8:30am Registration opens

9:00am Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country
Professor Mary Ryan | Executive Dean - Faculty of Education and Arts, Australian Catholic University

9:15am Keynote | Exploring Alternative Approaches to Research
Dr Debra Dank | Enterprise Fellow - University of South Australia

10:15am Lightning Talk | Moving across the Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Continuum in Teacher Education
Dr Justin Grogan | Senior Advisor - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, AITSL

10:30am MORNING TEA

11:00am Workshops (select one)

11:50am Workshops (select one)

1:45pm Lightning Talks

2:00pm LUNCH

3:30pm Keynote | Co-designing Artificial Intelligence for Pro-Social Practices
Professor Penny Van Bergen | Head of School of Education - University of Wollongong

4:00pm Close
### Day 2 - Friday 25 October, 2024

**ACU North Sydney Campus**

**#AISNSWEvidence**

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<td><strong>Contextual Coaching: Aligning Purpose, Process, and People</strong></td>
<td>Dr Andrea Stringer</td>
<td>Founder - Contextual Coaching</td>
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<td><strong>Cultivating a Culture of Curiosity, Research-Practice Partnerships in Action</strong></td>
<td>Fiona Cooney (Head of Learning Enrichment and Research) &amp; Amber Ripley (Director of Academic Administration) - Ravenswood School for Girls</td>
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<td><strong>Using the Science of Learning to Support Student Wellbeing</strong></td>
<td>Rebecca Birch</td>
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<td><strong>Research in the Real World</strong></td>
<td>Carolyn Blanden (Principal) &amp; Kirsty Rose (Deputy Principal) - Warakiri College</td>
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<td><strong>Building Global Citizenship in Students: Turning Research into Practice</strong></td>
<td>Alex Pentz</td>
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<td><strong>Primary School Students’ Perceptions of School Connectedness: “It makes you feel like you’re special.”</strong></td>
<td>Jodie Hoenig</td>
<td>Researcher - UNSW</td>
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**1:00pm LUNCH**

**1:45pm**

- **Keynote | Empowering Educational Leaders: Navigating Challenges and Fostering Wellbeing**
  - Dr Paul Kidson | Acting Chair, Educational Leadership (La Salle Academy) and Senior Lecturer, Education - Australian Catholic University

**2:15pm Panel**

- Chair: Dr Paul Kidson | Acting Chair, Educational Leadership (La Salle Academy) and Senior Lecturer, Education - Australian Catholic University
- Brad Moss | Principal - St John’s Lutheran Primary School and St Paul’s Lutheran Primary School
- Dr Briony Scott | Principal - Wavara School
- Hibbs Mourad | Principal Junior School (K-12) - Unity Grammar
- John Ralph | Principal - St Andrew's Cathedral Gawura School

**3:00pm Close**

- Tiffany Roos | Director, The Evidence Institute - AISNSW
9:15am | Opening Keynote
Exploring Alternative Approaches to Research

ABSTRACT

In this session, Dr Debra Dank, a distinguished Gudanji/Wakaja woman from the Barkly Tablelands, will share her extensive insights into conducting research with a First Nations focus.

Dr Dank’s professional interests lie deeply in the practice of narrative within Aboriginal communities. Her focus on the significance of semiotics — the study of signs and symbols — in understanding the broad spectrum of communicative mechanisms and functions, provides a rich framework for engaging with Indigenous knowledge systems. Through her acclaimed book, We Come with This Place (2022), Dr Dank exemplifies the power of non-linear narrative in conveying the depth and breadth of Aboriginal experiences.

This session will explore innovative research methodologies that honour and integrate First Nations perspectives, emphasising narrative and semiotics. Dr Dank will discuss how these methodologies can be employed to enhance the understanding of Aboriginal knowledge, traditions, and communication styles. Participants will gain insights into the importance of culturally responsive research practices and the role of storytelling in preserving and transmitting Indigenous heritage. Dr Dank’s presentation promises to be an enlightening exploration of how researchers can respectfully and effectively engage with First Nations communities to produce meaningful and impactful research outcomes.

Dr Debra Dank
ENTERPRISE FELLOW,
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Dr Debra Dank is Gudanji/Wakaja, from the Barkly Tablelands in the Northern Territory. For almost 40 years, Dr Dank has worked in primary, secondary and tertiary education roles, including as a classroom teacher, special education teacher, regional consultant, regional manager, senior lecturer, and Head of School (tertiary). She has worked in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and the Northern Territory in urban and remote contexts.

Dr Dank helped to establish The Indigenous Literacy Foundation. This involved extensive work with remote communities to develop a robust but flexible service delivery model to support place-based, community-identified responses to literacy needs in early childhood education, provision of appropriate literature for remote communities, and the production of reading material for English as a Second Language contexts.

Dr Dank is particularly interested in understanding more about how narrative, in its broadest sense, is practiced in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and what role semiotics plays in that understanding. This interest led to her PhD and the book, We Come With This Place, which won numerous awards in 2023, including four NSW Premier’s awards, The University of Queensland Non-Fiction Book Award at the Queensland Literary Awards and the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal. It was also shortlisted for the 2023 Stella Prize, the Queensland Premier’s Award for a Work of State Significance and the People’s Choice Queensland Book of the Year Award and the Nonfiction Award at the Prime Minister’s Literary Awards.

Passionate about the environment, Dr Dank works to protect Country and Aboriginal people’s right to maintain identity through kinship with Country at the Beetaloo Basin, where her place is located and under threat of being fracked.
10:15am | Lightning Talk
Moving across the Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Continuum in Teacher Education

ABSTRACT
Over the last four years, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has had the privilege of facilitating work on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Education to explore cultural responsiveness in the Australian teaching workforce. This important work brings together findings from extensive research and consultation efforts. Consultation was wide-ranging to capture the diversity of First Nations Education experts and stakeholders that make up the teaching workforce. It is clear that teachers must do more than simply know and deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content. AITSL’s recently released Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness toolkit was developed to provide teachers with a foundational tool to enhance culturally responsive practice. The aim of the self-reflection toolkit is to provide the Australian teaching workforce with the necessary resources and tools to create encouraging and supportive environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff and increase cultural safety in Australian schools.

Dr Justine Grogan
SENIOR ADVISOR, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION, AITSL

Dr Justine Grogan, a Wongaibon First Nations descendant, is Senior Advisor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education at AITSL. Formerly, she led First Nations education at UniSC. Expertise includes embedding Indigenous perspectives, addressing colonisation, anti-racism, and privilege. Awarded the Aurora International Scholarship, she researched at top US universities and has extensive publications.

11:00am - 11:50am | Workshop
Innovating Teacher Education at Hills Grammar to Attract and Retain Teachers

ABSTRACT
This presentation explores Hills Grammar’s innovative approach to Professional Experience Placements, which aims to foster the growth and support of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students and their mentor teachers. Recognising the critical role of practical experience in teacher education, Hills Grammar has developed a comprehensive structure that emphasises the importance of connection to motivation and cognition for ITEs and Mentors.

Our session will detail the framework of these placements, which are designed to create a supportive and enriching environment. Key components include initial interviews and intentional mentor placements, tailored induction programmes, ongoing professional development workshops for mentor teachers, and a robust feedback mechanism. This ensures that both parties benefit from the experience, promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Additionally, this has been found to not only support attraction to the profession but also retention of experienced staff.

The presentation will also share qualitative and quantitative data illustrating the positive outcomes of our approach, including improved teaching practices, increased confidence among ITE students, and strengthened mentor-mentee relationships. Additionally, we will discuss challenges encountered and solutions implemented to overcome these obstacles. Furthermore, the Hills Grammar approach strengthens relationships between the school and higher education institutions, fostering a seamless integration of theoretical and practical learning.

By attending this session, participants will gain insights into creating and sustaining effective Professional Experience Placements. They will leave with practical ideas and strategies to apply within their own educational contexts, ultimately contributing to the development of a highly skilled and reflective teaching workforce.

Sarah Warby
LEADER OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH, THE HILLS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Sarah Warby is the Leader of Professional Growth at Hills Grammar and has extensive training in both mentoring and coaching to support the growth and capacity building of education professionals. An experienced English, History and Languages Teacher with a history of working in educational innovations focusing on whole school and faculty management and enhancement. Sarah has led faculties and the whole school executive on innovative initiatives to support teaching and learning across educational systems and sectors both in Australia and internationally. She is an education professional with a Master of Teaching focused in Education and Teaching and is a qualified International Baccalaureate Literature Teacher. Sarah is currently researching and studying in the fields of neuroscience, cognitive psychology and educational practice, with a focus on educational leadership and research methods.
11:00am - 11:50am | Workshop

Do the Rich Really Get Richer?: Modelling Reading Growth Trajectories in Early Readers

ABSTRACT

There has been disagreement in the empirical literature about typical or expected patterns of early reading development. In synthesising existing literature, Stanovich (1986) first argued for the existence of widening achievement gaps between early low-skill and high-skill readers. This is the so-called “Matthew Effect”, whereby higher initial levels of skill compound to reap recursively higher benefits, and inter-individual differences tend to be maintained over time with high rank order stability, albeit with widening achievement gaps. This cumulative model has since found empirical support in numerous longitudinal studies (Bast & Reitsma, 1998; Campbell et al., 2002; Pfost et al., 2014). By contrast, in a study of Finnish and American children, Parrila et al. (2005) found more evidence for compensatory rather than cumulative developmental patterns in early reading development, where early readers with weaker skills tended to “catch up” over time.

So what are typical patterns of development, and what can we as educators expect of our students?

One significant methodological advancement for understanding developmental patterns in this field has been the application of Latent Growth Curve Models (LGCMs; Bollen & Curran, 2005; Duncan & Duncan, 2004). LGCM is a statistical technique that permits the identification of latent factors of growth that are presumed to underlie the change in measured variables. LGCMs permit flexible analysis on more complex longitudinal data that moves beyond the limitations of two-wave pre-test/post-test designs (Rogosa, Brandt, & Zimowski, 1982) that are focused on group-level mean differences.

This presentation will showcase work on understanding developmental patterns of reading and literacy skills in early childhood using a LGCM approach with a large existing secondary dataset: the International Longitudinal Twins Study (ILTS). The ILTS was a collaborative project between researchers from the University of New England, Australia; Linkoping University, Sweden; University of Colorado, USA; and the University of Bergen, Norway (first described in Byrne et al., 2002).

References for this presentation will be available in the conference app.

Thom Marchbank
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL ACADEMIC, INTERNATIONAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Thom Marchbank is Deputy Principal Academic at International Grammar School. A passionate educational leader and researcher, Thom has a background as an English and Philosophy teacher as well as in the behavioural sciences. His research interests are in the areas of educational achievement and individual differences, as well as metascience.

11:00am - 11:50am | Workshop

Power to Kids: Co-Designing Safer Schools and Brave Conversations

ABSTRACT

As educators we have a commitment to supporting the best learning outcomes for our children and young people, while fulfilling a duty of care and adhering to legal frameworks, including the Child Safe Standards and mandatory reporting. This can be particularly challenging when it comes to our own knowledge and capacity to address topics such as sexual safety and relationships. This challenge underscores the necessity for educators to be well-informed and capable of fostering self-protective behaviours among young learners.

‘Power to Kids,’ developed by MacKillop in partnership with the University of Melbourne, represents a strategic response to this need. Drawing on the latest research, this professional learning program is designed to enhance the skills and confidence of those working with children and young people. Initially aimed at residential care workers, the program’s success, indicated by 99% of participants reporting increased confidence in addressing sensitive topics, paved the way for its expansion. Over three years, it has reached more than 1,500 professionals across over 45 organisations, with evaluations highlighting its significant impact.

Building on this foundation, our presentation will spotlight our recent innovative collaboration with Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) to adapt and implement ‘Power to Kids in Schools.’ This initiative, geared towards enhancing sexual harm prevention and safety responses, demonstrates the potent results of combining external expertise with community partnerships.

This presentation will provide insights into:
- developing comprehensive understanding of sexual safety and relationships
- cultivating safe, supportive educational settings
- navigating sensitive conversations with students with enhanced confidence.

Smeeta Singh
NATIONAL PROGRAM DIRECTOR, POWER TO KIDS, THE MACKILLOP INSTITUTE

Smeeta Singh has 20 years’ experience in the education and community services sector. She has held multiple Director and leadership roles in organisations working in child and community safety. Smeeta has a passion for social justice, education access and intergenerational outcomes. She has experience in both primary and secondary schools, TAFE, and higher education.
Helping the Mountains Speak for Themselves: Evidence Based Character Development in the Outdoors

ABSTRACT

Traditional approaches to character development in the outdoors have been based on allowing ‘the mountains to speak for themselves’ (James, 1980), with the focus being on a student’s experience rather than facilitation and reflection to assist students to learn and develop.

In this session, the evidence base for effective character development in the outdoors will be explored. This will draw upon Dr Mansfield’s doctoral research as well as his own experience leading character development programs. The intention of this presentation is to affirm and challenge our practice, in order to provide the best, evidence-based character development opportunities for our students.

References for this presentation will be available in the conference app.

Dr Andrew Mansfield
DEPUTY HEAD (OPERATIONS),
SYDNEY CHURCH OF ENGLAND GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Dr Andrew Mansfield is currently the Deputy Head (Operations) at Shore. He has extensive experience leading school-based character development programs, including Cadets and Outdoor Education programs. Dr Mansfield has also completed doctoral research, his research identifying and testing features of effective character development programs in the outdoors.

Providing Written Feedback for Pre-Service Teachers During Professional Experience

ABSTRACT

Feedback plays a pivotal role in the development of pre-service teachers during their professional experience placements, guiding them in shaping their future goals as they progress toward the completion of their courses (Grossman & McDonald, 2018). Subject-specific feedback is essential for pre-service teachers undertaking courses that demand explicit content and pedagogical knowledge. Mentors, also known as supervising teachers, both locally and internationally, are expected to provide crucial feedback to pre-service teachers during their school-based professional experience placements, fostering the professional development and growth of pre-service teachers. In the most recent Australian review, Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel 2023, there is mention of the need for pre-service teachers to “receive regular observations, assessment, and feedback to support their development” (Teacher Education Expert Panel, 2023, p. 62) during their professional experience placement.

This presentation centres on examining a specific feedback approach, written feedback, for ITE primary pre-service teachers specialising in mathematics and secondary mathematics pre-service teachers. The focus extends to exploring subject-specific feedback. A literature-informed framework was developed to support the analysis of the written feedback.

The five themes in the framework include: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) governing standards, learner needs, feedback design, structure based on the written form/report, and mentor provisions.

The analysis focuses on 16 written reports completed by mentor teachers during the penultimate year placement of pre-service teachers. Results indicate a scarcity of subject-specific written feedback concerning mathematics teaching and learning during pre-service teacher placements. These results prompt crucial discussions on the effectiveness of general feedback in fostering pre-service teacher growth in mathematics, highlighting the need for clarity in the report and specificity in mentoring practices.

Dr Chrissy Monteleone
DEPUTY HEAD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION,
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Dr Chrissy Monteleone is a senior lecturer and the Deputy Head of School at ACU. Chrissy is an experienced childhood and primary school educator, and leads the NSW Partnerships in Young Children initiative. She is a member of the NSW Department of Education Early Professional Learning Team. She is also a research fellow and research lead at ACU in the Center of Research on Mathematics Education (CRIME).

Christy’s research focuses on enhancing critical mathematical thinking capabilities in young children and fostering communities of practice.

Associate Professor Monica Wong
STATE HEAD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION,
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Associate Professor Monica Wong is State Head of Education NSW at ACU. She is also a lecturer in mathematics education and brings with her extensive experience in information technology, computer science and applied mathematics. She is currently developing and implementing programs and research with school partners to increase the pipeline into teaching as a career.
**12:00pm - 12:50pm | Workshop**

**School Context, Ethos and Culture: How does this Impact Teacher Learning?**

**ABSTRACT**

School ethos and culture, and their influence on teacher career-stage learning, are integral yet often overlooked components of school-based professional development planning. An in-depth study was conducted over two years within and across three independent schools in Sydney, utilising a collegial methodology centred on principles of action research and focused on continuous school improvement. It revealed how specific school contexts have a substantial and differential impact on teacher learning across all career stages from neophyte to principal. Each school’s ethos and culture were seen to produce a distinctive teacher learning culture that subsequently influenced whole-school planning for, and participation in, teacher professional development. Teacher growth, well-being and job satisfaction were integrally related to ethos and culture and further influenced by the specific characteristics of the career stage of the teachers and school executive involved. The study gave further insights as to how the nature of teacher learning changes according to career stage. It was evident from the study that, for teachers, the school that they are in has a sizable impact on the nature of their professional learning and how they develop differentially at each stage of their career path trajectories.

With reference to this study and the broader literature, this workshop will enable participants a hands-on opportunity to reflect upon how their school is travelling in relation to the planning, delivery and evaluation of their in-house professional learning approaches and program. They will increase their knowledge about how teachers learn, prefer to learn and what they dislike in their learning at each career stage, and reflect upon the impact of their own school context on teacher learning, growth, resilience and wellbeing. Finally, they will start on an Action Plan using an Action Learning approach to conduct single-site case study research related to improving their professional learning that is cognisant with their own school’s ethos, culture and context.

Dr Christine Furner

**DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, THE HILLS GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Chris Furner currently works as Director of Professional Learning at The Hills Grammar School. A highlight in her learning has been the completion of a PhD on how to boost teacher learning across all career stages as a means to improve school effectiveness. Chris enjoys developing whole-school, strategic staff development initiatives and professional learning programs that inspire and encourage staff, support teachers and leaders and builds positive and flourishing learning community cultures.

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**12:00pm - 12:50pm | Workshop**

**Reframing Educational Environments: A Model for School-Wide Wellbeing and Success**

**ABSTRACT**

Australian schools are places of symbiotic relationships, where our interactions with each other shape outcomes. As Vygotsky said, “Through others, we become ourselves”. Schools must foster inclusive environments characterised by safety, predictability, belonging, and positive relationships. Such environments are crucial for positive student wellbeing, enhanced learning outcomes, academic achievement and staff satisfaction, wellbeing, and retention.

MacKillop developed the ReLATE model – ‘Reframing Learning and Teaching Environments’ - in our schools by synthesising interdisciplinary research to cultivate school cultures that prioritise safety, predictability, and authentic relationships. ReLATE has been evaluated using validated psychometrics tools including ARTIC and ProQOL, alongside interviews, and external university evaluations, to confirm its efficacy in enhancing educational environments.

This presentation explores findings, from collaborations with Monash University, including:

- enhanced staff wellbeing and efficacy
- reduced student behavioural issues
- increased student engagement
- increased student perceptions of safety and positive relationships.

Yvonne Lindros

**ReLATE CONSULTANT AND PRACTICE SPECIALIST, THE MACKKILLOP INSTITUTE**

Over 15 years in Education and the Community Services sector, Yvonne started her career as a classroom teacher and Wellbeing Coordinator in a Secondary school setting. She then moved into the Out of Home Care setting, directly supporting vulnerable young people residing in residential care placements.

Yvonne is a passionate educator and leader in the trauma-informed education space. For the last 9 years, Yvonne has been working in the alternative education space with MacKillop Education as a teacher (outreach and within the classroom), Education & Wellbeing Coordinator and Deputy Principal, working with the ReLATE trauma-informed model of education. Yvonne has worked directly with students and families, supporting their journeys and support needs around schooling, and ensuring access and equity to education through individualised and tailored support structures to meet each child where they are at.

Yvonne has led in the areas of Wellbeing, Inclusion and Learning and Teaching throughout her time at MacKillop. Her roles have included leading and supporting the implementation and sustaining of key trauma-informed education initiatives which combine best practice wellbeing and learning and teaching practices to support the holistic ReLATE model to flourish on the ground, creating a safe, trauma-aware and connected school community. This has included the delivery of ongoing professional learning, mentoring and coaching within the ReLATE model.
12:00pm - 12:50pm | Workshop
Talk for Good: The Art of the Dialogic Classroom

ABSTRACT

Speaking and Listening are fundamental skills and need to be inculcated in all of our young people. The evidence regarding this is clear: children who feel that their voice is valued and heard are happier, have a higher self-regard and are more likely to make strong academic progress. In conjunction with the University of Cambridge, Stephen has piloted an Action Research Project that draws on evidence regarding teacher education and adult learning. The basis of the project sees participants work in dialogic spaces themselves in order to support their belief in the power of such spaces; furthermore, this work provides clear examples of how to develop speaking and listening in dialogic classrooms. Participants of the workshop shall learn about the structuring of the Action Research, the process and the outcomes, as well as clear strategies for implementing dialogue across a learning community.

Stephen Campbell
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PROJECTS, PYMBLE LADIES' COLLEGE

Stephen Campbell is a member of the Senior Executive at a leading Independent girls’ school in Sydney, NSW. He has worked in the UK state, independent and international education and believes in the power of education as a mechanism for making the world a better place.

Alex Campbell
ENGLISH TEACHER, PYMBLE LADIES' COLLEGE

I am an experienced educational leader who believes that, by creating a culture of deliberate practice, observation, reflection and collaboration in schools, we can ensure that our pupils achieve the very best outcomes of which they are capable. Within the context of my own English classroom, in addition to promoting a love of Literature, I seek to build resilience in my pupils, along with their ability to think both independently and collaboratively. With this in mind, my classroom is a place in which I promote Oracy to facilitate cognitive engagement, and also metacognition, so that pupils come to understand themselves as learners.

1:45pm | Lightning Talk
Growing, Leading and Sustaining Evidence-Informed Practice in Schools

ABSTRACT

In this lightning presentation, Isaac will share research exploring the factors that enable and demonstrate growing, leading and sustaining evidence-informed practice in schools. By collecting examples from whole-school sites, the aim is to learn about what teachers and leaders are doing, the structures, cultures and strategies being developed, and the extent to which individual and organisational factors influence changes in practice. This knowledge will be used to help schools lead evidence-informed practice well in the future.

The study is not a course evaluation, but rather an investigation into how evidence-informed practice is sustained in schools. Data will be collected from focus group or individual interviews, staff meeting observations and artefacts such as whole-school programs that demonstrate the use of evidence-informed practice. Participants in the project may have taken part in the AISNSW Growing Evidence-Informed Practice (GEIP) professional learning course or they may be colleagues who have not completed the course.

This research is relevant because it seeks to enhance the way educators are equipped with knowledge, skills and confidence when engaging with evidence-informed practice. It will provide educators with an informative tool to use when engaging with evidence-informed practice and implementing whole-school programs with a long-term focus. Contributions will also be made to a broader body of research seeking to explore scalable and sustainable growth of evidence-informed practice in schools. Early insights from a literature review and interviews will be shared during the presentation.

Isaac Dargan
TEACHER, QUEENWOOD

Isaac Dargan teaches Year 6 at Queenwood, a K-12 all girls’ school based in Sydney’s Lower North Shore. As well as teaching, he is studying a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney. Isaac’s research focuses on exploring the factors that enable and demonstrate growing, leading and sustaining evidence-informed practice. He is passionate about investigating how evidence-informed practice can be implemented by teachers and leaders with the shared goal of improving student achievement.
1:45pm | Lightning Talks

Preliminary Findings from an Australian Longitudinal Observational Study: A Case for the Inclusion of Food and Nutrition in Teacher Wellbeing Interventions

**ABSTRACT**

**Background**

Food and nutrition (FN) influences teacher health and wellbeing. Global studies indicate teachers are not adequately trained or supported to fulfil the roles of health promoters or role models of nutrition. Little is known about the FN practices of Australian teachers. This study reports the preliminary findings of the Australian schoolteacher FN longitudinal study.

**Methods**

A convenience sample of 137 Australian secondary teachers, from across all learning areas and school sectors were recruited to complete the teacher food and nutrition wellbeing questionnaire (TFNQ) at four time points between September 2023 and June 2024. TFNQ included 15 food, nutrition, and wellbeing constructs, and three lifestyle covariates. To identify relationships and trends between TFNQ items, analysis included examining Pearson correlations and inter- and intra-teacher variation in responses, along with linear mixed models of both longitudinal binary and continuous measures, using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28) and R Studio Statistics Software (RStudio Team, 2020).

**Results**

Of 112 participants completing survey one (September 2023), 87.5% were female, 52% were aged 31-45 years, 90% on full time contracts, 78% listed classroom teacher as their primary role, followed by head teacher (13%). Preliminary analysis indicated significant relationships between several teacher reported wellbeing measures including occupational burnout, stress, and coping with teacher reported food agency and food skills confidence.

**Conclusion**

Initial findings provide insight into key food, nutrition, and wellbeing constructs, including school specific constructs like eating social norms, to inform development of FN inclusive teacher wellbeing interventions. Using tailored screening tools like TFNQ may help to develop teacher training that supports FN behaviours for optimal health and wellbeing and allow teachers the opportunity to better fulfil their roles as important FN influencers.

This presentation is based on a project conducted in conjunction with other researchers. The full list will be available in the conference app.

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Tammie Jakstas

PHD CANDIDATE, THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

Tammie is a qualified accredited practising dietitian and secondary school teacher. She began her career as a food science teacher before pursuing a Masters of Nutrition and Dietetics at The University of Sydney. She has worked across education, private practice and in public health promotion.
1:45pm | Lightning Talks
Making and Shaping Meaning Through Writing

ABSTRACT

Writing is complex, requiring significant instruction and practice. Wenona’s school based research project investigated the effectiveness of targeted approaches to improving writing proficiency for student confidence and achievement, as well as teacher writing instructional capacity. The focus was on contextualising the instruction of writing, within the teaching of content, in Stage 3 transdisciplinary units of work and in Stages 4 and 5 secondary History, Geography, PDHPE and Science.

The project developed a model of pedagogically informed writing strategies, known as the Making and Shaping Meaning model, drawing upon both current Australian and international best practice. With the expertise of academic mentors from the University of Wollongong, a ‘3 Pillars’ instructional routine framework was designed. Each Pillar within the framework, Reading, Talking and Writing, included a range of teaching routines which gradually released the responsibility to students. Teachers determined which instructional routine to trial in their classroom, according to their students’ learning needs.

As a result, a shared language for literacy was introduced throughout the school, used by teachers and students alike. Additionally, early analysis of findings indicate that there has been an increase in the capacity of students to transfer skills across curriculum areas.

Natasha Isbel
DEAN OF RESEARCH AND PRACTICE, WENONA SCHOOL

Natasha Isbel is the Dean of Research & Practice at Wenona. She is an experienced teacher in the social sciences and has a passion for building the capacity of students to write. Having come to teaching as a second career, Natasha has developed her knowledge of how to simplify the complex task of writing, improving the self-efficacy of students and teachers alike. She shares her knowledge and passion for literacy through presenting at conferences and student lectures and has most recently completed her own classroom inquiry research as a 2024 Global Action Research Collaborative Fellow. Natasha has commenced her Doctor of Philosophy, focusing on how to design professional learning for teachers which improves the impact of contextualised writing instruction.

1:45pm | Lightning Talks
Reducing Academic Anxiety

ABSTRACT

In recent years, schools have devoted significant resources to supporting the mental health of young people. For instance, some schools employ additional pastoral staff or counsellors to support students experiencing symptoms of anxiety and/or depression triggered by academic stress. Queenwood has been working closely with AISNSW and the University of NSW to investigate a pre-emptive intervention to support young people in developing academic confidence. The project introduced a structured study skills program focused on evidence-based independent learning strategies and gathered data to determine if it improves wellbeing for students Years 9 and 10. This session will cover the impetus for the project, an overview of the implementation and research methodology, and a selection of key findings.

Carla Younan
SENIOR SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER, QUEENWOOD

Carla Younan is a Year Coordinator at Queenwood alongside teaching English, where she is responsible for facilitating the academic, social, and emotional wellbeing of students in Year 10. She has experience in teaching a range of levels of English, having worked in co-educational and single-sex schools in Sydney. She has taught and facilitated the development of English programs ranging from Stage 4 to Stage 6, including experience mentoring students completing their HSC English Extension 2 Major Works and students completing the International Baccalaureate, Extended Essay in Literature. She is currently completing her Master of Educational Psychology at UNSW.

Jennifer Green
CATALYST COORDINATOR (K-12), QUEENWOOD

Jennifer Green, an ardent advocate of gifted education, is the K-12 Catalyst Coordinator at Queenwood School for Girls. With fifteen years’ experience teaching in K-12 schools, she is passionate about reversing gifted underachievement and meeting the social-emotional needs of high-ability students. Jennifer has a special interest in the positive impact of mentoring to improve affective and academic outcomes of twice exceptional students. With an abundance of energy and enthusiasm, Jennifer is dedicated to regular professional learning and has recently completed her Masters in Gifted Education.
3:00pm | Keynote Presenter
Quality Evidence in School Contexts: What Counts?

ABSTRACT
In the ever-evolving education landscape, the quest for quality evidence to inform decision-making processes in classrooms and schools remains paramount. With the diverse array of methodologies and sources available, defining what constitutes “quality” evidence in school contexts becomes a multifaceted and complex endeavour.

In this keynote, Professor Penny Van Bergen will examine the factors that underpin quality evidence within educational settings. Drawing upon empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and practical insights, Penny will explore the variety of sources teachers can draw on to access research evidence and the approaches they can use to check the methodological rigour, reliability, relevance and validity of that evidence.

She focuses specifically on when research findings should and should not be applied to learners in different year groups, from different backgrounds, and in different discipline areas. She concludes with a focus on how education policies and reform can both shape and distort our understanding of research evidence.

By enhancing our understanding of what defines quality evidence, educators can make better informed decisions that positively impact student learning outcomes and enhance equity in education.

Professor Penny Van Bergen
HEAD OF SCHOOL OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Penny Van Bergen is a Professor of Educational Psychology and Head of School in the University of Wollongong’s School of Education. She was previously also a lecturer, Associate Dean of Learning and Teaching, Director of Research, and Director of the Centre for Children’s Learning in a Social World at Macquarie University. She has two key areas of research: one focused on children and adolescents’ development of memory, emotion skills, and perspective-taking, and the other focused on student-teacher relationships in childhood, adolescence, and higher education. She is particularly interested in mapping the relationship factors that best facilitate learning and development. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and has been awarded teaching awards from Macquarie University, the Australian Federal Government’s Office of Learning and Teaching, Unijobs, and the Australian Psychological Society. Underpinning her university teaching is a strong commitment to creating research opportunities for education students.
9:05am | Workshop
Nightmares or Dreams: The Potential of Generative AI for Teachers’ Work

ABSTRACT
Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has promised to reshape education. Some have highlighted its potential to reduce the workload of teachers while others even suggest they would render traditional assessments obsolete. While there are plenty of claims about GenAI, there is little extant research into the way that teachers are already using GenAI in their work, how they might use it in the future, and what this might mean for the profession of teaching.

This research project, centred on two schools in Sydney, sought to investigate and implement the use of generative AI in supporting secondary school teaching, focusing on lesson planning, assessment, student engagement, and personalised learning. In addition, the research assessed teachers’ perspectives on the integration of AI in teaching, considering ethical, practical, and professional development aspects.

Adopting an action research methodology, teachers and researchers worked together in an iterative pattern to examine their practice and to identify ways to make use of various GenAI tools in their work. This led to the development of new patterns of work; these were then critically assessed to determine if AI was a help or a hindrance.

This research can lead to numerous outcomes, including the development of guidelines for implementing AI in lesson planning and delivery. In addition, it can contribute to the development of a professional development framework, focusing on the integration of GenAI into teaching in schools. Based on our findings, we hope to provide insights that might inform decision-making on the use of AI in education.

Dr Keith Heggart
SENIOR LECTURER,
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Dr Keith Heggart is an early career researcher with a focus on learning and instructional design, educational technology and civics and citizenship education. He is currently exploring the way that online learning platforms can assist in the formation of active citizenship amongst Australian youth. Keith is a former high school teacher, having worked as a school leader in Australia and overseas, in government and non-government sectors. In addition, he has worked as an Organiser for the Independent Education Union of Australia, and as an independent Learning Designer for a range of organisations.

Dr Shibani Antonette
SENIOR LECTURER,
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Shibani is a Senior Lecturer at Transdisciplinary School (TD School) at UTS. She has a background in computer science engineering and teaches in the Master of Data Science and Innovation program, specialising in Natural Language Processing. She researches applied areas of data science and artificial intelligence, with a particular focus on educational technology and writing analytics. Her work spans learning analytics, automated feedback tools, generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) for teaching and learning, ethical use of AI, human-AI complementarity, navigating misinformation and conflict in social media, and more broadly, data for social impact. Much of her research uses text analysis to uncover insights from data along with other qualitative and quantitative methods.

Shibani has a strong research profile and has served as a program committee member and reviewer for a number of conferences and peer-reviewed journals. She has served as an executive committee member of the Society for Learning Analytics Research (SoLAR) and co-hosts the podcast ‘SoLAR Spotlight: Conversations on Learning Analytics’. She has a wide authorship network with international collaborators and is an early career leader with several recognitions and awards.

Dr Camille Dickson-Deane
DEPUTY HEAD OF SCHOOL (RESEARCH),
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Camille is a Senior Lecturer and a member of the School of Professional Practice and Leadership at the University of Technology, Sydney Australia. Her research interests are in the contextual nexus of Learning Sciences, Usability Evaluation, Human Computer Interaction, Education Technology and Individual Differences. She serves on a number of prestigious journals including Education Technology Research and Development (ETR&D), Internet and Higher Education and the Journal of Computing in Higher Education, (JCHE) where she is an Associate Editor.
9:05am | Workshop

Time for Action -
Making a Start on Your Action Research Project

ABSTRACT

High impact teaching is supported and strengthened by educators who are skilled in using evidence to inform their practice. By engaging in and with research, teachers strive to build on the practices they know work while abandoning or redesigning those that are not meeting the desired learning outcomes.

While any effective educator will instinctively and consistently engage in the process of reflection, research and adjustment to improve their practice, the action research model gives practitioners a clear methodology and strategies to approach this form of research.

This workshop will begin by providing a brief introduction (or refresher) to the process of school-based action research by addressing the What, Why and How of this form of practitioner-based research, along with some illustrations of its practical application to some of the current challenges faced by teachers and school leaders.

The workshop will then demonstrate the early stages of the action research process by inviting participants to engage in the process of planning their own action research project.

By using a collaborative brainstorming technique, participants will first work on identifying some vexing problems or puzzles of practice currently at work in their school. After narrowing down to one or two problems of practice, participants will then identify the evidence they already have to indicate that their identified problem exists and the success criteria they will use to indicate how they will know they have moved towards resolving the problem.

From here, participants will be guided through the rest of the project planning process where they will be introduced to a range of different forms of data available to them and the processes they can use to gather, critically analyse and respond to this data.

By the end of the workshop, participants will be ready to engage in the next stage of the project they have started to plan and/or use the learning from this workshop to apply this methodology more broadly at their school.

Kate Corcoran
HEAD OF ACTION RESEARCH,
SANTA SABINA COLLEGE

Kate is a teacher of the Social Sciences, former Head of Faculty and is currently leading the implementation of a whole school Action Research Professional Learning Program at Santa Sabina College. In this role, Kate provides instruction, guidance and support to teachers as they engage in cycles of working in teams to gather and apply research to respond to identified puzzles of practice.

9:05am | Workshop Presenter

School-Based Research: How to Begin

ABSTRACT

Have you noticed something you’d like to do differently at your school, but weren’t quite sure how or where to begin? This practical masterclass will guide you through an evidence informed approach for engaging in research and how it can improve teacher practice, student outcomes and broader aspects of school education.

The focus will include a consideration of research that can be conducted by teachers at a class, subject, cohort level, or more broadly across the school community. This masterclass will provide a dynamic, interactive experience where you will arrive with questions and leave with a plan.

Dr Shani Hartley
SENIOR RESEARCH SPECIALIST,
AISNSW

Dr Shani Hartley has considerable experience in education as a teacher in schools and universities, and as a facilitator of professional learning for teachers. She has a strong desire to improve school education through research informed practice and is particularly interested in the development of students’ critical thinking and problem solving. Her research has focused on curriculum and pedagogy and her PhD examined school-developed curriculum in the form of enterprise education.

Since joining AISNSW, Shani has collaborated with a variety of schools and academic organisations, leading and supporting research. Shani also facilitates a number of courses at AISNSW, including Growing Evidence Informed Practice, Getting to Know Your Students Through Data and School Data: Telling the Story. She commits considerable time to schools, assisting them in growing and supporting research knowledge and practice.
10:00am | Lightning Talks
Co-designing Artificial Intelligence Policy and Sustainable Education Futures: AI Policy Prototyping in Australian and Finnish Schools

**ABSTRACT**

This research critically examines the impact of AI technologies, particularly generative AI, on education futures and schooling through an intergenerational lens. Despite the existence of numerous AI policy guidelines and frameworks, there are empirical and methodological gaps in how schools localise and cultivate AI digital literacy, critical moral knowledge, and values about AI through curricula and pedagogical practices across nation-states. A theoretical gap also persists in developing educational theories to advance AI global citizenship, empowering both current and future generations to navigate AI’s ethical complexities safely, responsibly, and sustainably.

To address these gaps, the research employs a participatory policy prototyping approach to engage both current and future generations (e.g., policymakers, educators, students) in co-creating AI knowledge and policy in education that supports safe, ethical, and sustainable development and deployment of AI in schools.

Drawing on empirical studies located across Australia, Finland, and Paris, France, the research explores two main lines of inquiry:

I. How can AI policy, ideas, and knowledge be co-created with local and global education stakeholders to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals — the sustainable development of ecology, economy, and society?

II. How can the voice of educators and young generations be empowered in shaping sustainable and intergenerationally ethical futures?

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**Annie Webster**

**FOUNDER, OEFAIR**

Annie Webster is the founder of the Organization for Educational and Foundational Artificial Intelligence Research which collaborates with transnational and transdisciplinary education stakeholders to explore opportunities and challenges associated with the integration of AI technologies in education governance, schooling, and its policy implications. She also serves as a UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab Expert Group Member.
10:00am | Lightning Talks

The Social Media Space and its Youngest Digital Citizens: A Case Study of Upper Primary Students’ Content Creation Practices on Social Media and Educating for Digital Citizenship in the Upper Primary Years in a NSW Independent School

ABSTRACT

Digital media use represents a critical and central aspect of children and young people’s lives. Over the past decade, social media in particular, has emerged as a dominant player in the media landscape, operating as a key site for social, cultural and economic exchange. Social media’s user base now extends beyond just adult users, with children increasingly accessing and interacting on these platforms (eSafety Commissioner, 2018). Children are in effect, digital citizens of the now - assuming presence in the social media space in complex and nuanced ways. Schools in partnership with other major educational stakeholders including families and members of the wider community are also responsible for ensuring that children and young people are positioned to act in their communities on and offline, as confident, enterprising and informed citizens (Education Council, 2019). However, there is scant research evidence in the Australian context detailing how children exercise their digital citizenship when using social media, in addition to how they can be supported to take position as productive, actively engaged and responsible digital citizens when engaging on social media.

This presentation aims to highlight key findings from a PhD research project which involved upper primary (Years 5 and 6) students and teachers from one independent school in NSW. The rationale of the case study research was two-fold. The first objective of the study was to investigate how upper primary students perform their roles as digital citizens when creating digital content on social media. Specific attention was given to the types of rights and responsibilities students enacted during social media-based content creation. The second objective of the study was to examine how upper primary teachers could teach digital citizenship linked to social media-based content creation through formal, classroom learning.

This presentation will offer novel insights into the ways children assert themselves as digital citizens in the social media space through self-initiated acts of content production, and the potential of explicitly teaching for digital citizenship associated with social media engagement. These understandings will thus be of significant value to members of the education community and communities beyond as they may inspire a more considered approach to designing learning interventions which are informed by the real, lived experiences and realities of children that relate to participating in today’s online world.

References for this presentation will be available in the conference app.

Rachel Yoo

PHD CANDIDATE & ACADEMIC TUTOR, THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Rachel is a PhD Candidate within the University of Sydney’s School of Education and Social Work. Formerly a primary school teacher, Rachel now teaches in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) program at The University of Sydney as an academic tutor. Her research passions revolve around understanding children and young people’s digitally-mediated lifeworlds.
10:00am | Lightning Talks
What Impact do Intergenerational Programs have on the Wellbeing and Sense of Identity in Teenagers and Seniors?

ABSTRACT
Children’s behavioural and educational outcomes are constantly criticised in the media. However, little is known about interventions that may impact educational and behavioural outcomes in adolescents. The ABC show “Old People’s Homes for Teenagers” showcased the potential that intergenerational programs may have on adolescents. In addition, there is some evidence that suggests these programs may influence teenage delinquency outcomes. However, there remains a gap in our knowledge about the impact these programs have on teens. Consequently, this study set out to explore the question, “What impact do Intergenerational Programs have on the wellbeing and sense of identity in teenagers and seniors?” Using surveys, observational data, and attendance rates to measure the outcomes, this study conducted a six-week trial of Intergenerational practice called “Seen and Heard” between seniors living in a retirement village and teenagers aged between 13 and 16 years in Port Macquarie, NSW, Australia. This study found positive impacts for both demographics in terms of improved wellbeing and an improvement in school attendance for particular teenagers. Concurrently, overall life satisfaction improved for both cohorts and ageist preconceptions were no longer entrenched in thinking. These findings, coupled with other research, support the positive impact of intergenerational programs in our schools and the wider community. They also support the implementation of intergenerational practice more widely in schools to improve the outcomes of adolescents. Future iterations of the program will continue to gather more rich qualitative data to further highlight the value these programs have on adolescents. Dr Katrina Bradford is a co-contributor to this research.

Casey Baldwin
EDUCATOR AND INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAM COORDINATOR,
HERITAGE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AND INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECT
Casey, an experienced educator and Intergenerational Program Coordinator, has enjoyed 25 years of experience in both public and independent sectors. With a fervent commitment to fostering enriched educational experiences and community engagement through intergenerational connections, Casey has demonstrated leadership skills in secondary education, including significant roles such as Deputy Principal.

10:00am | Lightning Talks

ABSTRACT
This paper presents the conceptual ideas for designing an Arts-based Integrative Teaching and Learning Model (AB ITLM) to support Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as another avenue in secondary school contexts in Australia. It first provides a rationale for integrating three different components: Visual Arts, Expressive Therapies Continuum, and Australian Curriculum with General Capabilities (GC) strands - mainly with Personal and Social Capabilities (PSC) that drive the design of the model. Second, it situates the context of SEL, and the gaps between theory and practice mainly in Art Education in supporting the scope and significance of the model. The main author highlights his experience as an artist/researcher/teacher (a/r/t) in a broader PhD research project. Borrowing upon Arts-based research as a methodology, the use of a/r/t reflexivity is discussed in analysing the design phase and outcomes of the pilot implementation in a school (students’ artworks and their experience and some insights gathered from artist and art therapists’ consultations and review). These insights support the a/r/t discussion and the significance of the AB ITLM to stress its adaptability and versatility across other learning areas and contexts.

Leigh Webster
PHD STUDENT,
MONASH UNIVERSITY
Leigh Webster is a PhD student in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. His focus on integrating visual arts education and art therapy practice as a pedagogical approach is aimed at promoting social and emotional learning and wellbeing for adolescent students.
**10:00am | Lightning Talk**

**Teacher Training Program for Primary School Teachers to Identify and Support Students with Anxiety**

**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 14 Australian children had clinical levels of anxiety, yet only 19% receive evidence-based care for anxiety. Teachers are often the first people from whom students and parents seek help for anxiety, yet primary school principals and teachers do not have adequate training or access to resources to support students with high anxiety. We consulted school staff to develop a training program to increase primary school teachers’ confidence and knowledge in identifying and supporting children with anxiety. The program was then pilot tested to examine its feasibility and acceptability to primary school teachers.

**Methods:**

A consultation study with 140 school staff (61.5% teachers, 26.4% leaders, 5.7% wellbeing staff) across 22 NSW primary schools led to the development of the “Applied Skills for supporting students with Anxiety in Primary school” (ASAP) program. The program was pilot tested with 74 teachers across 18 NSW primary schools (65% government, 24% independent, 11% Catholic). Participants were assessed at baseline, post-training, and 1-month follow-up on anxiety-related knowledge and stigma, confidence and behaviours in identifying and supporting students with anxiety, acceptability, and own mental health.

**Results:**

From the consultation study, teachers see it as their responsibility to identify and support students with anxiety, but lack the knowledge to do so. The training program significantly improved teacher knowledge, confidence, and behaviours in identifying and supporting students with anxiety. Anxiety-related stigma and teachers’ own anxiety levels also significantly decreased. The training also demonstrated high acceptability, with 94% stating they would recommend it to a colleague.

**Conclusion:**

This training program has the potential to transform teacher practices to better identify and support children with anxiety symptoms. Thus, the program serves as a preventative intervention that could prevent the onset and progression of child anxiety.

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**Dr Chloe Lim**

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER,
BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

Dr Chloe Lim is a post-doctoral research fellow in the Child Mental Health Team at Black Dog Institute, The University of New South Wales, leading co-designed trials examining the efficacy of prevention and treatment interventions for children with anxiety and depression.

**10:00am | Lightning Talk**

**Exploring the Impact of Online Mental Health Checks on Stigma Among Primary School Students**

**ABSTRACT**

Primary school students struggling with mental health are less likely than teenagers to access mental health care, due to barriers such as stigma and limited mental health literacy. Given this, there has been growing interest in expanding access to mental health care via school-based services, such as universal mental health screening. We co-designed an Online Mental Health Check to aid parents and children in identifying when to seek help for anxiety and depression in children. However, there are concerns around the potential harms and impacts of screenings in schools. In this study, we evaluated the Check’s impact on stigma and mental health among primary school students. A cluster randomised controlled trial allocated schools to one of two groups (intervention vs control), which varied based on the order and frequency of the mental health and stigma questionnaires. 798 children (aged 8-13 years; mean age = 10.29) completed assessments at baseline, 6-week, and 12-week follow-ups. Our findings revealed that different groups experienced changes in stigma at different rates over time. We found significant effects for self-stigma (feeling embarrassed about mental health) and secrecy (wanting to keep mental health a secret), but not for public stigma (perception of social stereotypes).

The frequency and presentation order of the Check had a discernible impact. Initially, children receiving the Check before the stigma measure reported heightened stigma, but over time, those receiving the Check more frequently experienced an overall stigma reduction, contrasting with an increase in the control group. These results highlight the importance of screening context, as the frequency and presentation order of questionnaires influence children’s reports of mental health stigma. Potential screening harms, such as exacerbating self-stigma and secrecy, warrant careful consideration. Addressing stigma-related barriers is crucial for implementing evidence-based practices in schools and enhancing mental health care access for children.

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**Emma McDermott**

RESEARCH OFFICER,
BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

Emma McDermott is a Research Officer in the Child Mental Health Team at the Black Dog Institute. She holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Psychology from the University of Sydney and is actively engaged across diverse clinical research trials aimed at developing and evaluating digital interventions to support children’s mental health.
ABSTRACT
Anxiety disorders represent one of the most common mental illnesses in children and pose a major threat to educational outcomes. Elevated anxiety in children is associated with reduced school engagement and academic outcomes, which often persist to adolescence. However, only 50% of children who complete current gold-standard treatments improve, and only 19% of children with elevated anxiety receive evidence-based care. As such, there is a need to improve current treatments and increase accessibility to appropriate supports. This research aims to bridge these gaps by testing how to maximise anxiety treatment outcomes for children through a digital exposure-based intervention named Courage Quest Plus. Exposure is the gold-standard treatment ingredient for childhood anxiety, as it teaches children how to face their fears. This study investigated the influence of other features of therapy to optimise the delivery of exposure treatment. We recruited 8-12-year-old children diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, and their parents. All participants received the same 10-week exposure-based intervention and were additionally randomly allocated to receive a combination of up to five features: i) testing expectancies, ii) positive mood, iii) parent training, iv) relaxation, and v) rewards. We trialled the Courage Quest Plus intervention to see if it changed the severity of anxiety symptoms, anxiety disorder diagnoses, life interference, behavioural symptoms, quality of life, health service usage, parent behaviour and parent-child relationship. We also measured intervention usage, and intervention acceptability. Measures were conducted at pre-treatment, post-treatment, and at 6-month follow-up. This study will allow for a greater understanding of how to optimise anxiety treatment through digital interventions, which could reduce resource limitations in mental health treatment for school-aged children. Insights gained from this research will also serve as a foundation for other school-based interventions for anxiety, contributing to the ongoing dialogue on evidence-based practices supporting student wellbeing.

Dr Chloe Lim
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER, BLACK DOG INSTITUTE
Dr Chloe Lim is a post-doctoral research fellow in the Child Mental Health Team at Black Dog Institute, The University of New South Wales, leading co-designed trials examining the efficacy of prevention and treatment interventions for children with anxiety and depression.
11:15am - 12:05pm | Workshop
Cultivating a Culture of Curiosity: Research-Practice Partnerships in Action

ABSTRACT
Ravenswood School for Girls values evidence-informed practices based on the science of learning and the importance of systematically gathering and applying evidence within our school context to guide pedagogical decisions and optimize learning. Concerned by student passivity and lack of curiosity, we partnered with the University of Queensland (UQ) Learning Lab’s Partner Schools Program for an exploratory project. Using Lowenstein’s information gap theory, we surveyed Years 7-12 students and found that while inherently curious, students lacked the time and skills to explore their curiosity in the classroom. There was also a noticeable ‘adolescent dip’, a decline in curiosity in Year 9.

By combining our findings with teacher expertise and existing curiosity literature, we developed a curiosity framework, piloted in 2023, and set for broader implementation in 2024. During the pilot, teachers recognized that they needed to be comfortable with uncertainty to foster curiosity and engagement in their students. The pilot project also emphasized the importance of a buddy system to support and embed these practices among teachers, building their efficacy and adaptive expertise.

The Partner School Program (PSP) enabled our teachers to become critical consumers, producers, and mediators of research, ensuring our framework is robust and relevant. This collaboration has provided us with access to research and methodologies building our research skills and facilitating meaningful dialogue that advance our collective knowledge and purpose. It has enhanced our understanding of curiosity in the classroom and elevated our staff’s professionalism, inspiring them to have a teacher-researcher (aka curious) mindset, opening them up to new possibilities and cultivating a strong research practice community.

In this session, we will describe our project and framework, share insights from our pilot study, and discuss the practical outcomes and lessons learned from this partnership.

Fiona Cooney
LEARNING ENRICHMENT DEPARTMENT,
RAVENSWOOD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Fiona is an experienced educator at Ravenswood School for Girls, where she leads the Learning Enrichment Department and oversees the Research Program. She has cultivated partnerships with leading institutions in the science of learning, including the school-based research centre, the Centre of Transformative Teaching and Learning (CTTL) in Washington DC, and with The University of Queensland (UQ) Learning Lab through its School Partnership Program. Over the last four years, she has overseen a team of teachers exploring curiosity in the classroom in collaboration with UQ and recently presented at the International Mind Brain Education Conference as part of a team symposium with UQ on ‘Advancing Knowledge and Practice: Building Collaborative Communities between Research and Practice’.

Currently an EdD Candidate in Educational Psychology with the University of New South Wales, Fiona is passionate about fostering a love of learning, nurturing curiosity, and championing inclusion. Her dedication ensures an environment where both teachers and students can flourish.

Amber Ripley
MATHEMATICS EDUCATOR,
RAVENSWOOD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Amber Ripley is an experienced teacher in primary and secondary Mathematics education in the UK and Australia. From early teaching roles to assuming leadership positions such as Curriculum Lead, Head of Middle School, and presently as Director of Academic Administration in Sydney, Amber has exhibited a dedication to educational growth. Amber recently completed a Masters of Education at the University of Melbourne with specialisation in Leadership and Management, with a Capstone Project looking at how MBE (Mind, Brain, Education) can improve teaching practices. Amber joined the Ravenswood UQ School Partnership Program in 2023, and has presented at the ResearchEd conference last year around how educators can optimise cognitive load for learners at varying stages of novice and expert learners. Amber’s professional journey is firmly grounded in evidence-based approaches, emphasising a curriculum rich in knowledge to facilitate effective learning outcomes. Amber has an interest in the interplay between cognitive science, pedagogy, and technology.

11:15am - 12:05pm | Workshop
Using the Science of Learning to Support Student Wellbeing

ABSTRACT
Academic stress and student wellbeing issues are known to be on the rise. We know that the science of learning is key to improve student learning outcomes, but did you know that it is also key to supporting student wellbeing? Classroom practices that provide structure through explicit teaching have been observed to reduce student behaviour issues. But when combined with autonomy-support and opportunities for guided practice and mastery through models like load reduction instruction, they also motivate our students, making them feel more supported and capable. At the secondary level, teaching students about memory, retrieval and other desirable difficulties empowers them to become independent learners. A key source of student academic stress, arising from high stakes testing and pressure to perform, can be alleviated when students have the tools to study effectively. Not only this, but students are also more likely to remember what they have been taught, further reinforcing feelings of capability.

In this session, Rebecca Birch shares her research on how the science of learning can impact the classroom and beyond, with practical knowledge and strategies that will help teachers to support their students’ pastoral care through everyday, evidence-backed teaching strategies.

Rebecca Birch
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH & PRACTICE,
QUEENWOOD

Rebecca Birch is the Director of Research and Practice and a current teacher at a top independent school in Sydney. She has provided consultation and content services for Ochre Education, Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn, and Catholic Education Tasmania, and has appeared on panels for ResearchED and the Gonski Institute for Education. She writes for publications and through her newsletter.

< Back to program...
Research in the Real World

ABSTRACT
In this presentation, we delve into Warakirri College’s research project “Enhancing Literacy Acquisition in Vulnerable Secondary Students”. Despite its noble goals, the project encountered several challenges that shaped its trajectory. We explore these obstacles, ranging from resourcing and time constraints to student engagement issues. Additionally, we discuss adaptive strategies employed by the research team to overcome these hurdles and ensure meaningful outcomes. Join us as we unravel the complexities of real-world research in an educational context.

Carolyn Blanden
PRINCIPAL,
WARAKIRRI COLLEGE

Carolyn has over 20 years of experience as a Principal in independent schools covering the spectrum from a high-fee, highly academic girls’ school through a PK – 12 community school where 100% of the students were LBOTE to a Special Assistance School for young people 15 – 22 from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Carolyn is committed to making a difference in the lives of young people through a holistic education that is inclusive, supportive of all students, and future-focused. Warakirri College has four campuses, including a Distance Education program in Western Sydney, serving young people who have disconnected from mainstream education through social disadvantage, mental health challenges, gender dysphoria, interface with the justice system, parenthood or the trauma associated with refugee status.

To meet the wide diversity of student needs, the school curriculum uses principles of Universal Design for learning and Michael Fullan’s New Pedagogies for Deep Learning. At the same time, a rigorous outdoor education program and trauma-informed practice supplement the wrap-around support provided by teachers, counsellors and wellbeing staff.

Carolyn was awarded a Menzies Foundation School Leader Fellowship last year, which has supported her recent study tour to the USA and UK, visiting alternative schools.

Kirsty Rose
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL,
WARAKIRRI COLLEGE

Kirsty Rose has worked in flexible education for over 20 years, joining Warakirri College as the Deputy Principal in 2020. With a background in welfare studies and education, she has worked in leadership roles over the last 17 years and in her previous role, established a small secondary school in Marrickville, Sydney. Kirsty is passionate about supporting vulnerable young people to engage in education as, in her experience, educational attainment can interrupt the cycle of disadvantage and transform people’s lives.

Building Global Citizenship in Students - Turning Research into Practice

ABSTRACT
One of the great aims of education is to create active citizens who can successfully participate in the world around them and with increasing global interconnectedness, this aim now needs to be broadened to equip students for the global futures and problems they, and the world, face. This presentation explores PhD research into how global citizenship can be fostered in students, and in particular girls, and examines how we can actually utilise research to affect teaching practice and student outcomes effectively. The session will unpack the results of this study, as well as how it has been used to create a new framework for teaching and learning.

Based on four case studies of the different school contexts and curricula (including the IB), this research examined the experiences students currently have in independent schools in New South Wales, Australia and how these contributed to shaping and preparing them as global citizens. Findings from the research highlighted the importance of holistic school approaches to fostering global citizenship including school leadership initiatives, and the significance of teacher expertise and particular pedagogical approaches in enabling secondary students to be equipped as global citizens. This presentation will examine key research findings and focus on unpacking models of best practice for effectively preparing students for global citizenship from the classroom, curriculum, to school leadership and policy.

Alex Pentz
HEAD OF SOCIAL SCIENCE,
ROSEVILLE COLLEGE

Alex is currently the Head of Social Science at Roseville College in Sydney, Australia. She has just completed a PhD through the University of Sydney researching how secondary students are being prepared as global citizens in various school contexts. Alex’s research examined how school environment, curriculum structures such as the IB and HSC as well as teacher preparedness influence students’ preparation as world ready learners, with a particular focus on the social science suite of subjects.
Primary School Students’ Perceptions of School Connectedness: “It makes you feel like you're special.”

ABSTRACT

School connectedness is a complex phenomenon intricately linked to students’ academic, social, emotional, and physical wellbeing, academic performance, physical, and emotional wellbeing. Research has shown that it is positively related to engagement in learning, self-worth, positive bi-cultural acculturation, feeling part of a community, and a sense of belonging. It is also associated with less emotional distress, depression, and likelihood of eating disorders. This has profound implications for the current Australian context, when there is vast concern for children’s relationships, mental health, and the overwhelming pressures of continuous assessment of learning, high-stakes entrance exams, a packed curriculum, information abundance, and education reform.

Despite its importance, current understandings have overlooked primary school children’s perceptions and almost exclusively been derived from adult conceptualisations and research conducted with senior school students. Consequently, the purpose of this qualitative study was to ensure primary school students had a voice to express their perceptions of the meaning and feeling of school connectedness. Using focus groups, the children’s rich descriptions of their experiences, understanding, and opinions of school connectedness were elicited. The sample included 50 students from Years 3 to 6 enrolled in five New South Wales Independent primary schools. Using reflexive thematic analysis, two themes were identified: the Interplay of Students and the School, and Notions of Being and Doing. Collectively, the children defined school connectedness as being part of an inclusive environment in which friends and teachers help and encourage them to learn, feel happy, be safe, feel special, and “do something...that you love”. It is anticipated that these findings can provide a more meaningful and coherent definition of school connectedness and a stronger foundation for actions to increase students’ school connectedness and address the problem of low school connectedness or disconnectedness.

Jodie Hoenig
RESEARCHER, UNSW

Jodie is a doctoral student, researcher, and lecturer at the University of New South Wales. Her formative experiences were working in schools for 30 years and studying a Master of Educational Leadership and Solution Focused Business Professional Certificate. Jodie recently presented her work about school connectedness at the British Educational Research Association conference. Her further research is on the use of AI for teacher preparation, and the role of Country University Centres for higher education.

Empowering Educational Leaders: Navigating Challenges and Fostering Wellbeing

ABSTRACT

Despite challenges revealed in the recent Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Survey, there is a proactive momentum towards addressing issues faced by school leaders and those in the profession. Acknowledging concerns including heavy workloads and staff shortages, there is an optimistic push for action locally and nationally to nurture supportive environments for school leaders. At the same time, school leaders must commit to proactive strategies within their own locus of control. This complementary approach provides a roadmap to a nourishing, rewarding, and sustainable experience of school leadership.

Dr Paul Kidson will share some of the comprehensive findings which underscore a commitment to understanding and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of educational leaders. He will present on various contemporary facets of school leaders’ professional lives, drawing from the survey finding and his expertise in educational leadership. Topics will include maintaining joy in leadership, stewardship theory, community significance, and decision-making.

The session will culminate in a panel discussion featuring experienced leaders from the Independent sector, who will explore some of the intricacies of research and practice in educational leadership.

Dr Paul Kidson
ACTING CHAIR, EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP (LA SALLE ACADEMY)
SENIOR LECTURER, EDUCATION, AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Dr Paul Kidson is Senior Lecturer in Educational Leadership in the National School of Education at the Australian Catholic University; he is currently Acting Chair in Educational Leadership in ACU’s La Salle Academy. He is one of the principal researchers on Australia’s largest and longest running principal well-being research project, the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Survey, as well as a frequent media commentator on educational matters.

His teaching and leadership career has been entirely within the independent sector, including 11½ years as principal in schools affiliated with AISNSW, and as a member of AHISA where he served for two years on the AHISA (NSW/ACT) Executive. In addition to his work on leadership in independent schools, he has co-designed and continues to deliver leadership programs in the government and Catholic sectors in NSW and beyond.

In addition to his academic qualifications and experience, he is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a Fellow of the Institute for Managers and Educational Leaders, and is currently President of the NSW Branch of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders.
2:15pm | Panel
Chaired by Dr Paul Kidson | Acting Chair, Educational Leadership (La Salle Academy) and Senior Lecturer, Education - Australian Catholic University

Brad Moss
PRINCIPAL
ST JOHN’S JINDERA AND ST PAUL’S HENTY

Brad Moss is a dynamic Principal of two Riverina Primary Schools, St John’s Jindera and St Paul’s Henty. He is committed to creating a learning environment where student agency, positive relationships and a vibrant school community thrive. With 9 years experience as a Principal and 20 years of leadership experience in education, Brad believes in empowering students through encouraging creativity, failing forward, grit and building meaningful connections with each other and their world. His leadership style is centred around embracing collaboration, inclusivity and valuing the person. Passionate about inspiring both students and staff, Brad is intentional about cultivating a school culture that prioritises well-being, curiosity and is energised by the power and wonder of learning.

Dr Briony Scott
PRINCIPAL
WENONA SCHOOL

Dr Briony Scott (BScAgr, MEd, EdD) is Principal of Wenona, a Kindergarten to Year 12 Independent girls’ school, and a proud alumna of the University of Sydney. Dr Scott is President of ACEL National (2023), Director with the Chris O’Brien Lifehouse, Chair of the USYD Stem Teacher Enrichment Advisory Board, and a member of the AISNSW Advisory Committee. In 2022, she was named Australian Principal of the Year (non-government), was listed on the Educator’s 2022 Hot List, and named as one of the Australian Financial Review’s Top 5 Most Powerful People in Education in 2022. She was the recipient of the Phyllis Evans Medal from the Teachers’ Guild of New South Wales for 2023. Dr Scott is a writer and speaker and has been in the media on matters covering adolescence, consent education, gender equity, and social discourse.

Hibba Mourad
PRINCIPAL
UNITY GRAMMAR

Hibba Mourad is a dedicated Sydney Muslim educator with over two decades of teaching and leadership experience in Islamic schools. She holds a Bachelor of Education (Primary) from the University of Sydney, obtained in 2001, and a Master of Education (Educational Management and Leadership) with Merit from the same institution in 2008. In 2022, she earned a Graduate Certificate in Education (Islamic Education) from the University of South Australia, receiving the Chancellor’s Letters of Commendation. Currently, Hibba serves as the Junior School Principal at Unity Grammar College, an independent Islamic co-educational primary and secondary school in Astral, New South Wales. She is committed to driving Islamic schooling towards distinction, fostering academic excellence, and nurturing moral values inspired by Islamic principles. With extensive experience in curriculum development, welfare, and educational management, Hibba is passionate about creating a holistic learning environment that cultivates the mind, body, and soul of students. She emphasises the importance of continued professional learning communities and staff collaboration, aiming to empower educators as leaders and innovators in the field of education. Her approach to educational leadership focuses on fostering supportive environments for school leaders and educators, promoting open dialogue, and implementing initiatives for continuous improvement. Inspired by the concept of being a “wholesome educator,” Hibba strives to embody qualities such as empathy, patience, and sincerity in the holistic development of students. She is dedicated to creating an inclusive and respectful learning environment that encourages critical thinking, ethical behaviour, and a strong connection to faith.

John Ralph
HEAD OF ST ANDREW’S CATHEDRAL GAWURA SCHOOL K-12, ST. ANDREW’S CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

John Ralph has been teaching for 30 years. His Aboriginal heritage goes back to the Gumbaingirr Nation from Nambucca Heads on the NSW North Coast. John was a Stage Leader and Grade leader for 15 years and the last 8 years as Head of St Andrew’s Cathedral Gawura School in Sydney. John currently sits on the Aboriginal Education Committee at the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). John has a passion for Indigenous education and has employed 10 Indigenous staff members to work at the Gawura School in Sydney, across various teaching, administration and community engagement roles.