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Student who questions whether inclusive education really exists wins ACE|ASG Student Educators Writing Award.



Erin Canavan is not afraid of speaking her mind, especially when it comes to advocating for the inclusion of special needs students in education.

The fourth year Bachelor of Primary Education student candidly talks about the challenges of special needs education based on her own personal experience and teaching placements in her essay: *'Changes and Challenges: Is our education system equipped to prepare students for a brave new world?'*

She explores the conflicting messages and ideas between government policy, national curriculum and classroom practice.

Her essay has earned her the ACE|ASG *Writing the Future* Award and she will present her paper at the [ACE national conference](#) in Sydney on 26-27 September.

"I have consistently observed pedagogies that are shaped exclusively by mandated requirements, creating an environment of pressure, accountability and ultimately, a 'future' focus that is short-term, narrow and predicated on a universal ideal of success.

Education is becoming less about the individual and is more competitive. Such a narrow focus on accountability, data collection and qualitative achievement in education has insidiously impacted the attention given to social issues. For example, the notion of equality has commonly been viewed as something automatically addressed by legislation, creating the misperception that nothing further needs to be done to optimise access, participation and achievement in education for students with special needs."

A member and academic on the judging panel says Erin's essay is very topical and timely.

'An exceptional paper for its keen insights into the issues that underlie what we have happening in Australian education currently. It doesn't just look at the surface, but goes straight to the heart of the current debate.'

ASG CEO John Velegrinis says this initiative attracts the best upcoming teachers who can lead the next generation of learners.

"I congratulate Erin on this fantastic achievement. It is wonderful to see that she is very passionate about education and is on track to becoming a great teacher and having a very satisfying career. Her confidence in challenging the status quo, questioning government policies on education and how the curriculum is designed is refreshing and honest. Australia needs upcoming teachers like Erin to support students."

Erin who studies at the University of Southern Queensland says she is keen to work with special needs students in learning support.

"I would like to liaise with classroom teachers, parents and the students themselves to make their education experience more enjoyable and inclusive."

Media contact:

For further information or to arrange an interview with ASG CEO John Velegrinis or Erin Canavan please contact:

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Editors notes:

The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) is a member owned organisation, helping to create educational opportunities for children. ASG has been helping families and their children for more than 40 years. During this time, more than 530,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.5 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments returned to members. For more information visit: www.asg.com.au.