2021 Student Award for demonstrating creativity goes to Micah Takita-Carey.***

This brings me to our final award for tonight - the Suzanne Peterson Award.

The Suzanne Peterson Award is Brunswick North West's most distinguished award, named after perhaps the best educator I have ever had the privilege of knowing. Each year, just one student is selected for this award.

Suzanne Peterson was a teacher at Brunswick North West many years ago, but she was also much more. Whilst none of you are old enough to have met Suzanne yourselves, she has made a huge impact on your education through the influence she has had over the pedagogy, philosophy and culture of our school community.

Suzanne was incredibly successful with a fascinating biography... before becoming a teacher, she had been a novelist, journalist and activist; later in life she started her own school - building it with her own two hands. Suzanne, lectured at Deakin University, gained her Ph.D in education, and wrote a series of science, philosophy and mathematics educational textbooks and teaching guides. Suzanne demonstrated an incredible amount of modesty over her achievements, most of them were not spoken of day-to-day.

No matter what remarkable activities Suzanne was engaging in, her focus, pride and joy lay with teaching. Her purpose in life was to inspire curiosity within children. She excited within all of us a sense of wonder about the mammoth and the minuscule - science, history, maths and art were part of every day learning.

While Suzanne was perhaps one of the most intelligent people I have ever known, she was not just smart. Suzanne openly appreciated the whole child and saw something special in everyone big and small. She was not just interested in the academic progress of her students; she aimed to foster the authenticity, respect, connection and creativity in all. For Suzanne, there were many varied forms of success, each as valuable and exciting as the other.

I don't know if Suzanne was drawn to this community's values or if she helped shape them. Probably a bit of both. But one thing is for sure - Suzanne's influences of inclusion, love and a hunger for everyone to learn and grow continue to echo through our school today.

In 2009, Suzanne passed away quite suddenly due to ill health. Whilst this was incredibly sad for our community, we knew we were all incredibly lucky to have had someone so special in our lives. For the past twelve years, we have remembered Suzanne and the great impact she continues to have on our school by presenting just one award each year to a single graduating student.

When deciding on which student should receive the Suzanne Peterson Award each year, teachers look for those who display many varied forms of success. Those who go beyond expectations. Those who surprise and delight. Those who consider their community and go to great lengths to build upon the community we all hold so dear.

Typically there is debate and deliberation over who should be selected for this award, sometimes there is overall agreement. This year I feel like I have been writing this student's speech for seven years - and that is saying something, when you look at the extraordinary cohort you are.

The recipient of this year's Suzanne Peterson Award is a remarkable person who has demonstrated a deep connection to our school, our community and their peers from the very beginning of their primary school career. This student demonstrates a passion for learning in all areas of the curriculum and a level of determination and persistence that should be applauded.

This student always strives to take their learning further, and does so with a smile on their face! Throughout the past seven years they have shown an incredible amount of respect, compassion and maturity for their age and they have a particular knack for recognising everyone's efforts and celebrating their achievements in authentic and positive ways.

This student makes meaningful relationships with everyone in the community - younger students, peers, family members, school staff and visitors. They consistently consider the needs of those around them and frequently advocate for their fellow classmates and younger school mates without any prospect of personal gain.

In recognition of this student's success in school and life, they are often relied on by others - and just like Suzanne, this student is modest about their achievements showing us all that you don't need a title to lead.

To the recipient of this award, for the past seven years we have seen you uphold our school values seemingly without effort and show an admirable level of dedication to your own learning, the learning of others, your family and our school community. This year, in the face of some unexpected challenges, you continued to work to your strengths and kept the greater good of all your peers (and us adults) in mind.

You have been a determined learner, friend, family & community member and an exceptional role model. You have shown us all that there is so much to be gained by considering the needs of the people and places around you.

I am so very proud to announce that the recipient of the Suzanne Peterson Award for 2021 is Maddy Broadhurst