**World Teachers’ Day podcast series**

**Sarah Condon and Patrick Robinson, Ambrose Treacy college**

**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.

Teachers really do play formative roles in many students' lives. I know my Year 1 teacher, Mrs. Holland, and Year 11 teacher Mrs. Lingard played important roles in my education. Today, religious education teacher, Sarah Condon from Ambrose Treacy College and former student Patrick Robinson join me.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Hi, Patrick and Sarah. Thanks for joining me today to talk about World Teachers’ Day.

**Sarah Condon:**

Hello. It's nice to be here.

**Patrick Robinson:**

Very happy to be here. Thank you for having us.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Now can we start with you, Sarah? How long have you been a teacher and what inspired you to choose teaching as a career?

**Sarah Condon:**

So, I've been teaching for 10 years. I started in 2011. In terms of inspiration I did a three year Creative Writing degree and I thought, what am I going to do with this degree? I was thinking I should go into journalism, should I go into public relations and they really weren't drawing me into it. I thought of teaching one day and I knew, I just knew with absolute certainty that that's what I was meant to do. I basically have never looked back. I just wanted to do something that I thought would bring me fulfilment, and also try and make a difference. I think teaching allowed me the ability to do that. So I went into high school teaching. I taught middle school religion and English. I teach senior English but over the last few years, my main areas have been teaching senior religion ethics and senior study of religion, which are my two favorite things to teach.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

And did you do a postgraduate in teaching?

**Sarah Condon:**

Yes, that's right. Yeah.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Okay, and what is it that you love about your job?

**Sarah Condon:**

It's absolutely the relationships that you get to build with your students. I teach them, but they also teach me as well by showing me what's important to them. What's going on in their world. What worries them. What they want to do to change the world when they're older and things like that.

One of the most important things I want them to be able to do, especially my seniors, I don't want them to leave my classroom not knowing how to form and stand by their opinions. So I make them do it a lot in my classroom. I'll be like, what matters to you? Why do you think that? How can you justify that? And I really make them work on that, really challenge them to be able to do that so that they know that they matter. That their voice and their opinion has been heard and that they can really contribute to society when they leave school. I want to make a difference in the world, but I want them to know that they can as well.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

What is it about teaching that makes it so rewarding?

**Sarah Condon:**

I think seeing the way that the kids grow and develop and they change. I'm really lucky with my job I can teach a Year 11 and a Year 12 class. I take them through for two years and you see so much growth and development and it's so rewarding to see what they're like at the end, especially when you know where they've come from and they change so much. It's so inspiring to see them at the then end of their schooling journey and that they're ready and confident to go at it and take on the world.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Patrick, thanks again for talking to us today. I understand Sarah, Mrs Condon, was somewhat of an inspiration to you. Can you tell me how she inspired you?

**Patrick Robinson:**

Thanks for having me once again. With Miss Condon, it wasn't some grand gesture or single action that you could single out that I could say inspired me. With Miss Condon it was more so the constant enthusiasm and passion she brought into the classroom every day that inspired me. No matter the time of the lesson, whether it was a Friday afternoon or a Monday morning, the content of the lesson or how busy she was, she was always engaging. Which is what made study of religion so interesting for me.

There was one gesture however that I won't forget. In our last lesson, she gave us a bag of trinkets. Each with its own unique message on how to take on life. So, in the bag was an eraser and that is to rub out any mistakes that you make along the way. There was a coin so that you'll never be completely broke, which I have to say has probably been spent by now, sorry about that. A marble for when you start losing yours. A rubber band to stretch you beyond your limits. A paperclip, to keep everything together. A band aid to heal all that hurts. And a lolly to keep life sweet.

While it was a grand gesture, it wasn't necessarily that for me, it was more so a culmination of, like she said, two years of constantly watching us grow and develop us into the men that we are today. That really made her stand out as a teacher for me.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

That's fantastic. And what are you doing today, Patrick?

**Patrick Robinson:**

At the moment I'm studying mining and mechanical engineering at the University of Queensland.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Did Mrs Condon help shape your career goals?

**Patrick Robinson:**

In terms of what I'm studying at the moment I wouldn't say that study of religion was the most relevant, but in terms of my outlook on life and general day-to-day things, I'd say I 100% was shaped by the lessons. More so the life lessons that I learned from Miss Condon along the way.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

And what would be your advice to other students about recognising and valuing the work of teachers and how they can shape and influence students' lives?

**Patrick Robinson:**

My best advice would be to appreciate your teachers every day, because teaching is one of the noblest careers one can pursue. Teachers are responsible for inspiring and educating a new generation of workers that then go on to change the world. Whether that be through what the teacher's actually teaching them in their lessons or like I said before, the more important life lessons that they can share with you. With our teachers, especially engaging, nurturing, and thought-provoking teachers like Miss Condon, nothing would change as it's only with knowledge and inspiration that teachers give to us day in and day out that we can grow to be the best versions of ourselves and achieve our fullest potential.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Well, Sara, that must be nice to hear from a former student.

**Sarah Condon:**

Yeah, absolutely. Very, very touching.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

And Sara, why do you give your students the bag of trinkets? What's the meaning behind it for you?

**Sarah Condon:**

The bag is very symbolic of, basically, what I wish for them to have in their future. I call it a bag of happiness, so obviously like Patrick said, each of those elements in that bag symbolise a wish for me, for them to have in their life. As teachers, we come in and we maybe teach for a chapter maybe two of a student’s life, but we don't actually to get to see the ending. We can only hope that we've had some sort of influence on them and hope that their ending is amazing. We're not even in the climax of their story, we’re all the way back at the beginning.

And it's sometimes really hard for us I think as teachers to not know what's going to happen afterwards and just really hope that they have this wonderful life. So for me, I want to make sure that I leave the students who have definitely touched me or had some influence on my life, cause they certainly do, I just want to leave with them something that they can remember their teachers by and feel like we have been part of their lives and have some influence in shaping who they are.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

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

**Sarah Condon:**

Yeah, absolutely. I think teaching is full of those moments that give you the encouragement to keep going and going. What you're doing is making some sort of impact. I had a student in Year 9 English in particular, who had dyslexia and dysgraphia. So he, he really, really struggled with English. He was very withdrawn in my class, especially for most of the first semester I taught him. He didn't want to answer any questions, didn't want to do anything like that. And you know, I made sure that I was working with him a little bit more one-on-one in the classroom as I was going to give him that encouragement, make sure he was keeping up.

And at the end of the year, his mum emails me the day of the exam and she said, "I don't know what you've done to my kid, but he went into his English exam today and he was confident. He knew he could do it. And he was so happy to have the confidence, to be able to know what he was going to write about and not be worried and not be in tears and not be anxious about it and she said that is because he loves you and how you taught him". To me that just, it's amazing to think that whatever it was that I did throughout the year to make him feel like he had the confidence to do his work and to achieve. And that's exactly what we want to do as teachers I think. See those kids achieve.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Yeah. That's great. What advice would you give students thinking of studying teaching or career changes moving into teaching?

**Sarah Condon:**

Teaching is, the best advice is that it is an absolute labour of love. If you don't love it, you're probably not going to stick at it. And if you don't put the work in, you're probably not going to get the results to make you really love it. It takes up so much time and so much energy, but I can absolutely say hand on heart, I absolutely love my job. I love being in the classroom. I love standing out there with the students. I love them getting annoyed and passionate and yelling at each other and yelling at me when they know what they want to say and that they have something they want to get across and want to be heard. But coming into teaching, you have to absolutely work really hard at it. It's so tough, but it is so completely and utterly worth it.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Oh, that's fantastic. And lastly, Sarah, how will you, or how will your school be celebrating World Teacher's Day this year?

**Sarah Condon:**

I'll be at home with my nearly seven-month-old baby this year.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

Okay.

**Sarah Condon:**

But at this school we always have a World Teacher's Day assembly. They usually have a staff member who comes and kind of shares their teaching story in that assembly. And we usually get some chocolates on the desk or in our staff rooms and stuff to share, but it's the kids who come up throughout the day and they do thank you. And you've got those kids who'll just say, "oh, I've been told to say thank you, so you know, thanks." But you've got the ones that are really genuine and they really do mean what they say, and again, it's that saying that makes it all worth it when they are really absolutely grateful for what you've done.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

That's great. That's really, really lovely to hear.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

And thank you both Sarah & Patrick...and Patrick, good luck with your studies.

**Patrick Robinson:**

Thank you very much.

**Virginia Bowdidge:**

And thank you for being part of this and thank you Sarah, as well.

**Sarah Condon:**

No problem, it's been such a pleasure.

**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 that they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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