Me & My Mentor ZARA NICHOLLS & MARK SCHUMANN

Head of digital technologies Mark Schumann and year 12 student Zara Nicholls share a love of design. Having worked together since Zara was in year 9, both have learnt a lot from each other. This year, Zara’s IDM work was displayed as part of the VCE Top Designs Exhibition.

ZARA SAYS ...

I’ve been at Yarra Valley Grammar since year 7 and I’ve always loved being creative. This year I’m the arts captain and so I’m working on the school’s Arts Week with other captains.

I first became interested in digital design in my year 9 basic IT class designing logos. Mr Schumann introduced me to typography, graphic design and digital art using graphic tablets.

I was initially nervous to do interactive digital media because I didn’t have any experience using digital design programs but, with Mr Schumann’s encouragement, I decided to take the class. It was one of the best decisions as I have learnt skills in programs and areas I never would have thought I would, such as website development and animation.

It has been an honour to have my works displayed as part of the Top Designs Exhibition. Seeing the work of other students across the state that is all so individual and unique has inspired me.

After I finish this year, I want to go to university and complete a creative design course to continue to learn more skills. I’ve thought about exploring the possibility of opening up an art cafe. I also sing and play the guitar so that would allow me to share my love of art and design with others.

Mr Schumann is passionate about everything he does. He isn’t afraid to go above and beyond to help with work or my often crazy ideas. He’s taught me to be open minded. I’ve never heard him shut down a student’s idea – he is always willing to listen, help and will try his best to help them make an idea become a reality. Also, to never take the easy option.

He embraces challenges and this has taught me to as well. I’ve also learnt to not be afraid of hard work and to just dive in.

Mr Schumann is one of the most hard working people I have ever met. He’s taught me that hard work and effort does pay off and this has helped me to grow as a student and a person.

MARK SAYS ...

I’ve been at Yarra for about 12 years. I started in IT and I wanted a new challenge, a way of connecting and supporting the students more directly. It was really the great work of my colleagues who inspired me to teach.

I completed my diploma of education in 2013 with media and IT as my methods. I’m very grateful that the school supported me as I made this transition.

I’m the head of digital technologies, teaching media from years 10 to 12 and IT in middle school. That includes teaching skills such as web development, coding, filmmaking, visual design and animation to name a few. Technology is always changing and I’ve always liked learning new ideas and new technology, and particularly their implications. There’s always something new to learn.

In year 12, media students complete a production throughout the year. The great benefit is that they have the scope to create products across a range of media forms such as film, print or animation.

It’s been a great privilege working with Zara. From teaching her for basic IT in year 9 to IDM and media in VCE, she’s incredibly passionate about everything she does. She’s guided by her intuition and has a very clear picture of what she wants to accomplish. In this way it makes it easy to support her as we’re always on the same page.

She’s also inspired by the stories of those close to her such as her family. These drive her ideas, which are represented in the products she creates. I was so proud to see her rewarded for all her effort when her animation and website were both accepted into Top Designs. Her unique ideas have always provoked great classroom discussions that inspire me to think differently and find new approaches in my teaching.

Students like Zara have taught me about the importance of knowing your students’ passions and helping them find ways to bring these into the classroom.

I’m very lucky that I have the scope to do that in the subjects that I teach.