

Vogel brothers: Big hearts for little people

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Only 14 months apart in age, it's a bit of a novelty to have the sporty, musical, creative brothers Ryan and Casey Vogel teaching at Brisbane Adventist College at the same time. Ryan teaches Year 5, and Casey Year 3, just a few doors away from each other. Haley Vogel, married to Casey, is also a Secondary teacher. You can imagine the conversations between some BAC siblings:

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“Actually, Mrs Vogel is the coolest.”

The brothers come from good teaching stock. Their father, Craig Vogel, is a biology and chemistry teacher, and Ryan and Casey spent much of their childhood playing sports in the playground after school at Northpine Christian College, and later at Avondale School while they waited for their father to prepare the lab for experiments the next day, or attend staff meetings. They certainly didn't jump into the joys and responsibilities of teaching with their eyes shut! Their older sister is a chemistry teacher.

They're proud of their dad and now, as the responsible ones, standing at the front of the classroom instead of the impressionable ones behind the child-sized desks, they draw inspiration from Craig. “What I remember about Dad was his presence in the classroom,” says Casey, who has now been teaching for four years. “He was calm and well prepared. A fair disciplinarian.” Ryan, who has been teaching for five years, says that there are times in the middle of saying something to the students, that he notices he's sounding exactly like his father. Surreal moments.

Last term, we sat down with them as they shared some thoughts on teaching.

Was teaching an automatic choice for you both because Dad's a teacher?

Ryan: No. I wanted to be a minister when I was young, but I worked in the kid's club for a couple of StormCo trips and really enjoyed it. I changed my mind from theology when I realised that a lot of the course was theory and they had these massive big Greek language textbooks! By the end of high school, I was thinking of business and was accepted to study that at Newcastle University but decided to defer for a year to check out primary teaching. (It obviously stuck!)

Casey: I worked with children at StormCo and summer camps, but I didn't make the decision until talking to older friends at church who were primary teachers and like mentors to me. They were great role models and they loved it. I probably also picked it because it was familiar to me.

How did it come about that you're both teaching at BAC?

Ryan: I'd been teaching at BAC for two years when another Primary teaching job came up at BAC. I mentioned it to Casey and talked to the principal. She was like: 'Do you get on?' and asked whether working together improved our work or made us less effective. I told her that we get along really well, and are very motivated to get our work done. Teaching at the same school has been really great because we do district sports together, we bounce off each other, and other times we just work at our own job.

Casey: I taught in Melbourne for a year and then decided to move closer to Avondale and do relief teaching because my girlfriend [Haley] was finishing her last year there. After that, BAC seemed like the perfect choice. I've had times in life when everything opened up very quickly and it felt God-led, and this was one of them.

How do you integrate faith and learning in your classroom?

It's not uncommon for the brothers to talk about their faith during English, maths, science – or any other lesson for that matter. Both musicians, their students have caught the singing bug, and you will hear their classrooms erupt into song most mornings for daily devotions.

Ryan: In science, we might be studying something like the human voice and how it works.

We talk about how God designed all the different parts of the voice and the body for different functions. We always include God in the little things too, like saying grace at the beginning of lunch, and a prayer before we go home.

Casey: Today we talked about emotions and how Jesus showed emotion – like when he was really angry at the priests in the temple. Our faith is so multifaceted and it's great to be able to link it in.

What do you do in your classroom that's active and fun?

Ryan and Casey call themselves YAMILs. This is a variation on the term given to male cyclists who take up road cycling somewhere around middle age. It stands for Young Adult Men in Lycra (as opposed to Middle Aged Men in Lycra – MAMILs). Being active is an important part of their everyday classroom routine.

Ryan: We have brain breaks. Sometimes we'll go out for handball or do guided movements. It depends on how energetic they are. Other times, I might give them options like constructing with Lego, puzzles or games, reading. We've been doing coding and Mathletics, so sometimes they might choose that, or imaginative play or chess. They love chess and they love playing teacher versus student! I've only lost to one or two students over the years, but they always find it pretty exciting.

Casey: We play a lot of games after they have finished their work, like silent ball where I get them to space out around the classroom and catch a ball, but they're not allowed to move their feet and they have to do it silently. They're getting really good at catching, and I throw in a few extra rules like catching one handed, left handed, standing on one leg, and hot potato.

What would you tell students who might be thinking of teaching when they finish school?

Ryan: Teaching is very satisfying, but it can also be really hard work. In my first year at Taree I was teaching multiple grades and it wasn't what I expected. But I wouldn't change any of that because of what I've learned.

Casey: Teaching is a great way to influence the generation coming through. It's a higher calling for me because you're leading young gents and young ladies to Christ, but also leading them to success in life. There are a lot of hours, there are challenges, and you have to have a bit of persistence, resilience. We debrief when things are hard, but we try to shrug it off as a bad day, go to the gym, and do something that relieves stress – Dad always instilled that in us as well.

As a principal I wish to address two groups: firstly

Parents: We celebrate the 'Vogel brothers' a default for every teacher, for the hard work they put into creating meaningful educational experiences for students. Every lesson, every day, every term, every semester our teachers help your children learn how to solve problems, develop skills and build habits of mind and character that prepare them for the future.

And secondly,

Students: If you're thinking about what you want to be when you leave school, consider teaching. If that's not what you want to be, be a 'teacher' anyway. Share your ideas, don't take for granted your education, never stop learning. Rejoice in what you learn. Be a 'teacher'. **TEACH**

“Share your ideas, don't take for granted your education, never stop learning. Rejoice in what you learn. Be a teacher.”



Playground supervision is part of 'the game' for Ryan and Casey.