**Transcript – World Teachers’ Day 2025 podcast with Gabriela Davies**

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

**Virginia Bowdidge:** World Teachers’ Day is a special day on the education calendar. It's a day we celebrate and acknowledge the hard work of our teachers. As part of our World Teachers’ Day celebrations for 2025 we asked teachers throughout the state to share their teaching story

I’m Virginia Bowdidge and today I'm talking to Gabriela Davies. Gabriela is the head of English and Secondary Leading Learning Coordinator at North Pine Christian College.

Hi, Gabriella. Lovely to talk to you today.

**Gabriela Davies:** Same here. It is a privilege and an opportunity to talk to you too.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** If we can start with what it is about teaching that appealed to you initially.

**Gabriela Davies:** Initially, it was the passion and the opportunity to shape young minds and futures. It was something extremely fascinating about taking this amazing raw material, that a teacher one would have in front of them, and helping them to actually work to potential, helping them flourish, develop, challenge themselves, including challenge their limits and see what they can achieve and see how much they can develop and love it all in the process. Sometimes it didn't happen straight away, but that was the main challenge being able to shape and work with that amazing material.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And what do you teach at the moment?

**Gabriela Davies:** I'm currently teaching advanced English to Years 11 and 12.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And is that something you've always been teaching or what did you initially begin teaching?

**Gabriela Davies:** No, I've only started teaching English mainly since, 2010, when I first arrived in Australia. Before that, I used to teach modern foreign languages. So majority of my time table as an advance skill teacher was taken with the teaching of French and Spanish. So when I came to Australia, there was the possibility to actually go into English in ancient history. And because I had the degree or the course or the part of the course that allowed me to do that, I embraced that opportunity. I've been dreaming about teaching Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens for ages, and it created that opportunity for me.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Oh, that sounds wonderful.

**Gabriela Davies:** Yes, it was indeed. And obviously Romania is a francophone country.

I originally come from Romania, but we also study 18th, 19th, British literature. It was a major part of my course, and it developed my passion for it, for that world and, you know, the literary style. And I wanted to share that with, my students and teaching English also had made that particular opportunity.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And was teaching your first job?

**Gabriela Davies:** No. Initially, because my first degree was in applied linguistics. I was preparing to become a concomitant and consecutive interpreter to either teach in this area and work or both, actually, as a concomitant and consecutive interpreter. And I completed my Master of Arts in this area. But to everyone's satisfaction, my career took the right turn, and I had the privilege of using those skills that I had acquired to teach.

But no, initially I had prepared to become an interpreter, and initially that was my dream. And I worked as an interpreter for 10 years into and from English, French, Spanish and obviously Romanian, which is my first language. And I absolutely enjoyed it but once the decision was made that it was time to actually look at teaching, I never, ever looked back.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What is it about teaching that for you has been so rewarding?

**Gabriela Davies:** When I see young minds and they're willing and passionate about becoming, through education - I know it sounds cliche, but that's exactly the best way to put it - the change they wish to see in the world. It's so rewarding. Entering that a journey together, maybe in Year 8 and then seeing them grow. I'm also a leading learning coordinator for secondary, so I actually have a lot of educational contact or influence on students in those year levels that I do not teach. And then, you know, seeing them at the formal, receiving those text messages and, those emails in which they share with me their ATAR or they share with me their first job or they share with me, the scholarship that they received. And, you know, all that, that little two liner becomes the impetus for the next year. The thank you Miss, or you've made such a difference. You can't even believe how wonderful it is for me to actually be able to have this job or this opportunity. And I'm ready to do it again next year.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** That's fabulous. It's so lovely to hear.

**Gabriela Davies:** Of course, it's also the thrill of learning. I'm a long life learner. I would permanently do degrees if that were possible in the context of teaching full time. I'm actually embarking on my PhD next year. I love learning, and I think that's extremely relevant. I share with them the fact that I also have to prepare. I also have to read. I also have to synthesize and summarize and write analytical essays. And we learn together. And I think it's catchy. I see it in them. I see that, you know, love for learning and studying and reading, slowly developing, even if it was not there from the very beginning. And it is just an amazing process to witness. It's absolutely inspirational. I thrive on that.

And even with the challenging ones that take a while to warm up. I do have the blessing of teaching advanced students so that it is a little bit different. They are usually keen students, but as you know, the cognitive development, some emotional, personal issues they may have would often put a damper on that thirst for knowledge.

And then I have to take them on a journey from a different point of view, taking into account a personal issue that they may be experiencing or, health issues that need to be overcome. And then I have to redirect my efforts, and I have to find a different entrance, and I have to work with them from a different point of view, so that we can achieve the same result to the very best of their ability according to potential, of course.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And what do you think it is that drives your enthusiasm for teaching? Do you think it's your love of learning?

**Gabriela Davies:** Absolutely. That's one of them. And again, I come back to that. I'm so sorry to repeat for our listeners, but the opportunities offered to shape tomorrow, today. It starts with the way I present in front of the students. They read me and they read their future into every single strategy, into every single decision I make when in front of them. I mean, it's a tremendous opportunity, and it's also very sobering. One would have to take it very, very seriously because it's high stakes. And also the satisfaction of creating learners who refuse to settle, learners who are committed to raise the bar, to boldly go where their talents and hard work can take them.

That to me is very, very important. Achieving to potential and maybe even pushing the limits. A little bit. There's a lot of research that talks about the productive discomfort, cognitive discomfort of pushing beyond what we are generically comfortable, what comes easily to us and I often explore that with my students. And it's really wonderful to see the results.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What advice would you give to students thinking of studying, teaching or career changers moving into teaching?

**Gabriela Davies:** Yes. Very good. And very important question. Ever since I left Romania and went to teach in England, initially for 8 years, and in Australia since 2010, I have heard this rather demeaning, ‘those who can’t do teach’. And it breaks my heart because that's not why I came into teaching, and that's not how I see my colleagues. And that's not how I believe a healthy society who wants their future generations to thrive and take it forward should see teachers. So, the advice is do everything, plan for everything possible, approach teaching from that angle. You're not into teaching because you can't do something else, but because you make that choice to bring excellence, to bring the very best results, to bring that energy, the enthusiasm that you would have had for, you know, 2 or 3 other options into teaching, the expertise. And, we've also had, you know, ‘you're not the sage on the stage anymore’, ‘you’re the guide by the side’. I don't see it as a dichotomy. And I would tell them that they are not mutually exclusive. They can be both. And to have that respect and to have that longevity in teaching and to have an impact on the students.

There is a place for the sage on the stage. There is a place for them to own what they are teaching and to love and continue to research it and get better and better at it. We wouldn't tell any other profession. We wouldn't tell doctors all, you know, stop, stop working hard because I think you've got the basics, your brain will pretty much remain the same. We push them and we want them to progress and take it forward. There are a lot of a lot of misconceptions that they would need to challenge. I would love them to start with that mentality. There is a need for excellence, for drive in teaching.

Yeah, don't come into it to just give it a go. Come into it to give it your all. Because students need the very best version of ourselves as teachers and not the leftovers. There will be days, realistically speaking, when sometimes they will receive the leftovers because we are human beings. But overall it should be onward and upward towards that better version ourselves, because that will create the better versions of our students.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** It's wonderful to hear how passionate you are about your career.

**Gabriela Davies:** Yes, I think that's been in the little notes my students write to me, or the cards that I receive from various stakeholders students, parents, TAs, colleagues, even community members with whom I'm working - because I'm part of the Seventh Day Adventist schools, South Queensland. That's one word that's been used to describe, and it's probably the best, as you have very aptly pointed out, because I still love it.

I actually love it more than when I started, and every single year brings that experience that gives me the thrill to try something new. And I look forward to that when I go to school. And I look forward to, to every single new group of students that I take from my colleagues at the end of Year 10. And it's just an amazingly thrilling experience for me to do that.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** I think your students are very lucky to have you.

**Gabriela Davies:** Oh, and I'm very, very lucky to have them. That's what gives us the reason to wake up every single morning.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Well, thank you for your time. Gabrielle. I have one last question, and that is, did you find any difference teaching in England to teaching in Australia, or do you think there's a universal similarity?

**Gabriela Davies:** There is a universal similarity, that is for sure. That is for sure. I would say that, you know, it's something that I've already mentioned, the need for taking our calling as teachers extremely seriously and passionately. I'm the same and yet different every single year, because of the experience I accumulated, the new challenges I take on. But that ingredient you spoke about, the passion is needed in Australia and is needed in England, because the students will perceive that and will see that you turn up determined to make a difference. So you turn up ready to be there for them, ready to take them on the journey to overcome the difficulties, to push them higher and higher according to their ability, of course. I would say from that point of view, yes, there is that universal need.

But there are also differences because I taught in an inner-city state school in Manchester, quite challenging. There were children that had experienced abuse of all kinds and, environments that no child should live in. And I didn't know them, but even those who did so were crying out for help and support. And that was their way of doing so. And it took me a while to actually discover that, because initially you were shocked. Particularly as in Romania the teacher is seen as this, you know, mythical member of society ­– they have such authority and they have this aura. Yes. There is this aura around them or at least sorry, while I was there, I haven't been teaching in Romania, so I'm not sure exactly what's happening now. But when I was there, the teachers are masters of their universe.

There is an aspiration to be a teacher. And then in Britain, the attitude was quite different. And here I came into a Christian school where the worst that I can experience is apathy. So in terms of behaviour bullying and of course you do get the odd situation, but it's, another challenge because then given that these students are keen and willing to actually, and there are no behavioural issues, then they want more, they need more. You need to bring in enrichment from other points of view. Yeah. So there are differences, but the need for the teacher to be passionate and responsible and in awe of the amazing opportunity they have must be the same across the world. I think.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Thank you for your time, Gabrielle. It was lovely talking to you.

**Gabriela Davies:** Same here. It was my pleasure and thank you once again for this opportunity and have a lovely day.

**Announcer:** You have been listening to the Queensland Department of Education podcast. The Department of Education acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands from across Queensland. We pay our respects to the elders, past and present. They hold memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.