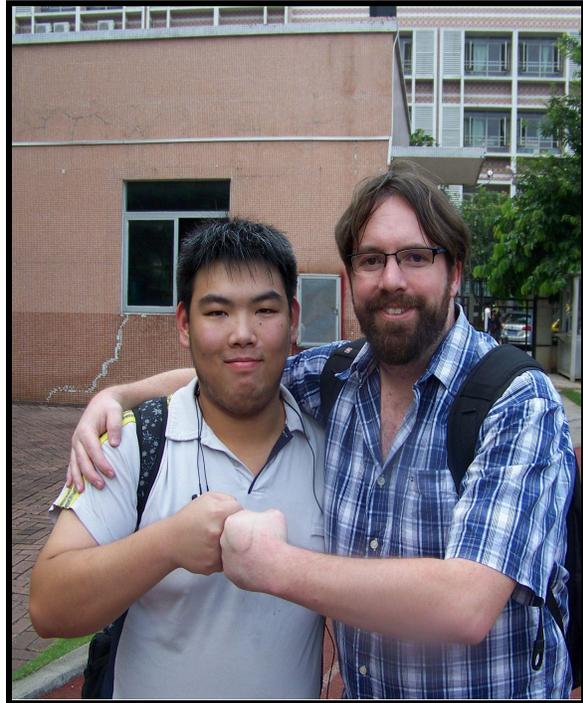


From Arrowheads to Abroad: The Global Teacher Who Believed



By Brock Buesing
Media Producer

Growing up, Doug Schwartz never believed he would be a teacher; it wasn't until one of his own teachers saw potential in him that he didn't even know he possessed.

"I was in Special Ed English and every Friday we got to go and write short stories in another English class," he explains. "Mrs. A made me stay and finish my short story. She didn't want me to leave."

That moment changed everything. It was the first time someone saw him for what he could become, not just who he had been.

That moment set him on a path that would take him from a small western town in Oregon to classrooms filled with students of his own.

Schwartz grew up in Oregon, in a town that could've been pulled from an old cowboy movie. He spent much of his childhood outside, wandering through fields and forests, digging in the dirt and discovering arrowheads and artifacts. History, to him, wasn't just something in books — it was something you could hold in your hand.

“Ever since I could remember, I loved history and observing and learning how things were shaped in the past,” Schwartz says.

That passion led him to Portland State University, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in History in 2002. But it wasn’t until a quiet moment riding in a 1984 Ford Escort — eyes on the powerlines, thoughts drifting — that it all clicked. He didn’t just want to study history... he wanted to teach it.

“I wanted to do what Mrs. A did for me when I was young,” he says. “The power that one individual holds over people is more than you realize.”

He moved on to Washington State University, where he completed a Master’s degree in Education in 2004.

He took his first job at Eddyville Charter School in Oregon. It was a small school, the kind where a teacher wears many hats — and he did just that. Over six years, he taught Economics, Government, World History, U.S. History, and Psychology.

“It was so funny there because students would get a week for Spring Break AND a week off for the start of hunting season,” Schwartz says. “I also coached football.”

Each year, each class added to his story. From a kid who once had his world changed by a single teacher’s belief... to becoming that teacher for someone else. This growth mindset led Schwartz overseas.

“I always knew I wanted to experience other cultures and teach internationally,” Schwartz said. “I spent my next eight years abroad.”



Schwartz taught in the United Arab Emirates, China, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and volunteered at schools in Sri Lanka.

“It was the greatest thing that ever happened to me,” Schwartz explains. It made me realize that all types of people want and need the same thing. I also learned that people all learn differently; those international students gave me great experience with addressing different learning styles.”

Schwartz was blown away by his experience overseas.

“I was always amazed at how kind people were towards me,” he says. “I could go on all day with students who had not mastered English and yet... still form a connection. It was a special thing that I think every teacher should experience.”

From there, Schwartz came to Minnesota and worked at St. Paul Prep; the school had kids from 33 countries.

“It was wild. I loved it. SPP was linked to almost all the schools I taught at overseas,” he explained. “It sadly closed, and that’s when I came to Hill-Murray in 2016.”

The decision to keep teaching or move back to China was difficult for Schwartz to make.

“I met my current wife and a lot of my Chinese students ended up coming to Hill-Murray, so the decision was simpler after that,” he says.

Mr. Schwartz was nominated as the “Teacher of Excellence” at Hill-Murray (along with Serene Deuth) for the 2024-25 school year. The students at Hill-Murray were the ones who voted on this honor.

“I think students respect that I teach life lessons, am well-read, a world traveler, and essentially respect them,” he explained. “It is an honor, and I have my past experience abroad to thank for all of it. I truly believe what students experience in my classroom is not coming from me, but through me, from other people I’ve encountered.”