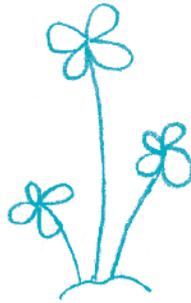


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# Q&A with Galina Zenin

Music is quintessential to Galina Zenin, who works hard to bring the joys of song and melody to early learners.



**A** 2015 ASG NEITA (National Excellence in Teaching Awards) recipient, Galina grew up in Russia, where she studied at the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music and then taught music in primary schools. She says teaching children through music builds social bonds and enlivens the soul.

## What motivated you to become an early childhood educator?

My interest in early years development started when my second child was born and I started learning nursery rhymes and games. I realised soon that many schools and early childhood services did not have a big focus on music and musical experiences. So to make music accessible and affordable for all families, I opened Australia's first dedicated music kinder in 2006—Bonkers Beat in Brighton East in Melbourne. We opened another centre in Aspendale in Melbourne in 2009.

## What have you gained by being part of early education?

The early years of a child's development are the most crucial. It is the time when educators and parents can enhance children's brain development and make an enormous impact on their future.

Teaching young children is very rewarding, as sometimes, we can see a big shift or change in a child's behaviour very quickly, which really excites me. Think of teenagers ... sometimes it takes a long time to see the results of our hard work. With young children, we may see big changes in their attitude, confidence, social-emotional development and other areas over a short period of time. I love seeing the evidences of mine and other educators' work, and this motivates me even more.

I never thought that my interest in the early years brain development will continue to grow and I'll become an expert in early childhood education.

## You have brought about changes to your centre, which culminated in the community recognising your work. How do you feel about it?

I love new ideas and positive changes. I also dream big and work hard to achieve my goals. At times, people think that my ideas are crazy and I say, bonkers ...

However, whatever I have in mind, I'm very clear and always know 'why' the new idea is important and 'why' we should try it. I am blessed that I work with educators and parents who believe in me and support me.

Being recognised and nominated by parents for ASG NEITA was an honour and I will always be grateful for their nominations.

## How did you exceed the National Quality Standards (NQS)?

It is always a great feeling when you are recognised for your hard work and commitment towards children's development. But for our team the NQS assessment has never been the main goal.

My personal vision is to provide the best education and care to every child, every day. And that's why Bonkers Beat Music and Wellbeing programs are designed to be incorporated and imbedded into the curriculum. That's why our educators run music, yoga, meditation and a range of other wellbeing practices on a daily basis.

Did this reflect in the NQS assessment and boost our rating? Absolutely!

Is this the main reason why we do it? No!



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## Tell us about your Wellness programs

Along with focussing on children's wellbeing, it's also important to focus on educators' wellbeing as the wellbeing of young children is in the educators' and parents' hands. How can we improve children's mental and physical health if we are not supporting adults? To create a healthy and happy future generation we should look after our own wellbeing, and our Wellness programs tackle both in one holistic approach.

We empower educators and families by providing them with practical and inspiring training opportunities. Education is the key to connect, grow together and create a happy and harmonious world.

## Why is this program so important for educators?

According to research conducted by beyondblue one in six young Australian is currently experiencing anxiety, and one in four young Australian currently has a mental health condition.

Research conducted by The Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Deakin University, RMIT and The Jack Brockhoff Child

Health and Wellbeing Program also revealed that between six to 38 per cent of educators in the Family Day Care met the criteria for depression. Their mental health was seen to influence care quality given to children, and the children attending their facilities.

Learning and practicing wellbeing daily is not a choice or luxury any more—it is essential for educators, families and children.

## What do educators gain from the wellness program?

Educators improve their own wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence. They develop skills to regulate their thoughts and emotions, and they become calmer and in control of their life.

Our wellness programs have received a very positive response and have been conducted in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. In July we are planning an Early Childhood Leaders Wellbeing Retreat and you can find out about our upcoming programs and events by visiting our website [BonkersBeat.com](http://BonkersBeat.com) or by emailing [info@BonkersBeat.com](mailto:info@BonkersBeat.com)