**World Teacher’s Day 2023**

**Erin Dunn – Australian International Islamic College**

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

**Virginia Bowdidge:** In Queensland World Teachers’ Day it’s celebrated annually on the last Friday of October. In recognition and dedication of the hard work of our teachers we talk to three teachers from very diverse backgrounds and settings about their teaching journey.

I’m Virginia from the Department of Education and joining me is Erin Dunn from the Australian International Islamic College at Durack.

Hi Erin, thanks for joining me.

**Erin Dunn:** Hi, thanks so much for having me.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** How long have you been teaching and what inspired you to choose teaching as a career?

**Erin Dunn:** I’ve been teaching for close to 7 years now. I always think when I get these questions from my friends – when you get asked in Year 1 and 2, what do you want to do as a job, I was really lucky that I had always wanted to be a teacher. I was able to just have that main goal going throughout for the whole of my schooling, which is really cool. I just always knew where I wanted to end up. So, it was really exciting to see it to come to life and actually get to do what I wanted to do.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Yeah, that’s wonderful.

**Erin Dunn:** It was really cool, I really enjoyed it. Sometimes, when I’m getting stuck into work, I’m like, I’ve actually always wanted to do this. So, it’s quite a refreshing thought when things are really hard.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Is teaching your first career, I’m assuming so?

**Erin Dunn:** Yes, it is. I have a double degree so I have a bit of background about Child and Family Services, how social work, works and But I never really got a job in that area of my study, I’ve always been in the teaching field. When I did my different pracs I was just always drawn to teaching and drawn to the children in comparison to the family dynamic we were doing.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What do you love about teaching?

**Erin Dunn:** I love the different kids that you get every day, even though I have my set class, the different kids that I we have at my school you know we are always doing activities with different classes or all different grades, and getting to know your families so, we do have quite big families at my school. It’s really cool to say, I had your brother a couple years ago. And you make the connections over their kids and their families in the few years as well.

My school is an independent school, based around the Islamic faith. I always say that to my friends or people that I am meeting are so curious about it and I always just say, it’s just like any other private school that has the Catholic faith, the Anglican faith, but their faith is all about Islam. It’s the same thing, they get to have their pray time during the week and during each day. Instead of having pray time in the class they go to the hall together and they pray as a big group. Which is really nice. It’s actually really lovely seeing kids come together and learn about what they believe in. They have lessons during the week as well, with their version of a Pastor, an Iman. And that’s lovely to see them grow up with these Imans as well and learn what their faith is all about.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Is it difficult for you not having any understanding of that faith previously?

**Erin Dunn:** I wouldn’t say difficult, I think it’s quite interesting. I remember my first day coming in and they told me I got the job, I was super worried. I was like, oh my gosh I don’t know about anything about this faith. They were so welcoming and so knowledgeable and also willing to share, no judgement. They are happy to share what they believe in and how that works in Australia as well. There’s challenges for our students in our school getting used to hanging around kids that don’t have the same religion as them, especially where our kids live in Durack. We have a few campuses.

So, for our kids growing up in the communities all around them they all have different beliefs. It’s interesting for them they come to school, and they’re all surrounded by children who all have the same beliefs and ideologies they have and then going out to their suburban streets where kids have different beliefs. It can be quite challenging. But I think it’s really important for our kids to understand about the world around them and be quite different as well. But now kids are interested about what other children their age are doing and it’s exciting when they go out to places on excursions, they get to see how other students live as well.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** That sounds as though it would be quite eye opening for you?

**Erin Dunn:** Yeah, it is. Even when they come in and we’re talking about our weekends and what we have done, for me, when I was growing up as a child and what I did on the weekend can be quite different to what my students do on the weekend. Some of them come from big families, some are from small families and even what our kids do in our classroom, can be really different as well.

Some kids they’ve got these big grand plans for over the holidays and the weekend and some of our other kids are just happy to stay at home with their families and go to the park and have fun with their friends. I think it’s interesting even just the dynamics in our class can be super different as well. Lots of different cultures but the same religion. That’s interesting for them as them as well.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What makes you job rewarding?

**Erin Dunn:** Being able to show kids and give kids experiences around things they didn’t think they’d be able to do. Like I was saying before some of our kids, their experiences might be a little bit limited to some of the other class mates. Being able to plan and take them on trips or take them on excursions on things where they have never experienced, that’s super special. And that’s something I really enjoy about teaching, especially at my school. Being able to take them away on a day camp and get them to experience stuff that they wouldn’t really have the chance to experience normally.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What excites you the most about the future of the profession?

**Erin Dunn:** I’m excited to see how teaching moves in the future, whether that be in Australia how we communicate with kids in different states or different, even religion areas but even teaching across different countries as well. I know that there’s lots of different schools we are connecting with overseas so, we have an exchange program with an Indonesian school that are Muslin based as well. So that’s really exciting to see how we can make connections everywhere across the world. How we can compare and look at how we are teaching and if we can find other ways to engage students. I know some of our kids have a really big focus on football so I think it would be really exciting to see how we can engage students with their interests other than just the base curriculum areas. How we can engage them in things that they are interested in.

School is just starting to make these big leaps of endeavors for our kids. We’ve been a school for just over 20 years but what we’re starting to do now is to really take some big growth steps around connections with other countries. We have been quite a closed school but now we are trying to find those connections for our kids. Especially because we have such a high base of ESL speakers and other students moving over to Australia to come to our school. Them being able to connections back to where they’re coming from has been exciting. So, we’ve got kids going over to Indonesia in these school holidays coming up. For some of them that’s them going home to visit their family but it’s also to visit other Islamic colleges over in Indonesia and seeing how their school life is.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** How long have you been at the school?

**Erin Dunn:** I’ve been at the school for 5 and half years now.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Oh, that’s a long time.

**Erin Dunn:** I came out of my double degree in 2017 and I’ve been working as a relief teacher, I’ve done some contracted work in Education Queensland and then in 2018 I came across to AIIC.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And you’re happy with that move?

**Erin Dunn:** Yeah, it was quite interesting. To be honest, like I said, on that first day when I came in, and they were like, here is your classroom, at this time we would all be going to the hall together to pray. And I was like, oh okay this is definitely something I was not used to, but the kids are great. They’re like okay Miss, you need to do this and this. Here’s how we do it at our school. So, the children are used to having to show and explain what their faith and religion looks like to everyone around them, I’m guessing. It was a very easy transition to be honest.

We follow the Australian curriculum, it’s exactly the same thing. It’s just those little differences each day that make it interesting.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What advice would you give to people thinking about studying teaching?

**Erin Dunn:** You think you know what you are going to be doing and then you’ll get in that classroom and you’ll be surprised about what you didn’t know. So, you’ll think you’re ready to go, you’ve got all these great ideas and then the first child will say something that will throw you off and that’s when the excitement gets to kick in. Oh my gosh how am I going to solve this problem? What can I do instead? It’s not just your stock standard university, this could happen so do this. There is always something different that you weren’t expecting. And that’s ‘on your toes’ kind of thinking, that I enjoy. That’s what keeps me in the profession knowing that every day will be different. You think you’re going to come in and this is going to happen. The first thing that will happen will be totally the opposite. You just have to adjust and keep going with your day.

I think one of the main things I would tell teachers when I meet them is that be open to trying different things. You think you want to be a lower primary teacher but you never know until you take that step and try relief teaching, or try doing upper primary or finding a job that you weren’t expecting yourself to enjoy, but you’re not going to know until you take the chance. If it’s not for you, it’s not for you but, you try new things and you might find a niche that you really connect with.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Thanks Erin, it sounds like you’re having a wonderful teaching experience.

**Erin Dunn:**  Yes, it’s been great. It’s been definitely different but, it’s been exciting.

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

**Virginia Bowdidge:** 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 traditions, the culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.