**World Teachers Day podcast series – Daniel Allen**

**Daniel Allen**

*Daniel Allen is an early career music teacher at Padua College. He holds a Bachelor of Music (Jazz Voice Performance) from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Griffith University and a*

*Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary) from the University of Southern Queensland. He is also completing specialist music pedagogy Australia Kodaly Certificate (Secondary Classroom Music Specialist). Daniel is passionate about music — creating good music and creating better musicians.*

**Announcer:**This is a Queensland Department of Education Podcast.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
World Teacher's Day is a special day on the school calendar. And we would like to take this opportunity to thank all Queensland teachers. 2020 has been an extraordinary year. During these unprecedented times, our Queensland teachers, school leaders and wider school support staff have all continued to show their professionalism and resilience striving every day to do their best for Queensland students.  
  
Commemorating World Teacher's Day gives us the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the wonderful work of all teachers across our state. I'm Virginia Bowdidge from the Department of Education, and I'll be talking to some of Queensland's extraordinary teachers about what drives them and what they value most about their role as a Queensland teacher.  
  
Today Daniel Allen joins me. Daniel is an early career music teacher at Padua Collage.

**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
Hi Daniel. Thanks for joining me today.  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
Hi Virginia Bowdidge. Thank you so much for having me.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
What inspired you to choose teaching as a profession and what was it that first attracted you to teaching?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
I went straight out of school and studied a Bachelor of Music, but when I reflected on why and how really I've had this idea in my head, I'd actually written it down on my little careers or a little information sheet when I was in grade seven saying this is what I wanted to do when I finished high school.  
  
So it's always been the back of my mind that teaching is the profession I wanted to enter into. I'm a little bit of a hoarder and I've found the little information book we had of all my class of 2000 from my primary school and all the information sheets, and I saw mine and I saw teacher and thought wow, that was a really insightful thing for a 12-year-old to do.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
And you've been teaching for five years?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
Yeah, just shy of five years.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
Can you tell me a bit about the various roles you've had in those five years?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
Yes, certainly. I started off as a relief teacher, which was the best way to practice my classroom management as most teachers will attest to. From there I got my first contract for six months, teaching music, HASS and RE and was fortunate enough to be offered a position at my current school where I presently teach music in the classroom music program. Aside from that I run the vocal ensemble and the liturgy group, and also assist with the musical every two years.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
What do you love about your job?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
I get to make music every day. It's probably the best thing I love about my job, because I can safely walk into a school and as long as it's got something to do with what we're teaching in the lesson, I get to make music. I get to make music with kids and see them inspired by what they can actually create with this great art form.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
2020 has been an extraordinary year. How have the events of this year impacted on you as a teacher?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
I think everyone would agree that we've had to really assess how we practice what we do in our teaching, but I know as a music teacher, it's been very, very difficult for us because especially in our younger grades, we've found it difficult to translate music into an online learning environment.  
  
We do a lot, in our teaching practice, of immediate feedback, immediate recognition of students' progress. And we weren't able to do that for a significant amount of time, which put us back. And so it really made us focus on what was important and why we actually taught music and the main part of it is music is fun, music is making music and we didn't want to lose that.  
  
And so we've had to adapt how we taught it and what we assessed, but making sure that we didn't lose that idea of our goal of making a whole lot of great musicians really enjoy what they do.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
What have you learned this year about teaching, and what changes have you put in place that will take you into the future?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
I guess what I've learnt this year is the ability to be adaptable to an ever changing situation. I’m fortunate, that it’s the case that I'm an early career teacher, there is still a lot that's very new to me. And so I've been able to take it in my stride with different changes that are happening and apply it to what I already know.  
  
And it’s made me very, very conscious that I've got to keep myself aware of the technologies and the tools that are available to us and be ready to, I guess, change the way I'm working, almost at the drop of a hat, so I can keep up with this ever changing fast-paced society.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
Do you have any memorable moments in your career that you'd like to share with us that have impacted on the teacher you are today?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
When I first started at my current school, I was thrown into the deep end being a third year teacher or second year teacher and given the Grade 12 music class. It was the last year of the OP system and so we're sort of winding down and the introduction of the ATAR system coming into play, but I had, I think it was 12 students in my class.  
  
And there was this one kid that walked in, in the first week of school and plonked himself down and said to me, basically, "Don't worry about me sir, I'm going to do a trade and I won't be here much longer". And you can see he's pretty confident that he didn't have to worry about the academic side of things. He didn't have to worry about doing well in music because he wasn't going to do any longer, he had his life set out for him.  
  
And then as luck would have it for him, it all fell through. And he was stuck with me for the year. And it was a struggle for the first little bit to get him on board and to get him engaging in what we're doing and really appreciating that music isn't just making music. It's also understanding how it's made and why things are done.  
  
And then I heard him play and he has this amazing ability to pick up a guitar and sing. I just watched him and thought, "Wow, he's got something special". And we fostered that and continued to foster that and work with that.  
  
He did some amazing performances and then his attitude changed and he really started appreciating what music was all about and why we do what we do. He became one of the first kids to hand in a draft to double check what he's doing, to make sure he's on the right track and to really push himself into the curriculum side of the subject, the analysis out of the subject, and making sure he had an understanding there. So he did well.

For me, it was a real confirmation that I've made the right career choice. This is where I'm meant to be, and this is what I'm meant to be doing. And I've have the unfound power to be able to change someone's mindset from just giving up completely to really engage in the subject.  
  
Fast forward to the end of the year, and we do a performance night and I was very fortunate to play and I still regard it as one of the best performances I've been a part of. It was such an honest and true performance. Accompanying him, I was playing piano, I did some backing vocals, but he had the lead with the guitar and lead vocals. And it was just a magical performance. It was one of the most memorable moments of my short career so far, but it will be one that I'll look back on for years to come to really reaffirm why I'm a teacher.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
It sounds like it was very rewarding.  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
It really was. He was a good test for a new teacher to really break the mentality that the written side of music isn’t as important. So it was great.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
How do you want to inspire your students in your role as a teacher?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
I look at what we learn in school. So teaching probably music, but also teaching RE, everything that we learn is a foundation, which they can build on to become positive influences within our wider community. My influences as a musician come from doing a Bachelor of Music and having the opportunity to perform. And I can say internationally, but at some of the best venues that Brisbane has to offer, at least.  
  
I want to see my students have those same opportunities offered towards them. Our goal is to make these students better than we were at school and to be the very best musicians that they can be. And so my inspiration for them is what I've got to have done and what I know they can do. And just really igniting their talent and their passion for music, even if they can't see it themselves.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
What do you think are some of the most valuable qualities of a teacher?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
Listening is a very, very valuable quality. Students, and I work in an all boys school, and students want to be listened too. If they're able to be listened to and really understood you can have that relationship and build that rapport with the students that just opens up this new world of much deeper learning and much deeper engagement with the subject you're talking about.  
  
And adaptability, being adaptable, being willing to try new things, to use different tools, to take advice from people we wouldn't usually advice from. Ask kids what they want to do. And especially in my vocal ensembles. I'll have an idea of what I want to do repertoire wise, but a lot of the time it's stuff that I love, which is great, but it's also got to be something they like, to give them that opportunity to offer something that they want to sing. It empowers them to think that they've actually got a say in what they're doing.  
  
So being adaptable to take on that feedback. And obviously with this year being the key preaching tool is anything's going to happen tomorrow, being ready to be able to take what you've done for the last however many years and apply it in a completely different context.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
What are your aspirations for your career?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
At the moment to survive. It's an interesting question. What are my, my aspirations. I'd love to move up the chain. I'd love to have some sort of leadership and really promote good education, good pedagogy within my key teaching area.  
  
I see myself as a teacher first and foremost, and no matter what I do. And obviously with the release of HAT and lead teaching opportunities within schools in Queensland recently, in the last couple of years, that is a career path I'm strongly looking at and will probably pursue in the next couple of years.  
  
I'll always continue learning. I'll always continue discovering more. I want to go back and do some further study to really improve my teaching practices, especially with the music area. But look, if I'm teaching like I am for the rest of my life, then I'm well and truly satisfied with that.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
How will you be celebrating World Teacher's Day this year?  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
I'll be teaching. It’s a teaching day for me, I'll be doing what I do best, I guess.  
  
**Virginia Bowdidge**:  
Thanks for sharing that with us, Daniel.  
  
**Daniel Allen**:  
Okay it's been a pleasure. Thank you so much for having me this afternoon.  
  
**Announcer:**  
You have been listening to the Queensland Department of Education podcast.