**World Teachers’ Day 2021 podcast series**

**Corey Gieskens and Kienan Wagner, Ferny Grove State High School**

**Announcer:**

This is a Queensland Department of Education podcast.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

World Teachers’ Day is a special day on the school calendar. It gives us the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the wonderful work of all teachers across our state. I'm Virginia Bowdidge from the Department of Education, and I'll be talking to some of Queensland's extraordinary teachers and some of the students they have inspired. Today, Industrial Technology and Design and STEM teacher Corey Gieskens from Ferny Grove State High School and former student Kienan Wagner join me.

**Virgnia Bowdidge:**

Hi, Corey and Kienan thanks for joining me to be part of the World Teachers’ Day podcast series.

**Corey Gieskens:**

Hi, Virginia. Thank you very much for having us.

**Kienan Wagner:**

Yeah, thank you, Virginia. Thanks having us.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Corey, how long have you been a teacher and what inspired you to choose teaching as a career?

**Corey Gieskens:**

I've been teaching for about 19 years or so. To be honest, it's been a blur because I really do have so much fun being a teacher. The area that I teach in is industrial technology and design. And I teach design, I teach a lot of the industrial skill subjects, but also get to teach STEM, major passion of mine. I love it, so my time's gone fast.

What inspired me? Probably a little bit different from a lot of people, being a homeless teenager at the start of high school. I was really naughty and very disengaged. It was teachers at school that made a difference to me. They recognised me and sowed some seeds and encouragement, and they really made an impact on my life while I was still at school. Always, way back then, it was something that I thought I might want to do when I grew up a little bit more.

Part of that homeless situation I needed to leave school a bit earlier. It was very hard to stay engaged, so I left quite early from school. Back then, everyone left at the end of Grade 10 if they were in that place. So that was me. I had a bit of a turnaround in my life. I was still very naughty and disengaged. A lot of teachers said I was probably heading to prison. Once I left school and got a job with someone from the local church, it turned my life around, really. Coming back to teaching was always going to happen because of the influence those teachers had once I managed to get myself sorted as a young person.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

What is it that you love about your job?

**Corey Gieskens:**

What I love the most about my job is seeing students when they get the bug, I call it. They get it. Especially my teaching area, inspiring a student to be a 21st century thinker and a creator or an inspired lifelong learner is what I actually get the most reward from as a teacher. I just love having students walk up at my office before school or at lunchtime after school, weekends even, using our Maker spaces, just wanting to do more and be more engaged. Part of that, I guess, is I love having phone calls from parents or parent-teacher interviews where the parents ask things like, “what have you done to my child that all of a sudden, so interested in doing what's inside your classroom”, which is my experience as a teenager as well with some teachers at school. Being able to now be that teacher is ... I love that.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

What is it about teaching that makes it so rewarding?

**Corey Gieskens:**

Honestly, it is about bumping into students post-high school and seeing what they're up to. I really love hearing how they flourished in an area that I might have maybe played a small part in. Just seeing young people land on their feet and just loving life and just being better humans, it just inspires me to be a better teacher day in, day out.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Kienan, thanks again for talking to us today. Can you tell me a little about what you've done since leaving school?

**Kienan Wagner:**

I graduated Year 12 in 2017, and then straight after that, I went into an automotive trade. I was there for about three years until I decided it was time to move into a career that was a bit more in line with my passions, mainly 3D design and CAD. I ended up scoring a drafting trainee-ship at a company that made fibre glass composite panels, and that's where I am currently. Just finished all the TAFE now. I'm a qualified drafter at the moment.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Congratulations.

**Kienan Wagner**:

Thank you.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Can you tell what you remember about Corey, Mr Gieskens, as a teacher?

**Kienan Wagner:**

I worked a lot with MrG, Corey, mainly in an after school engineering competition where we spend a lot of holidays and a lot of weekends working on it. I think for Coreyit was more than a job for him. You could definitely tell it was his passion and he was truly interested in the students, interested in helping. I'm sure he spent most of his holidays for a few years helping us out with the competition. I just remember him being super dedicated, super passionate and definitely the kind of teacher you'd meet.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

It's great when you meet teachers like that, isn't it?

**Kienan Wagner:**

Yeah. Absolutely

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

How do you feel he helped inspire you?

**Kienan Wagner:**

Yeah, well he didn't just inspire. With the engineering competition, he was always there pushing you to do more or is bringing the better out of yourself. Like I said, he spent a lot of holidays and a lot of weekends helping us out. I got a lot of skills from that, not just in terms of the engineering side. I mean, a lot of that, but a lot of life skills, communication skills. Now that I've been out in the workforce for a few years, I truly see the value of and how much I appreciate it.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

And has your chosen career been influenced by his teaching?

**Kienan Wagner:**

Yeah, absolutely. I'd never touched a CAD program, I guess, until I was in one of his drafting classes. As soon as I picked it up, I knew I loved it. And he actually approached me about joining the engineering competition and that's kind of where it started. That's where my passion started, so absolutely he had a huge part. It's been great for me.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

What would your advice be to others about recognizing and valuing the work of teachers and how they can shape and influence students' lives?

**Kienan Wagner:**

Teachers make all the difference. When you're in school, you spend a hundred percent of your time either working with the teacher directly or indirectly. A good teacher can make all the difference in your school experience. I think that that's something that should be really appreciated more and definitely valued more.

**Corey Gieskens:**

That's awesome, Kienan.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Corey it must be very rewarding to see past students like Kienan make their own way in the world?

**Corey Gieskens:**

It really helps knowing that what we do makes a difference. I bumped into Kienana couple of weeks ago for the first time in a little while at a past student's 21st birthday party. It was just amazing to not just be there with Kienanbut a number of other students and see what they're doing and knowing that you've played a part in their life, but listening to Kienantalk to me on that evening was just ... it filled my tank as a teacher. It really, really did, to want to keep doing what I do. Seeing his passion for what he does now and knowing I played just a small part in that, it's just the ultimate reward. It's not something everyone can talk about in their career, is it? That night and talking with him will give me energy to keep doing what I'm doing for some years to come, I know it.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Wow. That's very inspiring.

**Corey Gieskens:**

It was great.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Corey, do you have any memorable moments in your career that you'd like to share with us that have helped shaped the teacher you are today?

**Corey Gieskens:**

I've got so many amazing moments with students. I'm a very relational teacher, so I guess that helps. But I've also been so lucky to have worked alongside just a plethora of amazing teachers, who every day, have amazing classes. I just have this privilege of being able to sharpen my skills and steal their things to develop who I am as a teacher. That to me helps shape me. But also, if I was to talk about a memorable moment, choosing one is really hard, but I've thought of one for you. I think it was probably when we're on a world finals overseas for a STEM competition, and we were practicing verbal presentations where a student by the name of Ben who has learning difficulties, Asperger's syndrome, was just the most amazing young man who worked through that learning disorder that he has.

We didn't expect this. They practiced their verbal presentation in front of a pile of us, there was about six teachers in the room, and he unpacked the challenges that he'd faced in the STEM competition that we were in, and he actually had all of us teachers in tears. It was just so from the heart. He was basically appreciating us as teachers for allowing him with that disability to be in there and shining and being able to do what he did really, really well through the curriculum offered. It was just one of those moments. That definitely is such a memorable, along with many others, but that team, they went on to win the world finals. That was just such a good reward for those guys. I'm getting goosebumps just talking about it. It was just lots of them.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Great. What advice would you give students thinking of studying teaching or career changers moving into teaching?

**Corey Gieskens:**

Do it, Kienan. No, I'm always suggesting this to people that I meet. I often nag my students while still at school to choose teaching as a career. I'll often talk to them when I bump into them about doing it and how rewarding it is. Ultimately, I hope that one day, I get to teach alongside a student that I once taught. That would just be amazing.

I was actually lucky enough when I went back to my second school, after becoming a teacher to work alongside some teachers that had actually made a difference in my life. As an older teacher now, I look back on that, I think that must've been really special for them as well, and I got to tell that to them. One day, I hope that can happen for me. It would be great.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

And lastly, Corey how will you or your school be celebrating World Teachers’ Day this year?

**Corey Gieskens:**

We do quite a few things on World Teachers’ Day, so I hope I don't miss anything or I'll be in trouble from the folks here at school. I know the chaplains, they hand out gifts to the teachers to say thanks. Students, individually, hand teachers cards. We've got some really empathetic and understanding students at this school. It's wonderful, so we promote it really well. Admin makes a bit of a deal of saying thanks to staff. It does really help us be encouraged in that space. I know as a leader within my school, I'll be giving all of my staff a little token to say thank you, to encourage them, to keep doing what they do. And I've even had whole classes in the past clap me as we go into the classroom. It's so humbling because it's not an expectation or not why we do what we do to be acknowledged, but when it happens, it's very humbling. We do celebrate it pretty well here and acknowledge the great things that teachers do day in, day out.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Thank you both for joining me.

**Corey Gieskens:**

My pleasure.

**Kienan Wagner:**

No, thank you.

**Corey Gieskens:**

Honestly, it's been a good teaching career already.

**Announcer:**

You have been listening to the Queensland Department of Education podcast.

The Department of Education acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands from across Queensland. We pay our respects to the elders, past and present, for they hold the memories, the tradition, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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