

I, Kim Redmond-Fewtrell, of [address redacted], have known Scott Hahn since July 2009.

Scott has taught all three of my children during each of their three year stays in Stage 3 at (then Sutherland Shire Montessori School) now Sydney Montessori School: Rochelle (now 17 years) Carl (now 14 years) and currently teaches my daughter Jewel (10 years) who is in her second year in Stage 3.

Scott is an extraordinary teacher with an incomparable intellect coupled with a seldom-found compassionate, respectful, enduringly patient and trusting nature. His grand grasp of academic subjects is fuelled by this thirst for knowledge and this continues to grow. His willingness to find each student's personal learning needs and to present materials in each student's particular "learning language" makes him an invaluable educator.

My elder daughter Rochelle has gone from detesting Mathematics, as a younger child, to receiving awards at High School for the subject and it has become one of her favourite subjects. As a result of being taught by Scott she has adopted his resourceful, fact finding, "investigator of truth" approach and knows that there is, indeed, an answer to any question.

Scott's broad knowledge of many subjects such as History, Physics, Mathematics, and his willingness to immerse himself in any new area of learning (as the students show an interest in it) has made my children's learning experience so much richer. On the rare occasions that Scott was away from class, my children would comment that they wished he was there and say that school was not as great that day, without his presence in the classroom.

My son Carl, when in Scott's class for three years, presented Scott with the challenge of needing to find a way to reach this young active mind. Scott presented Carl with the world of Sacred Geometry, told stories of Mythology, and even helped Carl to research the sport of Parkour to capture Carl's attention and rapture while engaging his enquiring mind and writing hand in subjects that might otherwise appear dry and irrelevant to a young active boy.

When Scott was presented with the challenge of Carl's perceived inattentiveness in Stage 3, he learned the right ways to present materials to reach Carl and later when Carl moved to Sydney Montessori High School (and Scott now became his High School Science teacher), Scott remarked to me that all those various approaches to presenting information to Carl had paid off, as Carl was the only student who could answer all the questions in Year 7, this was testimony to Scott's perseverance and genuine care.

Very regularly my children would, and our youngest Jewel, still continues to, come home "on fire" with a new learning area in which the whole family would be immersed and enjoy, because Scott had found an imaginative way to present material that was interesting. In both Stage 3 and as a High School science teacher, Scott came up with fascinating experiments to surprise and enthrall his young primary students and his "too cool for school" high school students alike.

Scott enriched our school year by sharing with us, his own North American culture, helping the students to host Halloween parties each year, with the students running stalls, constructing a haunted house and buffet spread of food.

He also taught the children to be multi cultural, where each November he helped the students prepare and serve a Thanksgiving feast, where students are encouraged to prepare a dish from their family's culture and he provided traditional American Thanksgiving fare.

Scott has been the instigator of Book Clubs in the classroom and his enthusiasm for learning has been the foundation of the culture of an enquiring mind in his classroom. His thoughtfulness was evident in the way he would cook nut free, dairy free, gluten free book club treats when it was his turn on the roster, so that every child could participate.

This genuine care of others makes Scott a well-liked teacher. He is an approachable, open-hearted person who the children can take any problem to. He is joyful and encouraging, an adult resource who will stick with you until you have found your own solution and cheerfully congratulate you for your endurance.

Scott, as a person, is extraordinary.

He is visibly devoted to his job. Each day he travels a total of seven hours round trip by train to work after he made the decision to live in the Blue Mountains in 2012. He made this decision to allow him the setting that offers him the best environment to recharge his batteries in. This change of setting allowed him to be at his best self in the classroom but came at a personal cost of getting up at 3:50am to be at work in the classroom by 7:35am to have the room prepared and settled before the students arrived at 8:30am.

The students' experience of this change was unexpected. Scott, although travelling so far, became an even more radiant and fulfilled person who had even more adventures and perspectives to share. His dedication still meant he was staying back after school and giving up his time to help parents and students alike. He is a person who has a lot to share.

This devotion to personal excellence in his vocation is also evident in his handling of young people.

Scott is a supporter of young people's goals and ambitions. Procuring tools, reference materials and objects that the children have not been able to get by themselves. He always has some extra thing to carry on the train for them. Eg recycled skateboard bearings for a young girl's potter's wheel that she is building.

Scott believes in his students even before they have learned to believe in themselves. He gives them courage to try challenging things and discover what they can do by sticking with them and supporting them until they realise their success for themselves, by themselves.

You see in the children's faces as they speak to him that they feel confident to share anything with him because they know that they can trust him to support them to dream big. Scott does not judge people's ideas and separates a person from their behaviour, offering them a second and third chance to succeed. His heart is as open as his mind and children feel safe with him.

Scott has been a voice of calm, wisdom during any conflict between students at school – allowing each student to reveal their perception of what happened and facilitate a reconciliation of minds and a plan for future interactions.

Children respect his judgement and guidance. When Scott deems it is time to say “No” in a situation, they know it is for a good reason because he is not a naturally restrictive or controlling person. The students easily accept this without protest because Scott always has, and will share, the logical reason for the decision.

Scott's patient, optimistic nature has meant the difference between children overcoming an obstacle or giving up. His guiding support and faith in my children has given them confidence to tackle uncertainty in social situations, apathy in the academic areas they have tried to avoid, and spurred them on to keep plugging away until they have succeeded. His faith in them inspires them to believe that they might just be able to do it, and then they do. This is a priceless characteristic in a teacher.

Each of my children have different personalities from each other and have each been given the same fair treatment by Scott – he has no favourites. In my time volunteering in the school library and helping students, I have witnessed Scott handling children of all different needs. He is firm and consistent with his expectations of each student whilst still able to meet a student where they are at and take a different approach, where needed, to guide them. He maintains the rules equally and fairly whilst remaining kind, approachable, fair and honest.

Personally, I have witnessed Scott to be a strong minded, strong hearted advocate of peace and justice. His kind of justice does no harm and he respects all people, regardless of their failures. He sees the good in all people and the wisdom behind situations. Scott's consultative nature allowed his Stage 3 class to justly declare their own rights and responsibilities in the classroom which they self-policed.

Scott is also an advocate for real world, outdoor experiences. When younger members of the class were nervous about the impending Stage 3 camp, he arranged for a one night campout under the stars on the school grounds to offer students a transition to the full 4 day camp ahead of them. No one was going to be left behind.

My children have always enjoyed his company and guidance. He has witnessed their journey and cheered them on, smoothing little bits of their path before their feet to help them be able to challenge themselves and have those initial successes for them to build upon.

As a family we have benefitted from his wisdom in parenting our children. He offers practical solutions to behavioural situations without judgement, only with the view to assist in making the child's experience of life richer and more manageable.

Scott has been a main player in the culture of Sydney Montessori School. His open, joyful, personality, his breadth of knowledge, his thirst for real world, outdoor experiences for our children, his ability to bring concrete experiences to abstract concepts has enriched our children's lives and we have treasured our years with him.

Scott has been a consistently kind, thoughtful, self directed, hardworking, self sacrificing, competent person for all the years I have known him.

I, very regularly, catch myself being an obstacle to my children's development and feel blessed that my children have had 6 hours a day of being guided to find their own solutions with Scott at their side.

Any child who finds themselves in his class is blessed to have such an inspiring adult with which to share their academic and developmental journey.