**World Teachers’ Day**

**Stuart Ablitt**

**Hills International College, Jimboomba**

**Announcer:** This is a Queensland Department of Education podcast.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** World Teachers’ Day is a special day on the Education calendar. It’s a day we celebrate and acknowledge the hard work of teachers. I’m Virginia Bowdidge, and today I’m speaking with Stuart Ablitt, from Hills International College.

Stuart is Deputy Head of Primary and Head of International Baccalaureate programs.

Thanks for joining me Stuart.

**Stuart**: My pleasure, Virginia.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Can you tell me about your current role?

**Stuart**: Currently, I am the Deputy Head of Primary and the Head of IB programs, I’m the PYP co-ordinator at Hills International College. I’m also the principal’s delegate for Inclusive Education so overseeing our Inclusive Education department from Prep to Year 12. So, I look after all teaching and learning curriculum, assessment reporting for the primary school, as well.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** How long have you been with Hills?

**Stuart**: I’ve been at Hills since 2011, I was actually a graduate here and have worked my way up to the leadership team.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** That’s quite an achievement

**Stuart**: It’s been an amazing journey and I’ve been very fortunate along the way to have great mentors and guides and an amazing team to work with.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Why did you decide to become a teacher?

**Stuart**: I suppose I always wanted to be in a profession that helped people. Both my parents were ex-police officers and have always been in that service industry and I wanted to do something that made a difference, so my initial thoughts were always around para-medicine or being a teacher. And it was then my Year 4 teacher actually at Hills, I was a student here as well, who was a great inspiration and then my Year 5 teacher when I moved to a different school, and then my Year 10 teacher that actually saw the potential in me when I was working with her one day, she said, ‘you would make an amazing teacher’. And then from there it’s always just been on the radar, that, that’s where I wanted to be and nothing was going to stand in my way. That’s where I wanted to be and that’s where I’ve gotten to.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Congratulations and that’s a wonderful validation of your career choice.

**Stuart**: I’m a firm believer we are born for this job.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What is it you love about your job?

**Stuart**: I love the fact that I can make a difference and seeing the change in students and watching them grow. I’m predominantly an Early Years trained teacher and that’s where my focus has always been. They’re like sponges at that age. They just want to grow and learn more and that passion they have for learning. I love the ‘ah ha’ moments, when you can see that they’ve clicked and they’ve gotten what you’ve been looking at or what you’ve been teaching. You can see in their mind, they’ve got this accomplishment. That they’re so proud of themselves and that you’ve had a part in that. It’s truly rewarding.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What’s the day-to-day aspect of your job like?

**Stuart**: I love that every day is a completely different adventure. No two days are the same, it’s not Ground Hog Day. It is very much, I walk in and I look at my calendar first to see what things to do but I get to walk around. I get to say hello to our students every morning at drop-off. I will walk around. We have therapy dogs on site as well, and I’m a handler, so we get to do some therapy dog visits. It’s about those high growth relationships really connecting with our students. We take pride in the fact we are a place to belong.

Getting to know our students, and all of them, is vitally important. And visiting classrooms, asking them questions about what they’re doing, what they are learning, where to next with their learning is truly rewarding and it makes each day completely different, which is great.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** It sounds like you do a lot at the school as well. You have a lot on your plate.

**Stuart**: Yeah, but I think that comes with the job that we all have. Being a teacher is no longer just being a teacher, there is so many other elements to our roles but I think that’s what makes the profession so amazing. It’s not just being that keeper of knowledge or deliverer of knowledge. There’s so many more elements to our role.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Leading on from that, what is it about your job that inspires you, and what makes it rewarding? I know that you’ve touched on that a little bit, but could you just go into that a little bit further?

**Stuart**: So what inspires me? I suppose it’s about, like I’ve touched on it before about those connections that we make with our students. And so, I think back to a student that I taught in his prep year, and he was on the spectrum and working closely with mum and dad and his family, we wrote his IEP and were building on from what his goals were. He smashed his goals, like we had them down for six months and by the end of Term 1 he had already hit all of his goals and we were moving on and he was growing. Some days, he would have his bad days. And that’s fine, it's completely okay.

I have a passion for inclusive education and working with all students. That’s what my Masters’ degree is in, but it makes it rewarding for me, when we can have those connections with all of our students. I worked hard at building that relationship with him and I’m now referred to as, ‘school dad’. He’s in high school now, and still comes back on the other side so he works with me each Wednesday afternoon, at the moment. And it’s great, I still get to catch up and I still get to see him on site. Which is awesome.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** You’re a P to 12 school, aren’t you?

**Stuart**: Yeah, P to 12 college. It’s lovely that we don’t lose them. We can still see them and see the amazing people that we know that they could be.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** You’re obviously a very committed teacher. What do you think shaped you into that teacher?

**Stuart**: I think I go back to those three teachers that I spoke about earlier on. I can think back to each one of those years. It was, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 10. They were important years because I can remember everything about my time in those rooms and the way those teachers made me feel. I think, those memories and the feelings that they invoked, they were the reasons that I thought I could do what I do now. So it was like the connections that those teachers went to. The little things that they did to make their students feel special. The lengths that they would go to, to include everybody and I think those three teachers have really shaped who I am as a teacher today.

I’m lucky enough that my Year 4 teacher was my, I sought her out to be my internship teacher when I was finishing my degree. And I ran into the Year 5 teacher at, I was leading a professional learning workshop for a network of schools and she was there and then I still catch up with my Year 10 teacher to have coffee now. So, it’s great that those connections, and it is, it’s all about connection.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Oh, that sounds just wonderful. Those connections between students and teachers can be very powerful.

**Stuart**: I would agree, yeah . There’s a TED Talk. I can’t remember the ladies name I think it’s, her name is Rita. ‘Kids don’t learn from people they don’t like’, and we have to make the effort to build those high-growth relationships and get to know our students as individuals rather than just another student in a class.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What advice would you give students thinking of studying teaching?

**Stuart**: It’s not an easy profession. It’s not a 9 to 3, but it is the most rewarding profession that I can think of. It’s not every day you get to go to work and help shape the future.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Thanks for talking to me about your career Stuart. It sounds very interesting.

**Stuart**: My pleasure Virginia, thank you for having me on your podcast.

**Announcer**: You have been listening to a Department of Education podcast.

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