

2007 National Excellence In Teaching Awards

State and Territory Teaching Excellence Award Recipient



Mervyn Swords

Diploma Teaching, Bachelor of Education
Runcorn State High School, Runcorn, Queensland
Nominated by: School Parent Association

Position: Junior Science and Senior Chemistry Teacher • Level taught: Secondary School • School type: Government • Town: Runcorn • Category: Secondary • State: QLD

Sharing a love of science

Utilising his position as a science teacher at Runcorn State High School, Mervyn has developed many programs to encourage a love of science and to help students develop their self-esteem, literacy and numeracy skills within a scientific framework. More recently, Mervyn led a team in the development of a program designed to link the junior and senior curriculum more closely. He has also co-organised the District Science Forum that focused on professional development for primary and secondary science teachers.

Several of his students completed their chemistry courses before the prescribed completion time and started undertaking university courses while still at secondary school.

Mervyn has also developed a "Career Awareness Program" that encourages students and parents to consider the many pathways through school and beyond and therefore enabling them to make a more informed decision about their future.

Mervyn's dedication to the school community has been recognised in his appointment as the school's first Head of Student Services, a body that oversees such vital areas as career counselling and youth support.

Insight

Q: *In your opinion, what makes a good teacher?*

A: The ability to effectively communicate with students, to make the learning experience interesting and enjoyable, and to build up a good honest rapport.

Q: *How do you maintain your enthusiasm for teaching?*

A: Looking for new and exciting ways to increase student interest and awareness of things scientific, and seeing the students enjoy and succeed in science.

Q: *In hindsight, what do you wish your training provided you with more of?*

A: I learnt and remember more from my practice teaching sessions than anything else. Universities need to increase the opportunity to work with experienced teachers at a variety of schools.

Q: *What is the most difficult aspect of teaching today?*

A: Teachers are competing with a multitude of stimulating technologies for student attention. Today's classrooms need to adopt these technologies to maintain student motivation and enthusiasm.

Q: *What is your greatest challenge as a teacher?*

A: Keeping current with subject knowledge and practices, technology, learning techniques, behaviour management, youth culture and all other factors that are ever changing.

Q: *How has teaching changed over the years?*

A: Teachers are required to teach the skills of learning and facilitate the learning experience rather than focusing on imparting content.

Q: *What is the single most important thing you, as a teacher, can do to connect with individual students?*

A: To treat all students as I like to be treated – fairly, with respect and valued.

Q: *If you were the Minister for Education, Science and Training for a week, what would you try to change?*

A: I would like to see greater links between classroom teachers, community and industry so teachers have a greater awareness of careers that their subject leads to.

Q: *What keeps you awake at night?*

A: My two-year-old daughter who continually gets out of her bed and wanders down to 'sleep with daddy'. It would be all right but she seems to take up most of the bed.

Q: *If your students could describe you in three words, what would they say?*

A: They would use a variety of adolescent terms that hopefully translate into caring, interesting and dedicated – I hope anyway.

Contact Details:

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