

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Vision Unlimited

Educational Research @ WSU 2025

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION





Artwork – 'Those Who Came Before Us' – In 2020 and 2021 over 120 staff and students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, contributed to this painting. This activity was co-facilitated by artist Allan McKenzie, a Wiradjuri-Gamilaroi man from Griffith NSW. 'Those Who Came Before Us' is owned by none, yet owned by all, and is a great example of reconciliation in practice.

With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocol and out of recognition that its campuses occupy their traditional lands, Western Sydney University acknowledges the Darug, Dharawal, Gadigal, Gundungurra and Wiradjuri peoples and thanks them for their support of its work on their lands (Greater Western Sydney and beyond). We acknowledge that the teaching, learning, and research undertaken across our campuses continues the teaching, learning and research that has occurred on these lands for tens of thousands of years.

Contents

Message from the Dean, School of Education.....	4	Higher Degree Research Graduates.....	33
Welcome from the Associate Dean, Research	5	Higher Degree Research Conference.....	39
Research Programs	6	Visiting Scholars.....	41
Education for Social Justice and Inclusion (ESJI).....	6	International Collaborations.....	44
Education in the Anthropocene	8	Centre for Innovation in Teaching.....	47
Alternative and Innovate Learning and Teaching		Linking Research to Practice.....	48
Environments (AILTE)	9	Education Knowledge Network (EKN)	48
Futuremaking with Generative AI in Education (FGE).....	10	EKN Workshops.....	48
Featured Research Projects	11	Consulting and Advising.....	49
Strengthening National Reforms in Teacher Training and Inclusive Education Leadership (Ghana).....	11	Publications	50
High Achieving Teachers Project (HAT)	13	Q1 Journal articles.....	50
Guardians of the Park: Habitat Restoration for Western Sydney's Adolescents	15	Books	70
New Projects	17	Edited Books	70
Continuing Projects	19	Book chapters	71
Cross Institution Collaborations	28	Journal articles.....	73
WSU Global Challenge.....	29	Research Reports	75
Awards	31	Non-traditional Outputs.....	77
Early Career Researcher 2025	31	Conference Proceedings	78
Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards	31		
Higher Degree Research Cohorts.....	32		
Kids Early Learning.....	32		
ROSETE.....	32		
Bilingual Language Education.....	32		
Doctor of Education (EdD).....	32		

Message from the Dean, School of Education

Welcome to Vision Unlimited 2025!

For the fourth year running, research in Education has played a pivotal role in Western Sydney University being ranked #1 globally in the 2025 *Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings*.

Our School's impact is **regional, national, and international**, spanning three key areas:

1. Innovating Learning and Teaching

We're finding new ways to make learning meaningful for everyone, no matter their circumstances. Our research underpins teacher and school leader development with a strong evidence base.

2. Empowering Educators and Learners

We're driving innovation to support learners, empower educators, and promote well-being—helping communities in Western Sydney and beyond thrive.

3. Championing Social Justice and Inclusion

Across all our work, we advocate for equity, inclusion, and evidence-driven outcomes. Together with our partners, we harness education to achieve socially just, sustainable, and transformative results for individuals and communities.

We invite you to explore our work—and join us in our mission to **make learning work for all learners!**



Professor Michele Simons
Dean, School of Education



Welcome from the Associate Dean, Research

Vision Unlimited 2025 encapsulates the collective achievements of researchers in the School of Education throughout the last year. It demonstrates our commitments to addressing challenges, fostering equity and advancing knowledge and understanding across all facets of education. Our research is optimistic and forward-facing. We envisage a future where education contributes to social justice, inclusion, creativity and community empowerment, and our research efforts are directed towards this vision.

Our research has regional and global impact. In our local region, significant impact is evident through industry partnerships where we collaborate to transform opportunities and outcomes for young people, educators, families and communities. We generate robust evidence about pedagogical innovations to support practitioners and policymakers in evidence-informed decision making. Our international partnerships extend to Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa as we build networks and share knowledge across borders.

Excellence in research is measured through high quality publications in leading academic journals, ensuring that our research findings can be accessed and drawn upon by scholarly audiences globally. Much of our research is published in open access format, making it available to practitioners and stakeholders beyond universities.

Another measure of academic excellence is our success in securing competitive research grants and tenders. Through these processes, our acknowledged research expertise means that we are well placed and trusted to undertake important research to investigate and design solutions for challenges at all levels of education.

Our research community includes doctoral and masters researchers who design and undertake original research on issues of importance. Their work enriches our collective understanding of educational challenges and solutions and contributes to our vibrant research community.

Finally, we could not achieve these successes without the dedicated support and skills of research-focused professional staff in the School of Education.



Professor Susanne Gannon
Associate Dean, Research

Research Programs

Research programs represent groups of researchers working on multiple projects contributing to a common theme. These programs have generated a rich vein of collaborative projects, publications and outcomes. The collective approach helps to build the capacity of researchers through the sharing of research methodologies, findings and approaches, enabling the building of new knowledge in these fields.

Education for Social Justice and Inclusion (ESJI)

Program Leaders: Professor Loshini Naidoo and Associate Professor Jacqueline Ullman

Academic members:

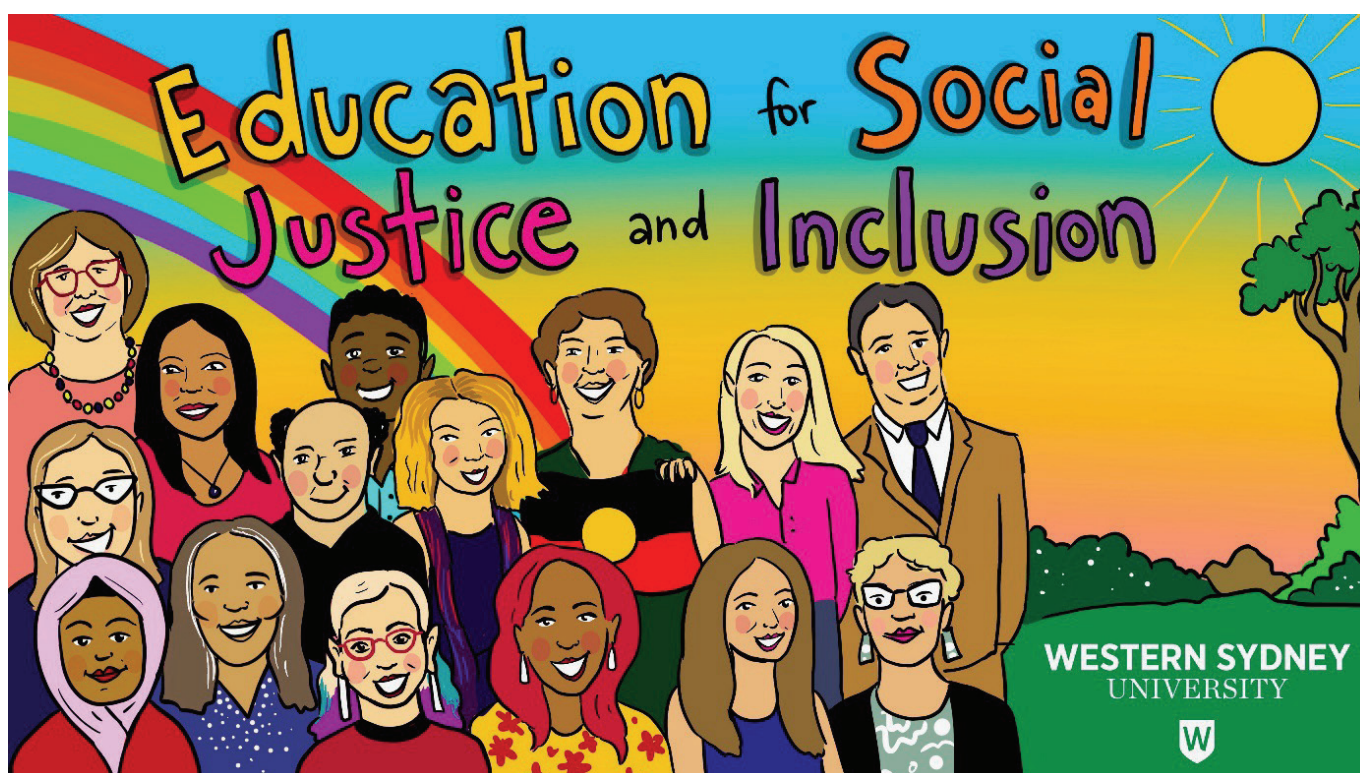
- Dr Azadeh Motevali Zadeh Ardakani
- Dr Johanna Einfalt
- Dr Jennifer Dove
- Associate Professor Jacqueline D'warte
- Professor Tania Ferfolja
- Professor Susanne Gannon
- Dr Rachael Jacobs
- Associate Professor Criss Jones Diaz
- Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik
- Dr Michelle Locke
- Associate Professor Finex Ndhlovu (UNE)
- Dr Genaro de Oliveira (CSU)
- Emeritus Professor Wayne Sawyer
- Associate Professor Christine Woodrow
- Associate Professor Katina Zammit

Educational inequity is shaped by intersecting disadvantages and reinforced by colonialism, whiteness, and heteronormativity. Our research addresses these through interdisciplinary collaborations that advance curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher development grounded in justice, democracy, and decolonisation. We work with teachers as partners in transformation, equipping them to challenge poverty, exclusion, and inequality. Spanning early childhood to post-secondary education, we prioritise the voices of children and youth, especially in high-poverty, marginalised communities. Using participatory and arts-based methods and informed by decolonial, feminist, queer, and southern perspectives, we reimagine education to reflect diverse lived experiences and dismantle systemic inequities.

A snapshot of 2025 research projects, publications and presentations

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Early Childhood Pedagogies (2024-2026) is a partner funded research collaboration between the NSW Department of Education, KU Services NSW, Education SA, and Gowrie SA. This national research which includes ESJI members Associate Professor Jacqueline D'warte and Associate Professor Christine Woodrow, in conjunction with Dr Jamie Sisson and a cohort from the University of South Australia, explores the application of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies in early childhood settings. Year 1 findings have been presented at several national conferences throughout 2025.

Led by Dr Azadeh Ardakani and Professor Loshini Naidoo, the research project **Exploring students' digital learning experiences** examines CALD students digital learning experiences during the emergency remote teaching (ERT) period during Covid-19 and builds on the research project **Human Rights and Digital Inclusion in Western Sydney'** (Naidoo and Tan).



Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik's **Arts-Based Research on Sport for Development in the Global Context** seeks to investigate the critical issues regarding the use of arts-based data collection approaches within marginalised sporting communities in the Global South.

Associate Professor Criss Jones Diaz, in conjunction with Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education (SICLE) at the University of Sydney, has been working on a national study, **Community Language Schools and children under 5: Issues and opportunities** which investigates the key issues and challenges facing Community Language (CL) teachers and principals in teaching community/home languages to preschool children.

Hit Me with Your Best Shot: Planning for an ARC was a full-day event dedicated to building competitive research grant applications, with a focus on ARC success, with presentations from Professor Jo Lampert (Monash University), Associate Professor Jacqueline Ullman and Professor Susanne Gannon.

Becoming Unstuck: A Workshop to Drive Your Academic Writing Forward, a guided workshop presented by Associate Professor Jen Scott-Curwood (University of Sydney), opened ESJI's two-day writing retreat on Parramatta City Campus.

Education in the Anthropocene

Program Leader: Associate Professor David Cole

Academic members:

- **Dr Eva Vass (Program Deputy Leader)**
- **Dr Annette Sartor**
- **Dr Pegah Marandi**
- **Dr Karin Louise**
- **Dr Rachel White**
- **Dr Marion Sturges**
- **Ms Zana Jabir**
- **Dr Susan Germein**
- Dr Felicity Picken
- Ms Jen Dollin (WSU Head of Sustainability)
- Dr Sarah Crinall (Southern Cross University)

In 2025, the research program has been working with local and international partners to further research in Education in the Anthropocene. In February 2025, WSU jointly presented a colloquium with Shiraz University, Iran, to interrogate educational practice and research to unearth the throughlines from human inquiry and progress to enhanced natural functioning and integration with the biosphere. The colloquium, **Understanding the Future International Collaboration**, featured nine academics from the research group as speakers who were joined by colleagues from Iran, including Associate Professor Amin Izadpanah and Associate Professor Laleh Atashi (Shiraz University). As a result of this colloquium, the team have a contract with Springer to produce an edited book: **Creative Philosophy as Education in the Anthropocene**.

With new funding, the Education in the Anthropocene research team initiated the 2025 'Education in the Anthropocene' series to engage educators, industry and community in critical dialogue via online webinars throughout the year, and which will be followed by up with qualitative research inquiry.

Associate Professor David R. Cole presented **What if it's the idea of humans that's the problem** in August, followed by guest speaker, Professor Claire Colebrook from Monash University who presented an online talk in September on **Pedagogy of Chaos: Art as Education in the Anthropocene**. Online talks were presented in October by Dr Felicity Picken and Dr Sarah Maree Crinall on **The Problematic Nature of Science in the Anthropocene**, and in November by Dr Karin Louise on **What radical acts of being and becoming can we dare to undertake to reimagine our collective future in a dangerous world?**.

These popular and well attended webinars, with well over 500 registered participants, have created intense speculative debate amongst participants and attracted both national and international interest. They will lead to new research, collaboration and partnerships for WSU in Education in the Anthropocene.

The Education in the Anthropocene research program has continued to strengthen international research networks and connections, for example, with the World Education Research Association (WERA), which is planning to publish a series of Q1 journal articles, aimed at being reference works for Education in the Anthropocene studies, and has started a new journal called **Education in the Anthropocene** with Springer.

Further information can be found on the web site <https://iiraorg.com/education-in-the-anthropocene-research-program/>

Alternative and Innovate Learning and Teaching Environments (AILTE)

Program Leaders: Professor Tonia Gray and Professor Susan Hespos

Academic members:

- **Dr Marion Sturges**
- **Ms Jaydene Barnes**
- Associate Professor Arianne Reis
- Ms Alexandra Harper (PhD Candidate WSU)
- Ms Fiona Pigott (PhD Candidate WSU)

In a world increasingly dominated by screens and sedentary lifestyles, researchers from Western Sydney University are urging the adoption of Alternative and Innovative Learning and Teaching Environments (AILTE). At an international level, leading organisations such as the UN, OECD, and UNICEF have emphasised the need for more childhood play in society (Yogman et al., 2018). We focus on play—especially outdoor risky play—as a potent learning vehicle for children to develop the skills necessary to succeed and flourish throughout their lives (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2024). Nature play in outdoor educational settings offers a way of addressing the pressing challenges faced by children today. Our research underscores the physical, socio-emotional, and academic benefits of outdoor learning and risk-taking, offering a compelling case for its integration into schools across Australia.

The rapid rise of Gen Overwhelmed (Gen Z) is shaping education, creating both opportunities and challenges that demand urgent research and policy responses (Gray et al., 2025). A growing chorus of experts believe a key driver of the adolescent mental health crisis is the decline, over decades, in opportunities for children to engage in 'risky play' (Dodd & Lester, 2021). This includes adventurous activities that pose both physical and emotional challenges for kids, such as climbing, jumping and balancing at height, or exploring play spaces freely with limited or no adult supervision. The AILTE program is deeply responsive to nature-based learning and reminds educators what is possible when we embrace challenge, adventure, and place-attuned practices to build a child's resilience, a sense of belonging self-confidence and engagement. Team members have expertise in conducting research that generates new knowledge and scholarly contributions to address these challenges.

Futuremaking with Generative AI in Education (FGE)

Program Leader: Associate Professor Lynde Tan

Academic members:

- Associate Professor Joanne Orlando
- Dr Jose Hanham
- Dr Louie Liang

Lead AI Engineer: Mr Andrew Agius

The FGE research program investigates how Generative AI (GenAI) is transforming education across policy, research and development (R&D), teaching, learning, assessment, ethics, and online safety and wellbeing. Through co-designed evaluation and other research initiatives, the program critically examines the affordances and risks of GenAI and its implications for education and society. By engaging with industry, government, research and other communities, the program informs the integration of GenAI at the University, national and international levels. It ensures that GenAI is used in education with a critical, ethical and culturally informed approach while considering its broader impact on social dynamics, communication, wellbeing, and productivity. Through 2025, the FGE program launched new research and held several key research events.

Dialogue with Machines: Collaborative Authorship & the Future of Writing

This event in October explored the evolving landscape of authorship in an era shaped by generative AI. Bringing together educators and researchers, we examined how human-AI collaboration is transforming the writing process, reshaping notions of creativity, voice, and agency. At this event we reimagined the future of authorship where dialogue with machines opens new possibilities for expression and knowledge creation.



Designing Culturally Responsive Chatbots to Enhance Teacher Communication in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Classroom Contexts.

The GenAI Shift: Innovation, Integration & Impact in Academia

This online symposium held in November was co-organised with Researcher Development, and the Division of Research and Education. It aimed to foster critical dialogue, share innovative practices, and build capacity for ethical, inclusive, and future-ready academic work. Participants engaged with thought leaders and peers to examine:

- The evolving role of GenAI in research and academic writing
- Ethical and institutional implications of AI integration
- Strategies for embedding AI literacy into curricula and research training
- Intersections of research-informed teaching and teaching-informed research

Designing Culturally Responsive Chatbots to Enhance Teacher Communication in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Classroom Contexts

While GenAI tools have shown promise in supporting adaptive learning, their potential to enhance culturally responsive teacher communication remains underexplored. This research aims to design a chatbot that simulates classroom interactions in which cultural responsiveness is essential. This exploratory study aims to pilot and refine prompt engineering techniques to train a chatbot to simulate teacher-student communication in CALD classroom contexts.

Featured Research Projects

Strengthening National Reforms in Teacher Training and Inclusive Education Leadership (Ghana)

Funding Body: The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

Amount: \$216,547

Partner Organisations: Western Sydney University, Australia & the Colleges of Education, Ghana.

Project Lead: Dr William Nketsia

Research team:

- **Professor Danielle Tracey**
- **Associate Professor Katrina Barker**



Synopsis: Inclusive education means more than just access; it is about participation, respect, and support for diversity in the classroom. However, globally, several challenges have been found to affect the implementation of inclusive education. These challenges have ranged from attitudinal barriers to inadequate teacher training and insufficient resources. In Ghana, children with disabilities remain among the most excluded from quality education. This exclusion is not due to a lack of potential, but rather attitudinal barriers, misconceptions about disability, inadequate teacher training, and insufficient resources, infrastructure, and cultural mindsets that often overlook the rights and needs of learners with disabilities.

One key strategy that has been found to address most of these barriers has been effective teacher training for inclusive education. To strengthen this, we led a Fellowship program funded by DFAT, in collaboration with Western Sydney University



(WSU), that brought together 10 Ghanaian educators—5 males and 5 females, including three with disabilities—from various Colleges of Education and universities across Ghana—to take part in a three-phase international Fellowship. The Fellowship was grounded in action research and professional learning, designed to equip Fellows with inclusive teaching strategies informed by global best practice and tailored to local contexts.

Overview of the Phases:

Phase 1 – Preparation (4 weeks)

The fellows had 4 weeks of preparation in Ghana through interactive Zoom discussions and sharing of online documents. We collaborated closely with the fellows to encourage deep reflection and critical thinking about key challenges and gaps in Ghana's inclusive education reforms.

Phase 2 – Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude Building in Australia (4 Weeks)

During Phase Two of the Fellowship, fellows were privileged to travel to Australia and engage in a wide range of immersive experiences that consisted of Field Visits in Australian schools and community services to observe firsthand how inclusive practices. In addition, fellows engaged in workshops with renowned Australian experts. These sessions deepened their understanding of the social model of disability, human rights frameworks, and university policies that support students with disabilities. Fellows also explored best practices in curriculum design, assessment, and collaborative teaching. One of the most empowering aspects of this phase was the Action Research Design process. Our Zoom interactions with the fellows in Phase One and discussions with them during the first week of Phase One helped the Fellows identify real challenges within Ghana's teacher education reform landscape and began shaping their action research projects. Fellows were divided into two groups and identified real issues in their educational settings, then developed action research questions and methodologies to address them.



Phase 3 – Implementation in Ghana (2 Weeks)

Upon their return to Ghana, the fellows used a collaborative participatory action research model: observing, reflecting, planning, and acting—while involving stakeholders like teachers, teacher educators, and students. Data was gathered through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations—before and after the intervention. During our visit to Ghana, we worked alongside the fellows, offering expert guidance, reflecting on their progress, and co-planning the writing of the action research results. Our support enriched their capacity to translate ideas into impactful practice.

The Action Research Studies led to two major interventions:

- One group partnered with a private school to train in-service teachers on UDL and behaviour management
- Another group worked with five Colleges of Education to train pre-service teachers on inclusive attitudes, disability awareness, and classroom practices.

Before the intervention, inclusive education was widely misunderstood. Misconceptions and harmful beliefs—such as viewing disability as a curse—were common, creating significant barriers to inclusion. Many teachers also lacked the confidence and practical skills to support diverse learners effectively.

After the intervention:

- Of the 22 private school in-service teachers:
 - 21 improved their confidence in inclusive teaching.
 - 21 reported gains in knowledge of UDL.
 - All of them improved their behaviour management strategies.

- Of the 50 pre-service teachers in Colleges of Education:
 - 33 showed positive shifts in attitudes.
 - 37 gained confidence in teaching students with disabilities.
 - 41 acquired practical, inclusive teaching strategies.

Wider Impact

These changes have ripple effects. As these teachers enter the classroom, thousands of students with disabilities will benefit from more inclusive and respectful learning environments. That's real progress toward **SDGs 4 and 5**—quality education and gender/equity.

To sustain this momentum, we co-developed an **Inclusive Education Policy Guide** and a Practical UDL Teaching Manual for use across teacher training colleges in Ghana. These are under review by experts at WSU and will be shared with the organisations in charge of initial teacher education in Ghana for review and adoption. Fellows are also initiating social inclusion clubs, reflective staff sessions, and campus-wide disability sensitisation efforts.

This project proves that **inclusive education reform is possible when grounded in research, collaboration, and lived experience.**

The impact of their work is already being felt. Through their leadership, they are equipping future teachers, designing inclusive curricula, and advocating for policies that promote not just educational access but educational justice.

Funding Period: November 2024 – June 2025

High Achieving Teachers Project (HAT)

Funding Body: Commonwealth Department of Education

Amount: \$3,112,190

Partner Organisations: Western Sydney University & NSW Department of Education

Project Lead: Associate Professor Kay Carroll

Research Team:

- **Professor Michele Simons**
- **Associate Professor David Cole**
- **Dr William Nketsia**
- **Dr Jose Hanham**
- **Dr Nathan Berger**
- **Dr Pegah Marandi**
- **Dr Christine Grima-Farrell**
- **Zania Jabir**
- **Matthew Leeds**
- **Kellie Jorda**
- **Dr Kate Templeman**

Synopsis: Cultural and linguistic diversity is a prevalent feature of schools across Greater Western Sydney. According to research from the Centre for Western Sydney, the region is characterised by a high level of population growth (25.3% increase since 2011), where 40.9% of residents in the region were born outside of Australia. In 2020, 36.9% students in public schools came from homes where languages other than English were spoken by themselves and/or at least one parent or carer. The diversity of language backgrounds of students in government schools has also increased by 12% from 217 languages in 2010 to 243 languages in 2020. Given this linguistic diversity and current research that shows that multilingual students thrive in contexts that acknowledge their linguistic competence (Cummins, 2014), it is vital that initial teacher education programmes graduate teachers who can bring multi-lingual and cross-cultural competence to their work as teachers.

The HAT Program is a new initiative funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, which recognises the valuable skills and expertise of individuals with qualifications in a range of different subject areas, and from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and provides a scholarship opportunity for them to upskill into teaching.

Potential candidates are drawn from Community Language Teachers, many of whom arrived in Australia as either migrants or refugees and who have graduate qualifications and have either worked in education systems in their countries of origin as teachers and school leaders, or who are wishing to change to a career in teaching in primary or secondary schools.

The NSW Department of Education has partnered with Western Sydney University to deliver an accredited and flexible teaching degree to meet the needs of experienced teaching participants.

Overview of the Phases: The HAT Program includes a suite of innovative initiatives which collectively provide a case-managed personalised learning pathway for participants. These include:

- Support and engagement with the Community Language teacher networks as the source for recruitment;
- Academic assessment of academic and non-academic capabilities for teaching including processes to recognise formal and non-formal learning (RPL);
- Support and relevant English Language Proficiency testing;
- A mentoring and support program to support success in LANTITE, promoting student wellbeing, and capacities to work cross culturally in Australian school settings; and
- Structured and supported employment-based experiences embedded in diverse school contexts, and ongoing transition and professional learning to accelerate attainment of proficient professional status.

Research and Evaluation: The HAT program is being evaluated to determine the extent to which it has delivered on the aims of the expansion pilots to meet the needs of schools with identified work challenges. It combines an approach which emphasises a focus on process (how the pilot was implemented) and a defined set of outcomes (numbers of graduates; progression/retention in employment). The evaluation considers the 2-year operation of the pilot and include cycles of data collection, analysis, feedback and reporting which will be used to inform the development of the pilot as it unfolds and to provide data to assist overall impact at the end of the two-year period. The overall components of the evaluation framework include:

- Co-design of an evaluation framework with key stakeholders (Commonwealth Department of Education, NSW Department of Education); this will include consultation with Community Language Schools, Western Sydney School partners and the development of an agreed program logic to establish a shared understanding of the working of the pilot.
- Collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to track retention and progression of participants

throughout the pilot; this will include focus groups with participants, school leaders, university and school-based staff working with the pilot participants; semester reporting of student outcomes, progress and success rates.

- Quantitative data collection post-graduation of each cohort to determine progression, retention and attrition within the first 1-2 years of teaching

Wider Impact: To date, 54 participants have commenced the HAT Program in 2025.

Program Composition and Diversity

- 30 participants are enrolled in the *Master of Teaching (Secondary)*
- 18 participants are undertaking the *Master of Teaching (Primary)*
- 6 participants are enrolled in the *Master of Teaching (Secondary) STEM*

Academic and Professional Backgrounds

All participants have completed a three-year undergraduate degree. The cohort reflects a rich blend of experience:

- 6% are recent graduates
- 94% are mid-career changers, bringing valuable professional insights into education
- One participant holds a doctoral qualification
- Three participants possess non-education Masters degrees

Community Engagement and Retention

A notable 34% of participants have actively contributed to education through volunteer teaching in Community Languages Schools demonstrating early commitment to community-based learning.

Importantly, the program has achieved 100% retention and progression at the end of its first year. No withdrawals have occurred, underscoring strong participant satisfaction and program stability. The WSU HAT program is strengthening teacher workforce diversity by creating a targeted pathway for aspiring primary and secondary educators from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds to teach in Greater Western Sydney's most hard-to-staff schools, directly addressing equity and access challenges in the region.

Funding Period: 2025 – 2027



Guardians of the Park: Habitat Restoration for Western Sydney's Adolescents

Funding Body: Western Sydney Parklands Trust

Amount: \$25,883 + \$43,000

Partner Organisations: Western Sydney University & Greater Sydney Parklands

Project Lead: Professor Tonia Gray

Research Team:

- Fiona Pigott
- Dr Chris Panagiotaros
- Clarice Lisle
- John Schaefer

Background: Greater Sydney Parklands (GSP) is the NSW Government agency responsible for more than 6,000 hectares of urban green space across Sydney, including Centennial Parklands, Western Sydney Parklands, Parramatta Park, Callan Park, and Fernhill Estate. Through its Education and Community Programs, GSP connects tens of thousands of people each year with nature, culture, and community, focusing on wellbeing, inclusion, stewardship, and lifelong learning. Central to this work are initiatives that engage children, young people, and schools in meaningful, place-based and place-responsive experiences that build environmental awareness, social connection, and a sense of belonging.

The *Guardians of the Park* (GOP) program was established in response to a series of arson incidents within the parklands as a collaborative initiative between Greater Sydney Parklands, the NSW Police Youth Liaison, the Rural Fire Service, and First Nations education providers. The initial cohort consisted

of young people directly involved in lighting fires, and the program was designed as a non-punitive response combining environmental education, practical conservation work, cultural learning, and positive engagement in outdoor settings. Over time, GOP evolved beyond this focus and is now offered more broadly to adolescents aged 14 to 17 who are disengaged from or disadvantaged in mainstream schooling, particularly those who benefit from experiential, nature-based learning environments, rather than traditional classrooms.

Facilitated by experienced GSP educators trained in inclusive and responsive practice and complemented by First Nations knowledge holders. Activities are designed to be sensory-aware and place-based, maximising group cooperation and nature connection opportunities to develop social skills, emotional regulation, confidence and environmental responsibility. From its inception, GOP has incorporated principles of participatory and nature-based pedagogy, with students as co-creators – helping shape the direction and focus of program activities. The program continues to be reviewed and adapted to reflect participant needs and emerging best practice.

Cohorts attend the program with their regular teachers and School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs), with coordinating teachers selecting participants for whom conventional classroom approaches have proven ineffective. A significant proportion present with complex cognitive, behavioural and sensory profiles, including, but not limited, to neurodivergent diagnoses such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ADHD is characterised by difficulty with attention regulation, planning, and impulse control, whilst individuals with ASD experience atypical social communication and sensory processing. Many participants also come from low socio-economic backgrounds and complex family circumstances. Cohorts reflect a wide diversity of nationalities, languages, and cultural identities. This diversity, in combination with the



prevalence and diversity of additional needs, underscores the program's role as a flexible and inclusive intervention for young people who face significant barriers to participation.

Pilot Study Results: This mixed-methods pilot research study explored the impact of a 10-week habitat restoration project involving disadvantaged youth in Western Sydney, Australia. Researchers examined changes in participants' connection to place, self-esteem, and overall wellbeing through surveys, observations, and interviews.

While substantial research links nature with wellbeing, less attention has been given to young people's growing disconnection from natural environments—especially adolescents with special learning needs in disadvantaged urban areas. This pilot study therefore sought to:

1. assess whether a 10-week engagement in habitat restoration could enhance connection to place, self-esteem, and wellbeing;
2. identify factors influencing the success or limitations of such programs;
3. explore the relationship between urban nature connectedness, wellbeing, and pro-environmental behaviour; and
4. develop recommendations to guide similar initiatives supporting the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of adolescents in disadvantaged communities.

The study revealed that participants faced several challenges, including varying literacy levels, inconsistent school attendance, and complex personal circumstances. Qualitative data emerged as the most reliable and accessible method of collection, while quantitative approaches encountered several unforeseen barriers. The pilot study incorporated Martin and Czellar's (2016) four-item 'Extended Inclusion of Nature in Self (EINS)

scale which used spatial metaphors to capture the self-nature connection. Whilst the EINS has been shown to be a robust tool for assessing environmental identity and nature relatedness across a variety of different contexts, the literacy levels of this cohort conveyed otherwise.

Initial findings indicated that immersion in habitat restoration positively influenced participants' connection to place, self-esteem, and wellbeing. Two main factors contributed to the program's success: (1) the incorporation of cultural teachings by local Indigenous educators, which enhanced engagement and participation; and (2) the effective facilitation by park educators, who helped build a strong relationship between urban nature connectedness, wellbeing, and pro-environmental behaviour.

Overall, the project demonstrated that structured, nature-based interventions can offer meaningful benefits for disengaged youth. It also underscored the importance of culturally responsive teaching, sustained mentorship, and accessible program design in achieving positive outcomes. A set of thirteen recommendations was developed to strengthen future delivery, focusing on inclusivity, consistency, and the integration of Indigenous ecological knowledge. These recommendations aim to further improve the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of adolescents in disadvantaged urban settings.

Following the pilot's success, the project has been extended through 2028 to implement and evaluate these recommendations in practice. This ongoing research will continue to build understanding of how long-term engagement with urban nature can foster wellbeing, community connection, and pro-environmental behaviours among young people facing educational and social disadvantage.

Funding Period: July 2025 – July 2028



New Projects

In Limbo: Where is my job? Young people's experiences of finding meaningful work

Funding Body: Young and Resilient Research Centre WSU

Amount: \$5,000

Project Lead: Dr Karin Louise

Research Team:

- Professor Phillipa Collin
- **Associate Professor David Cole**
- **Associate Professor Kay Carroll**
- **Adrijana Tomovic (Research Assistant)**
- Kerry-Anne Jones (CEO, Southwest Arts & Advisory Group)
- Emmanuel Assante (Youth artist & Advisory Group)

Synopsis: While on the surface there appears to be a strong job market in Australia, on the ground experiences of young people between the ages of 18-30 indicate that there are significant barriers in breaking into entry level careers that match qualifications and constitute meaningful work to them. A scoping review of the experiences of young people 18-30 years residing in Western Sydney or regional NSW of finding meaningful work in the cultural and educational literature to find out a) what is considered by young people meaningful work and b) what are the impacts of not having meaningful work on wellbeing.

Reading for Life: Advancing the Reading Ability, Self-concept, and Motivation of Primary Students

Funding Body: Learning Links

Amount: \$155,128

Project Lead: Associate Professor Katrina Barker

Research Team:

- **Professor Danielle Tracey**
- Associate Professor Laurence Park

Synopsis: Learning Links is a children's charity that partners with schools to deliver Reading for Life (R4L) to enhance students' reading ability, self-concept and motivation. The program targets children in Years 2 and 3, providing a significant boost in reading skills at this critical stage of development, while simultaneously enhancing their sense of self, aligning with the goals of the NSW Public Education Plan. Designed by a psychologist, teacher and speech pathologist, R4L has been successfully running for 20 years and has been recognised as a Promising Program by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). This evidence-based program was previously evaluated through an ARC-Linkage grant, demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing primary school students' phonological awareness and reading self-concept. The program was recently updated to align with the new national English curriculum, focusing on students in Years 2 to 3 experiencing reading difficulties, focusing on foundational literacy skills including sounds, blends, high frequency words, reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension. Updated empirical validation of its effectiveness is therefore required.

Learning Links are collaborating with Western Sydney University to understand the program's effectiveness. This has been made possible through funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation (2025-2027). This project assesses the impact of Learning Links' updated R4L on Year 2 and 3 students with reading difficulties across schools in New South Wales (NSW). The objective is to determine R4L's effect on students' key reading skills (single sounds and blends, reading accuracy and fluency, and comprehension), students' reading self-concept and in the longer-term motivation, hypothesising improvements, in comparison to wait-list control.

Evaluation of the Hive Early Childhood Educator Network (ECEN)

Funding Body: United Way Australia

Amount: \$40,832

Research Team:

- Dr Cris Townley (TeEACH)
- **Dr Azadeh Motevali Zadeh Ardakani**

Synopsis: This project evaluates the effectiveness of the Hive's ECEC capacity-building initiatives aimed at improving the quality of early education and care in an area of social disadvantage, high developmental vulnerability and 'thin supply'. The Hive is a place-based collective impact initiative in the Mt Druitt area (2770), focused on supporting children in their early years through a community-centred approach. This evaluation will provide evidence on how professional learning and network-building initiatives contribute to quality improvement across ECEC services, thereby informing broader place-based strategies for early childhood development.

Funding period: May 2025 – March 2026

Transitions: Life at Liverpool – Stages One & Two.

Funding Body: Department of Education

Amount: Stage 1 \$30,668, Stage 2 \$29,591

Project Lead: Dr Karin Louise

Research Team:

- **Associate Professor David Cole**
- Michael Saxon (Principal, Liverpool Boys High School)
- **Associate Professor Kay Carroll**

Synopsis: Transitions will employ the Cultural Wellbeing Framework to collaboratively design a series of creative experiences for staff to explore their past, present and future relationship with Liverpool Boys High School through place-based perspectives. The aim is to inspire the LBHS school community to remember past successes, navigate present challenges together and reimagine optimistic futures through the medium of artmaking. This will provide opportunities for staff and students to process and express in a safe way the emotional, mental, physical complexities they will experience as part of the first stage of demolishing and rebuilding LBHS.



Continuing Projects

Advancing Balimo College, Papua New Guinea 2025

Funding Body: PNG Sustainable Development Program Ltd.

Amount: \$242,401

Project Lead: Professor Danielle Tracey

Project Team: Associate Professor Katrina Barker

Synopsis: Throughout 2025, Professor Tracey and Associate Professor Barker employed an action research methodology to co-design, develop and evaluate curriculum and pedagogy for the Diploma in Teaching (Primary) and Bachelor of Education (Primary) at Balimo College Western Province Papua New Guinea. As part of the action research methodology, academics at Balimo College were mentored to build local capacity in pedagogy and research. The project is delivered in partnership with PNG Sustainable Development Program Ltd. and Kokoda Track Foundation.

Arts-based Resources to Promote Children's Food Allergy Literacy

Funding Body: School of Education

Project Lead: Dr Prathyusha Sanagavarapu

Research Team:

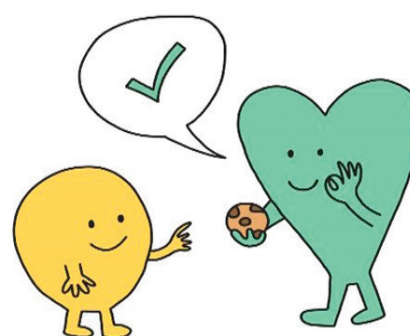
- Professor Ann Dadich (School of Business)
- Dr Barbara Doran (University of Technology, Sydney)
- Ms Maria Said (Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia)

Synopsis: Young children with food allergy (potentially life-threatening) find it hard to negotiate offers of tempting foods from benevolent peers, especially when they do not understand the seriousness of an allergic reaction without being ostracised. Also, with limited assertiveness, children can find it difficult to communicate their food allergy symptoms and seek help early when they begin primary school. Children need to be empowered in developmentally appropriate ways, with the knowledge and skills needed to avoid foods they cannot eat and remain safe, coined as 'Food Allergy Literacy' (FAL). Moreover, there are very limited easy-to-understand resources to support young children's learning of FAL.

Addressing an urgent need to develop pre-schoolers' FAL and for resources, Dr Sanagavarapu and her team have developed Arts-based resources with key messages of food allergy safety. These easy-to-understand, child-focused resources will soon be distributed via Western Sydney University and Allergy & Anaphylaxis websites. Educators, parents and guardians, who are not able to access research findings via traditional research outputs can easily access and use these resources to develop young children's FAL and to promote their safety in various settings.

Supported by seed funding (\$5K) from the SoE, this project exemplifies how even modest funding can generate significant outcomes when research is thoughtfully translated into practice.

if you have food allergy
check with an adult



that your food is safe

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia UTS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Batyr School and University Programs Evaluation

Funding Body: batyr Australia Limited

Amount: \$343,111

Project Lead: Professor Philippa Collin

Research Team:

- Associate Professor Katrina Barker
- Professor Danielle Tracey

Synopsis: Youth mental health is declining in Australia with more than 40% of young Australians experiencing anxiety and depression. Mental health promotion focusing on building young people's mental health literacy, reducing stigma and improving awareness of available supports and readiness to seek help. Friends are the number one source of support for school students and peer-based interventions have been shown to be effective. This project will collaborate with youth-led mental health initiative batyr so evaluate their schools and universities programs. This five-year project builds on an existing relationship to and will include: the development of an evaluation framework; co-researcher training for young people and batyr staff members; a process evaluation; an impact evaluation; and an economic analysis. The outputs will support the evidence for peer-based, storytelling mental health promotion interventions in schools, communication of the impact and value of batyr programs to young people, funders and potential supporters.

Funding Period: 2024 - 2028

Bennelong Foundation for Transitions

Funding Body: Bennelong Foundation for Transitions Drama

Amount: \$26,550

Project Lead: Dr Rachael Jacobs

Synopsis: Western Sydney University have partnered with Collective Impact Arts since 2021 to run the Transitions program as part of a research project into the impact of drama for supporting migrants' and refugee students' language development and a sense of belonging in Australian schools. Weekly workshops used drama to:

- Support group cohesion and team building skills
- Boost confidence
- Boost collaboration skills
- Support English language learning, with many new words taught in context as students learn more about drama.

In 2024 and 2025 the program expanded to more sites, investigating the suitability of Drama to aid students' transition to mainstream high school.

Funding Period: May 2023 – April 2025

Cultural Wellbeing of Us: Beyond the Divide

Project Lead: Dr Karin Louise

Research Team:

- **Associate Professor David Cole**
- Dr Gus Casely-Hayford (Director, V&A East London)
- Dr Tracey Callinan (CEO, Regional Arts NSW)
- Kerry-Anne Jones (CEO, Southwest Arts)
- Kiri Zakinthinos (CEO, Curiousworks)
- Karen Maber (Dharug Keeping Place Officer, City of Parramatta)
- Brett Adlington (CEO Museums and Galleries NSW)

Synopsis: The Cultural Wellbeing of Us roundtable group led by Dr Karin Louise has met four times in 2025 to work on projects that apply the cultural wellbeing research design approach with community arts initiatives. Beyond the Divide arts and culture roundtable series explores how we can advocate for the cultural wellbeing of our societies in a way that is life sustaining for us all. How can the arts and culture create spaces that help us to connect, are meaningful and accessible for the next generation.

Capacity Building of Papua New Guinea Coaches and Teachers for E-Learning Advancements in Balimo, Morehead and Lake Murray

Funding Body: PNG Sustainable Development Program Ltd.

Amount: \$221,959

Project Lead: Associate Professor Katrina Barker

Research Team: Professor Danielle Tracey

Synopsis: Adding Lake Murray to the project in 2025, Associate Professor Barker and Professor Tracey will once more leverage their expertise in curriculum and teacher training to build the capacity of PNG coaches and their teachers. To achieve this the following activities will be undertaken:

1. Lead the design of in-service professional development training for teachers in Balimo, Morehead and Lake Murray.
2. Oversee the training of coaches in Balimo, Morehead and Lake Murray to ensure the high-quality delivery of professional development modules to teachers.
3. Evaluate the impact of this professional learning initiative on significant student and teacher outcomes. This evaluation aims to gauge the program's effectiveness and provide insights for refining future offerings.

Delivered in partnership with PNG Sustainable Development Program Ltd. and Kokoda Track Foundation.



CIPL – Curriculum Implementation Professional Learning

Funding Body: NSW Department of Education

Amount: \$504,055

Project Lead: Associate Professor Erin Mackenzie

Research Team:

- Associate Professor Kay Carroll
- Distinguished Professor Kathryn Holmes
- Professor Michele Simons
- Dr Nathan Berger

Synopsis: This project aims to examine how evidenced-based professional learning, resources, communities of practice, and high-impact teaching strategies can be leveraged to improve school performance and student outcomes equitably, improve teaching quality, strengthen school leadership, and build pathways to lifelong learning for students. WSU will provide a research lens to support the creation, delivery, and evaluation of Curriculum Implementation Professional Learning (CIPL). Across three interconnected phases of the project, we will share expertise in evaluation and our deep understanding of evidence-based pedagogies and assessment practice to support the iterative improvement of CIPL and effective implementation of the new NSW syllabuses.

Funding Period: October 2023-June 2025

Designing Online Learning Through Productive Talk

Funding Body: Collier Charitable Trust

Amount: \$35,000 (plus \$15,000 internal funding)

Project Lead: Dr Eva Vass

Research Team:

- Associate Professor Lynde Tan
- Andrew Agius (Research Officer/Web Designer)

Synopsis: This project was designed to support teachers' professional development and enhance student learning by bringing together two powerful themes: classroom dialogue and technology-enabled learning (TEL). Educationally productive dialogue is active, inquisitive, and empathetic (Vass, 2018). We explored how these principles translate into TEL environments, which offer unique opportunities for educational dialogue when used with dialogic intention. Using participatory action research, we collaborated with primary and secondary teachers to examine how the quality of classroom talk impacts student learning and how technology can extend and enrich dialogic conversations. Teachers explored ways to design substantive, educationally productive interactions in online environments available to them, focusing on English, Maths, and Science & Technology.

An open access Dialogic Teaching Hub was developed to share findings with the wider teaching community, presenting three cases that exemplify dialogic teaching in digital contexts. University restructuring created constraints around web resources during CMS transition. Rather than delaying the project, we developed a custom, standalone platform adhering to university branding and WCAG accessibility standards. The hub, hosted on existing infrastructure, is nearing completion with several operational modules ready for demonstration at https://vuws.westernsydney.edu.au/bbcswebdav/xid-79808048_1.

Funding Period: January 2022 - October 2025

Early Career Teacher Induction: Early Career Teacher Induction: Supporting Precarious Teachers

Funding Body: Australian Research Council

Amount: \$37,100 [via UniSA]

Project Lead: Professor Anna Sullivan (University of South Australia)

Research Team: Professor Michele Simons

Synopsis: This project aims to investigate the ways in which Australian induction policies support precariously employed early career teachers to manage student classroom behaviour effectively. This project expects to generate new knowledge in the area of workforce development about the induction experiences of casual and short-term contract early career teachers. Expected outcomes of this project include alternative policy and practice recommendations to support the transition of insecure replacement teachers to the profession. This should provide significant benefits, such as improving teachers' classroom management practices; the retention of new teachers; improving teacher workforce development; and building a healthier education system.

Funding Period: January 2023 – December 2025

Early Childhood Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogies

Funding Body: Department of Education (NSW)

Amount: \$54,545 [via UniSA]

Project Lead: Dr Jamie Sisson (UniSA)

Research Team:

- Associate Professor Victoria Whittington (UniSA)
- Professor Irabinna Rigney (UniSA)
- Professor Rob Hattam (UniSA)
- Associate Professor Christine Woodrow
- Associate Professor Jacqueline D'warte



Synopsis: The EC CLRP project investigates culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies in the early childhood context. It is a collaboration between UniSA and WSU, with multiple partners. The approach uses an action research design enriched with ethnographic methods to explore and develop these pedagogies in which community knowledges play a fundamental part. The research involves teachers, leaders and families. The outcomes include a framework for ECLRP and Case Study Resources to support teachers in this work. Partner organisations/research sites include KU Children's Services NSW, DE NSW, Catholic Education SA (CESA), Gowrie SA and an independent school in Adelaide.

Funding Period: 2023-2026

The Human Rights Claims of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023/2027 in Social auditing: a field study on deliberative permeability in public and private entities

Funding Body: FAPESP (São Paulo research Foundation)
\$82,496.67

Research Team:

- Associate Professor Marco Antonio Bettine de Almeida (Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil)
- **Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik (Western Sydney University)**

Synopsis: The project aims to deepen studies on deliberative democracy, based on Jürgen Habermas' theory, applying it in the context of public and private entities, with a focus on women's equal rights in the 2023 and 2027 World Cups. The project will develop a replicable model of social audit, integrating Habermas' communicative rationality with the guidelines of the Brazilian Courts of Auditors, investigating at the federal level the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship; at the state level the Secretariat of Sports of the State of São Paulo; and at the municipal level the Municipal Secretariat of Sports and Leisure of the city of São Paulo. Among the entities related to the mega-event, the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) will be audited. Contact will be sought with entities that operate in the world of sports to protect female players, such as: the International Women's Football Union (FIFPRO) (World Players' Union), the National Union of Professional Football Athletes (SINAPFAI), the Brazilian Football Reference Center (CRFB), the Study Group on Football and Women (GEFuM), Gol pela Igualdade - Fundação Gol de Letra, and the Sports & Education Institute. A connection will also be established between communicative rationality and administrative practices for the management of complex systems, since they share validity foundations of correctness, sincerity, and truthfulness. The questions are based on reports produced by the international media during the two mega-events, using inequality of rights as a category. Comparative research between the World Cups (2023/2027) will allow us to assess variations in FIFA governance and local policies. The central argument is to measure the permeability of democratic civic common sense and identify barriers to communication and effective engagement.

Nancy Fraser establishes an interesting dialogue about the third dimension of contemporary feminism. In addition to the struggles for redistribution, the ideal of equality expanded in relation to socioeconomic inequalities and for representation, the deconstruction of anthropocentric patterns of cultural value or hierarchies, contemporary feminism is based on representation, which goes beyond ensuring an equal political voice for women in already established political communities. In the current phase, feminism fights to reframe disputes about justice that cannot be properly contained within established regimes. Habermas understands this position as aimed at emancipation, which involves the enlightenment obtained through political interaction, which should not only produce formal equality of rights, eliminating male prerogatives, but also overturn concrete forms of life marked by male monopolies. This is the main justification for the research: the fight for women's equality is the fight for political participation. The project seeks to contribute to civic education and the integration of theory and practice in the face of the challenges of participatory democracy.

Living Well with Global Developmental Delay

Funding Body: National Disability Insurance Agency & Department of Health, Ageing and Disability

Amount: \$994,140

Research Team:

- **Associate Professor Christine Johnston**
- **Professor Danielle Tracey**

Synopsis: This project is funded through the Australian Government's Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program. Christine Johnston and Danielle Tracey are working with three industry partners: Dr Tim Moore (Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute), Kerry Dominish (CEO of EarlyEd) and John Forster (CEO of Noah's Ark). Dr Matthew Breaden is the research officer on the project.

The project continues to have three aims. Firstly, we have developed and continue to build a website that offers detailed, easily accessible information that is evidence-based and takes account of the literacy levels, language and learning needs of individuals and families living with Global Developmental Delay (GDD). While a translation and accessibility tool is available on the website, professional translations have also been produced in 20 community languages. Social media tiles in those languages are also now being used to make families aware of the resources.

Materials continue to be produced in multiple formats with written materials supplemented by videos and blogs featuring those living with GDD and the professionals working with them bringing their experiences and knowledge to life.

Secondly, and most importantly, the resources are being co-designed with the considered and enthusiastic input of our Working Group of five mothers and one grandmother all of

whom have a child who has been diagnosed with GDD. It is they who have identified the content and suggested how it can best be presented providing feedback on the materials as they are produced. They have also contributed to the videos and blogs. They, together with our research team which brings expertise and experience in applied research, online education and intervention, are ensuring that the website is of considerable relevance to families living with GDD, the professionals working with them and their communities.

Finally, the project is enabling an exploration of co- design principles that will lead to recommendations for practice.

The project has been presented at one national and two international conferences in the last year. <https://globaldevelopmentaldelay.com.au>

Funding Period: 2019 – extended to June 2026

Middle Leading Practices for Impacting Student Learning

Funding Body: Australian Research Council-Discovery Project

Amount: \$538,242

Project Lead: Professor Peter Grootenboer (Griffith University)

Research Team:

- **Professor Catherine Attard (Western Sydney University)**
- Professor Christine Edwards-Groves (Griffith University)
- Associate Professor Sharon Tindall-Ford (University of Wollongong)

Synopsis: This project aimed to understand how school middle leaders' practices build teacher capacity in ways that positively impact student learning. Using practice-based methodology, the project studied the "flow of influence" from middle leaders' (ML) implementing school-based professional learning (PL), to the direct impact on classroom teaching and student learning practices. Since improving students' academic results is a national imperative, and middle leaders are accepted to be key "drivers" for facilitating school-based PL, results have informed the development of a repertoire of middle leading practices (RoP). This contributes to a charter of middle leadership best practice that improves teaching and learning in Australian schools.

Funding Period: January 2021 – extended to December 2025

Preparing for Big School in South-West Sydney

Funding Body: Community First Step

Amount: \$20,000

Project lead: Professor Danielle Tracey

Synopsis: Readiness for schooling provides an important foundation for school success, yet children from CALD backgrounds in South-West Sydney often commence school without meeting key developmental milestones. Community First Step offer 'Big School Big Minds' to better prepare these children and families. This study seeks to determine if:

1. Children participating in the 'Big School Big Minds' program experience an increase in the short-term outcomes identified in the program logic
2. Parents/carers participating in the 'Big School Big Minds' program experience an increase in the short-term outcomes identified in the program logic, and
3. Identify the acceptability of the 'Big School Big Minds' program

Professor Tracey has designed and overseen a mixed methods study where quantitative and qualitative data is collected to answer the research objectives.

Funding Period: October 2023 – June 2025

Professional Development Through English Medium Instruction: Pedagogy and Participatory Teacher Action Research

Funding Body: Huaqiao University HQU, China

Project Lead: Professor Jinghe Han

Research Team: Associate Professor Lynde Tan

Synopsis: The focus of this project is to enhance and empower bilingual academics from Huaqiao University in preparing for their teaching, research and publication for the internationalisation agenda of the university. It engages participatory action research to facilitate an intensive intervention between WSU and HQU. The specific objective of this Project is to explore and strengthen HQU bilingual academic staff's pedagogical and research capacity through English Medium Instruction.

Funding Period: October 2023 – April 2025

Promoting Adolescents' Mathematics Engagement and Participation in NSW

Funding Body: Department of Education (NSW)

Amount: \$485,000

Project Lead: Distinguished Professor Kathryn Holmes

Research Team:

- Dr Nathan Berger
- Matt Thompson
- Professor Erin Mackenzie (Southern Cross University, adjunct at WSU)
- Professor Helen Watt (University of Sydney)
- Dr Bronwyn Reid O'Connor (University of Sydney)
- Associate Professor Judy Anderson (University of Sydney)

Synopsis: This project consists of three complementary and interlinked strands. Research Strands 1 and 2 will discover why motivations decline, especially for girls/women, and how this in tandem with other factors predicts upper secondary mathematics enrolments and future aspirations. We will systematically explore competing explanations for why particular types of students 'opt out' or 'opt down' relative to the level of senior mathematics that their achievement background would suggest, versus what engages and promotes advanced mathematics participation by other students.

Theoretically-derived explanations from the literature that we will explore include anxiety, disinterest, lack of information or misinformation concerning relevance to students' future career aspirations, and potential costs such as effort, time and competing interests, assessed using psychometrically validated scales. We will be alert to whether explanations are disproportionate for particular groups, including girls and culturally diverse students. Findings will provide directions for closing equity gaps and lifting engagement for all students. The Translational-Strand will develop a process model for authentic professional learning (PL) partnerships together with participating teachers and school leaders using their own schools' data, to co-design solutions and transform findings into practical approaches to improve the engagement and participation of NSW adolescents in upper secondary mathematics and beyond. Teachers in each school will work with the research team to develop strategies to fit their particular settings by asking relevant questions of the data in an authentic evidence-based process model for PL. The model and practical approaches that we develop will be implemented, evaluated and disseminated through our planned outputs to inform future policy interventions aligned with the goals of the NSW Mathematics Strategy.

Funding Period: June 2022 – November 2026

Habitat Restoration and Ecological Monitoring in Western Sydney Parklands for Threatened Species Recovery and Climate Change

Funding Body: NSW Department of Planning and Environment & Royal Botanical Gardens Trust

Amount: \$23,530

Project Lead: Professor Tonia Gray

Synopsis: This is a project led by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, partnering with the Western Sydney University and 1) Muru Mittigar Aboriginal Corporation – Education Team, 2) Naturalist, 3) DPIE - Saving Our Species Program, 4) RuffTrack, 5) Twenty10, 6) Sydney West Youth Services, and 7) Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation and The Greater Sydney Parklands.

Through a Place Based Learning in Environmental Land Management approach the project aims to: Undertake BioBlitz using iNaturalist to record and identify species, particularly those threatened; encourage awareness and appreciation for flora and fauna in our parklands; Increase social skills through team-work activities; Increase physical skills and emotional wellbeing by being in nature; Learn bush skills and bush craft, scientific curiosity; Connect with and learn Indigenous Cultural knowledge of the area; Design and increase habitat connectivity for threatened species by planting vegetation corridors and restoring Cumberland Plain Woodland (EEC); mitigate and adapt to climate change through ecological monitoring and habitat restoration; Integrate science with arts by creating podcasts/ videos or other media of the project.

Funding Period: January 2023 - June 2025



Tranquility: Painting for Peace and Cultural Wellbeing

Funding Body: Liverpool Council

Project Lead: Dr Karin Louise

Project Team:

- Associate Professor David Cole
- Emmanuel Assante (Artist, workshop lead)

Synopsis: What does peace and well-being look like in the eyes of young people? The Tranquility: Painting for Peace and Cultural Wellbeing Project is an art-making research project aimed at exploring possibilities for peace and wellbeing in our society through the eyes of young people. Young people are our future leaders of the planet and their voices matter; however, with multiple global crises, they are inheriting some of the most challenging times to grow up and live.

Using the Cultural Wellbeing Framework as a guide, the project aims to instigate conversations about peace and wellbeing and potentially germinate new youth-led projects that embed cultural wellbeing from the start. *Tranquility: Painting for Peace and Cultural Wellbeing* is a collaboration with CuriousWorks and young people at Liverpool Boys High and Liverpool Girls High that extends a 2024 project at these schools.

Understanding and Addressing Everyday Sexisms

Funding Body: Australian Research Council, Discovery Project

Amount: \$214,024

Project Lead: Professor Mindy Blaise (Edith Cowan University)

Research Team:

- Associate Professor Emily Gray (RMIT University)
- Associate Professor Jacqueline Ullman (Western Sydney University)



Synopsis: 2025 was the final year of this project, with Associate Professor Jacqueline Ullman and run in cross-institutional collaboration with lead C.I. Professor Mindy Blaise (Edith Cowan University) and C.I. Associate Professor Emily Gray (Monash University). This year was focused on the refinement and delivery of a suite of educational resources developed from the project, intended for use by university-based Equity, Diversity and Inclusion personnel and Executive staff for professional development and awareness raising. These materials feature findings from the survey academics from 12 public universities and focus group interviews from academics working in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. Educational resources include a free microcredential and accompanying hands-on creative resources for small group professional learning activities in the university setting, including our “Cards Against Everyday Sexisms” deck. The microcredential and suite of professional learning materials can be found on the project site: <https://www.everydaysexismsau.com/>

Funding Period: 2021 – 2025

Shifting environmental paradigms in education: continuous learning of educators in the Anthropocene (ENVOLEARN).

Funding Body: European Challenge grant (via Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Amount: €499,991.17

Project Lead: Professor Mintautas Gutauskas (Vilnius University)

Research Team:

- Associate Professor Sandra Kaire (Vilnius University)
- Professor Lilija Duobliene (Vilnius University)
- Dr Simona Bekeraite (Vilnius University)
- Dr Ruta Gajauskaite (Vilnius University)

- Dr Virgilijus Pupeikis (Vilnius University)
- Professor Birute Galdikas (Vilnius University)
- Professor Jan Jagodzinski (University of Vienna/ University of Alberta),
- **Associate Professor David Cole (Western Sydney University)**

Synopsis: The main aim of this project is to investigate how educators worldwide engage with their immediate environment, address tensions in differing environmental perspectives, and develop innovative methodologies to enhance environmental education and new environmental competences. Theoretical research will focus on analysis based on phenomenological and posthuman approaches and its development in the philosophy of education. The empirical research will consist of multi-site study that will combine phenomenological, posthumanist and place-based approaches.

Understanding and Building the Strengths and Skills of Non-Specialist Mathematics Teachers and Schools’ Capacities for Junior Secondary Mathematics [Teaching Out of Field]

Funding Body: NSW Department of Education

Amount: \$472,326

Project Lead: Professor Helen Watt (University of Sydney)

Research Team:

- Professor Janette Bobis (University of Sydney)
- Associate Professor Judy Anderson (University of Sydney)
- **Distinguished Professor Kathryn Holmes (Western Sydney University)**
- Professor Paul Richardson (Monash University)

Synopsis: Teaching out-of-field (OOF) contributes to student underperformance in mathematics. To address this issue, we propose an intensive analysis of existing large-scale data to spotlight areas in NSW with greatest need (Objective 1), to inform our new data collection using online surveys and targeted case studies to learn from successful resource management solutions and discern indicators of best practice that could support and reduce OOF (Weldon, 2016); comprehensively canvassing targeted schools’ needs and suggested solutions (Objective 2). We will translate our collective research and professional expertise in mathematics, teacher education and student learning into developing accredited PL for upskilling non-specialist mathematics teachers to teach junior NSW secondary mathematics (Objective 3). This will entail an initial scoping review and critical analysis of previous (in NSW) and promising initiatives underway (e.g., Victoria, Ireland) to determine potential pitfalls, principles underpinning effective PL and successful program design.

Funding Period: June 2021 – November 2025

Sport and Social Development: The Perception of Agents from the Field of Sport for Development and Peace Regarding Sport as a Tool for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Funding Body: Brazilian Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), \$42,000

Project Lead: Associate Professor Billy Graeff (Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Brazil)

Research Team:

- **Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik (Western Sydney University)**
- Dr Renan Petersen-Wagner (Leeds Beckett University, UK)
- Dr Luciano Jahnecka - Universidad de la República de Uruguay).

Synopsis: The last 30 years have seen the flourishing of a field of practices and research known internationally as Sport for Development and Peace (SDP). In South America, considered one of the 'social sports projects', this field has become as ubiquitous as it is disputed and highly contested within the civil society and the educational communities. As it is a relatively broad field, it can be said that it encompasses initiatives that use sport as a tool to promote social development in its different facets. The SDP sector has also been increasingly associated with the pursuit of achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Given this complex picture, the general objective of this research project is to study social sports projects in South America to find out who the agents in the field are and how they perceive the activities of social sports projects as a tool for achieving the SDGs. The specific objectives are: (a) To identify and describe the contexts in which social sports projects - initiatives associated with the SDP - in South America are developed; (b) To identify and present the people involved in social sports projects in South America and their stories of involvement in the field; (c) To identify and present how agents linked to social sports projects in South America perceive the activities of these programs as tools for achieving the SDGs; (d) To investigate whether and how activities of social sports projects are adapted to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The main theoretical framework will be Pierre Bourdieu's Reflexive Sociology, with special attention to the forms of constitution of the field(s) in which social sports projects are inserted; to the habitus characteristic of such field(s) and related dispositions; and to the social illusion associated with such projects/initiatives. The universe of participants in this study will be composed of three groups, according to their own inclusion criteria: Group 1 - financiers, managers, administrators, owners and creators of social projects; Group 2 - teachers, interns, volunteers and "workshop facilitators"; Group 3 - participants, students, athletes. The instruments used to address the research questions will be document analysis, participant observation, focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Funding Period: 2025 - 2026

Transgender Athletes in Sports: A Sociocultural and Inclusive Analysis

Funding Body: Brazilian Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq)

Amount: \$55,899.59 (2025-2027)

Research Team:

- Dr Erik Giuseppe Barbosa Pereira (Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
- Dr Rafael Garcia (Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
- Dr Leonardo José Mataruna dos Santos (Coventry University, UK);
- **Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik (Western Sydney University)**

Synopsis: Currently, sport can be seen as a highly significant avenue for inclusion, especially when discussing the topic of transgender identity. In academic literature, there is already a more tangible discussion about trans women in sports disciplines; however, studies investigating trans men are still very incipient, and even more so are studies on non-binary individuals in sports. This project arises with the proposal to investigate the participation of trans athletes in sports—whether men, women, non-binary, or any other identity outside of cisheteronormativity. To do so, the sociocultural and inclusive dimensions involved in this context will be considered. This approach is justified by the need to understand the challenges faced by trans athletes, as well as the opportunities and impacts that the inclusion of these individuals can bring to the sports scene and reverberate throughout society. The methodology will consist of a qualitative approach, involving a literature review on the topic, as well as analysis of documents and regulations in the field of sports and society. Interviews and participant observation will also be used to collect testimonies and narratives from trans individuals involved in sports practices on-site, in order to document their daily lives and the nuances that emerge during their entry, permanence, and performance in sports.

Cross Institution Collaborations

Our researchers frequently partner with colleagues from other Schools and Institutes within WSU, as well as with colleagues from other universities and a variety of organisations. As well as projects listed in the previous section, the partnerships described here demonstrate how partners bring their expertise and experience to collaborate on research that serves the needs of stakeholders in the community.

Inner West Council Anti-Racism Bystander Intervention

In 2025 **Dr Rachael Jacobs** became a core member of WSU's Challenging Racism Project (CRP). Led by Professor Kevin Dunn, CRP is a centre committed to addressing racism through research, evidence-based community interventions and consultancies. Dr Jacobs is leading a group of researchers to deliver the Inner West Council Anti-Racism Bystander Intervention project, facilitating 20 anti-racism workshops to community members. She is also contributing to other projects such as the development of a racial literacy tool for community members involved in sport, as well as advancing her own research on arts-based anti-racism education in schools.

MARCS - The MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour, and Development, Western Sydney University

Dr Luyao (Louie) Liang is collaborating with Professor Paola Escudero on the *Little Multilingual Minds* project, which offers language exposure sessions aimed at boosting young multilingual children's language proficiency and overall education.

Additionally, Dr Liang is developing a research project with BabyLab Director Professor Susan Hespos to explore how young children learn through multimodal channels. This connection also facilitated a project in a WSU Early Learning centre, where Dr Liang is beginning research on multimodal literacy learning and teaching with digital technology.



Dr Eylem Altuntas collaborates with Professor Denis Burnham, Professor Cathi Best, and Dr Antonia Götz at MARCS on research investigating how and when infants begin to abstract the phonological properties of their environmental languages, and whether this process is influenced by the extent to which parents exaggerate vowel sounds in infant-directed speech. This collaboration led to one publication in *Developmental Science* in 2025, and received extensive media coverage, including RobWords (YouTube), 2SM Radio, ABC Radio, and The Conversation. Two further papers from this collaboration are currently under review. In addition, Dr Altuntas is conducting two systematic reviews with Professor Burnham focusing on the acoustic and visual properties of infant-directed speech.

World Leisure Centre of Excellence (WLCE), Western Sydney University

Academics **Professor Tonia Gray** and **Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik** from the School of Education (SoE) played a pivotal role in shaping Western Sydney University's successful application to join the prestigious World Leisure Centre of Excellence (WLCE), a globally recognized network dedicated to advancing graduate and postgraduate education and research in the interdisciplinary fields of play, recreation, arts, culture, sport, festivals, health and wellness, travel, and outdoor education and tourism. With a strong emphasis on global perspectives and social impact, the WLCE fosters international academics exchanges, collaborative research, and internship opportunities for postgraduate and HDR students across its member institutions. In 2025, the WSU World Leisure Centre began establishing its foundational structure, marking a significant milestone in the university's international engagement strategy. The School of Education is represented in the WLCE leadership team, with Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik serving as co-leader of the thematic group on 'Leisure and the Fulfillment of Human Rights', a stream that critically explores the intersections between leisure practices and the advancement of equity, dignity, and social justice locally and worldwide.

WSU Global Challenge

Introducing Western's Global Challenge Program

Introduced in April 2025, Western Sydney University's Global Challenge Program brings together researchers across the university to tackle the most difficult global issues and on emerging opportunities in both local and international contexts. It creates new cross disciplinary research networks among Western academics and nurtures impactful partnerships with industry, government and community stakeholders. Through this Program, Western explores and advances the translation of solutions drawing on expert knowledge and skills to a wide spectrum of substantial real-world problems, with the aim of achieving genuine change.

The program is stewarded by Global Challenge Leads, working in pairs or triads. They convene cross-disciplinary teams, support academic excellence, and direct effort toward areas of greatest need, connecting research with industry, fostering cross-institutional collaboration, and tackling complex problems to achieve meaningful impact. First Nations knowledge and knowledge systems inform this work. **Associate Professor Katrina Barker** of the School of Education is Global Challenge Lead for *Realising Digital Futures*.

Realising Digital Futures

Innovation for Inclusive Societies

AI and the Cyber World

Human Centred AI

A/Prof Katrina Barker

Dr Farnaz Farid

Supporting a Sustainable Future

Water and Food Security

Climate, Environment, Energy

AgriTech - Technologies, Cultures and Economies

A/Prof Rachael Gallagher

Dr Ehsan Noroozinejad

Contributing to Fairer Societies

Equity, Social Justice, Belonging & A Sense of Place

Housing Security

Equitable Infrastructure

Gender, difference and power

Distinguished Prof Kerry Robinson

Prof Louise Crabtree-Hayes

Dr Rimple Mehta

Creating Liveable Environments

Smart Cities

Liveable Communities

Arts, Humanities and Community Creative Placemaking

Prof Susan Hespos

Dr Alison Gill

Fostering Healthy Communities

Innovations in Wellbeing

Healthy Equity & Humanising Healthcare

Whole of Life Care & Whole Person Care

Tackling Chronic Conditions

A/Prof Kathy Tannous

Dr Deep Bhuyan

Dr Rocco Cavaleri

Leading Future Industries

Advanced Manufacturing

Industrial Innovation & Technologies

Skilled and Inclusive Workforce

Sovereign Capabilities

Olivia Mins

Dr Seed Aishar

First Nations Knowledge and Knowledge Systems

Since launch, the Program has:

- released Seed Research funding opportunities;
- conducted research workshops to build networks and shape collaborative projects;
- introduced a Grant-to-Research Accelerator Scheme;
- research image competition; and
- led a range of Research Week events in September.

The figure above outlines the six challenge areas targeted by the Global Challenge Program and presents the Global Challenge Leads responsible for each, with contact details. Please connect and engage with them. The Program will continue through 2026, with new initiatives to be announced on Viva Engage.

Validation of a survey instrument for understanding AI-enhanced multimodal online dexterity in Australasian higher

Funding Body: WSU Global Challenge

Research Team:

- **Associate Professor Lynde Tan**
- Professor Joyce H.L. Koh (University of Waikato, New Zealand)

Synopsis: This proposed project aims to develop and validate a survey instrument to measure academics' AI-enhanced multimodal online dexterity across diverse disciplines in higher education within the Australasian context. It will build both researchers' previous work to design a survey instrument using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses coupled with cluster analysis. Additionally, it will employ semi-structured interviews to capture contextualised practices and challenges. The project aims to profile academics' current capabilities in facilitating multimodal meaning-making using digital technologies and AI across synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid modalities and recommend differentiated professional development strategies to foster AI-enhanced teaching practices and instructional design across disciplines.

Awards

Early Career Researcher 2025

Western Sydney University Researcher Development Award Scheme

Dr Luyao (Louie) Liang

Funding amount: \$14,797.72

Integrating Digital Technologies into Multimodal Literacy for Young Bilinguals: A Pilot Study with Preschool Teachers is a qualitative research project that aims to explore how early childhood (EC) teachers integrate digital technologies and resources like the ELLA app into their pedagogy to support multimodal literacy in young bilingual children (4–5 years old). By collaborating with Western Sydney University Early Learning Parramatta, the project aims to provide preliminary insights into current practices, challenges, and potential research gaps for a larger study. Findings from this research are also expected to contribute to future teacher professional development and inform practical discussions on integrating multiliteracies pedagogies with digital technologies in Australian ECEC settings.



Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards

Excellence in Postgraduate Research, Training and Supervision

**Associate Professor
Jacqueline Ullman - Highly
Commended**

Associate Professor Jacqueline Ullman is a leader in HDR training and supervision who has made extensive governance contributions at the university-wide and school levels. Her HDR graduates stand out for consistently excellent results, high praise from their examiners, and as winners of external recognition and awards. She has been instrumental in establishing the specialisation of gender and sexualities research for HDR's in education, resulting in a thriving network with integrated mentorship into academic cultures. Associate Professor Ullman is dedicated to her HDR students' scholarly growth and development of academic track records which has led to their leadership in subsequent employment.



Higher Degree Research Cohorts

Higher Degree Research Cohorts have opportunities to engage with international visiting scholars, post-doctoral research fellows, and other current HDR students through a lively on-campus and on-line intellectual environment. In 2025, four HDR Cohorts were operationalised, and their reports are outlined below.

Kids Early Learning

The research focus of this newly established Cohort is on the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) context. The doctoral candidates will consider Issues associated with workforce development, leadership, policy, pedagogical practice and professionalism. There is a particular focus on areas aligned with the research imperatives of KIDS Early Learning, which is an entity of Blacktown City Council (BCC). KEL provides Early Childhood Education and Care Services to 1700 children under 5 in the Blacktown CC community – the most populous LGA in Greater Sydney. The program is an innovative structured doctoral program based within this supported and led by an academic team that comprise a supervisory collective. In this reconceptualised Doctorate of Education, candidates will assemble a portfolio of academic work that includes a scoping literature review, critical policy analysis and research methodologies.

ROSETE

In 2025, the ROSETE (Research Oriented, School Engaged Teacher Education) Program continues into its 19th year since the Partnership Agreement signed between WSU and Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau in 2006. Ningbo and WSU are planning for joint 20th anniversary celebration in the second half of 2026 in Ningbo.

To date, WSU have received over 100 ROSETE members and around 85% of them have graduated from Western. In this year, 6 ROSETE students (Qiong Zhang, Suling Yang, Yiqin Shi, Xiaolu Tu, Dongqi He and Yingqi Zhou) either have completed their study or are finalising their revision or submission. Currently three cohorts are undertaking a Doctor or Master of Philosophy Degree study. ROSETE 15th group (5 members) have completed their volunteering teaching at St Paul's Grammar School and focusing their thesis writing. ROSETE 16th group (2 members) are conducting their volunteering work and at the same time working on data collection. Cohort 17th (5 members) are currently participating in intensive weekly workshops and seminars on campus and via zoom run by Jinghe, preparing for their CoC.

SoE colleagues have been collectively supporting and contributing to ROSETE academic event series (practicing Cohort Model). Dr Louie Liang, Dr Johanna Einfalt, A/Professor Jackie Ullman, A/Professor Jorge Knijnik and SoE librarian Leontyne Dawson-Jones have generously given their time, running some of the workshops to address the HDR students' learning need.

Bilingual Language Education

The focus of the Bilingual Language Education Cohort centres on research into bilingual teacher education grounded in evidence-based pedagogies for second language teaching in Australia and in the home country of HDR candidates. Further strands of research include: Language education policy and practice; English Medium Instruction EMI; Content and Language Integrated Learning CLIL; Research methodologies; Second language acquisition and theory and Socio-cultural competence in bilingual education.

Doctor of Education (EdD)

In September 2025, an exciting new doctoral program was launched in the School of Education with a celebratory event marking the enrolment of the first cohort of candidates in a reconceptualised Doctor of Education (Ed.D) program. The first cohort is comprised of early childhood teachers from Kids Early Learning (KEL), Blacktown, TAFE, Mount Druitt, and Department of Education. Esteemed guests from Kids Early Learning, Blacktown, Blacktown City Council, SoE colleagues, and students came together to celebrate this event at Kingswood. This innovative new program respects and builds on teachers' professional knowledge in a program tailor-made to the interests of experienced practitioners working in the field, helping them develop a new skill set in practice-based research and contributing to raising the quality of their educational programs. For more details see: <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/future/study/courses/research/doctor-of-education>

Mr. Michael Reid, Manager of KEL Blacktown acknowledged the benefits of this doctoral research program to improving their council-based services, equipping practitioners as champions of change and importantly responding to the interests and needs of children, families and communities representing varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the Blacktown LGA.

The event marks the beginning of an exciting journey for our students and school—and a reminder of why this program is so special.

Higher Degree Research Graduates

The School of Education congratulates HDR Graduates from December 2024 and Autumn/Spring 2025 Graduations. Congratulations on this remarkable achievement! Your dedication, hard work, and passion for advancing knowledge in the field of education have culminated in this significant milestone. As you embark on your next journey, may you continue to inspire and make a positive impact in the lives of learners, educators and your communities. We are proud of you and excited to see the contributions you will make to the field!

Faten Alabasi

Supervisors:

- Associate Professor Criss Jones Diaz
- Associate Professor Jacqui D'warte

Thesis Title

Saudi female Students' Reticence to Participate Orally in the English classroom

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: This study examines female students' interaction and engagement in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom in Saudi Arabia. The study investigates various factors that Saudi female students encounter in their English language classroom, and how these impact their English language learning. It also examines how classroom pedagogy and curriculum influence their participation and disposition of passivity and reticence. This study is informed by Bourdieu's theory of social practice (1977; 1990) and Foucault's poststructural theory (1972, 1977) to critically examine students' and teachers' perceptions of the importance of oral engagement in the English classroom. Moreover, the study seeks to understand the importance of oral participation in developing English language speaking skills, and how classroom pedagogy and curriculum influence students' oral participation. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, including questionnaires and interviews. Data was collected from 100 female students and five teachers from the Preparatory Year in the North of Saudi Arabia to investigate the issue of EFL Saudi female students' reticence to engage in oral participation. The findings highlight students' contradictions in their views about oral participation in the English classroom. While the students believed that oral participation is significant, they had negative feelings about speaking up in the classroom due to a lack of English knowledge and low levels of confidence in their English language proficiency. The findings also reveal that the relationship between students and teachers drives students' motivation for oral participation, and students' knowledge of and prior experience with English is important for their oral participation. Recommendations from the findings of this study inform policy and pedagogy that will enhance active participation of Saudi female students that will facilitate effective processes of English language learning; and lead to further suggestions for strategies and teaching methods to improve and promote English language learning processes in Saudi Arabia.

Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Stuart Hughes

Supervisors:

- Professor Carol Reid
- Dr Nathan Berger

Thesis title

The Decline of Coding Subjects and the New Alienation: Investigating the Role of Software Studies in the Era of Cloud, Mobile and Social Technologies

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: In the past three decades, innovations in digital technologies have brought about extraordinary transformations in the home, classroom, and workplace. From the mid-1990s until the bursting of the dot.com bubble in the early 2000s, enrolments in the digital technologies learning area increased sharply. Since that optimistic era however, participation in the learning area has steadily declined.

Concern has emerged from mainstream media, education authorities, teachers, and business organisations that the economy may be negatively impacted by low enrolments in school coding and IT subjects. Commonly cited reasons and remedies for the decline fit within a dominant education-for-work framing of the phenomenon. A mixed method of investigation explores the role of powerful corporations in facilitating rich learning experiences while at the same time alienating students, not from the use of digital technology, but from its development. The study's findings provide insight into the relationship between students and the increasingly sophisticated technologies that are changing the purpose and meaning of software development in the classroom. This study adds nuance to debate around the decline phenomenon and suggests that prevailing subject rationales include a stronger emphasis on enjoyment of learning and awareness of the challenges posed by newer digital technologies.



**Doctor of Philosophy
(Education)**

Mariel Lombard

Supervisors:

- Associate Professor
Jacqueline Ullman
- Professor Tania Ferfolja
- Professor Nida Denson



Thesis Title

Prevalence and correlates of compassion fatigue among Year Coordinators in Australian secondary schools

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: Year Coordinators in Australian secondary schools are on the front line of support for students' wellbeing. Given rising rates of psychological distress amongst high school students and increases in the workload and work complexity of teachers, Year Coordinators may be at particular risk of compassion fatigue. This study examined the prevalence of compassion fatigue and its correlates among Year Coordinators (N = 288), using a sequential mixed methods design. Descriptive and hierarchical regression analyses were used in a first quantitative phase to identify the prevalence and predictors of compassion fatigue. In an embedded, sequential phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 15 participants, purposively selected for their potential to provide insights into the factors of compassion fatigue. Data were analysed using the Framework Method, integrating sociological and psychological perspectives. The conceptual framework which guided this study was adapted from the Job Demands-Resources theory and the theory of Secondary Traumatic Stress. Findings indicate that compassion fatigue is a significant occupational hazard for Year Coordinators. The study offers insights into key risk and protective factors associated with compassion fatigue and underscores the need for proactive, systemic wellbeing support to sustain this vital workforce.

**Doctor of Philosophy
(Education)**

Karen McDaid

Supervisors:

- Associate Professor
Christine Johnston
- Distinguished Professor
Kathryn Holmes



Thesis title

The identity and self-efficacy of Primary Preservice teachers: Experiences of teaching mathematics in the practicum classroom

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: This research investigates the development of preservice teachers' self-efficacy for teaching primary mathematics during professional practice. While previous studies have explored general teaching self-efficacy, few have examined how it changes through mathematics-specific practicum experiences. Using a qualitative, year-long case study with thirteen preservice teachers (four examined in depth), the study drew on interviews, reflections, and focus groups to explore how beliefs and experiences shape teaching confidence. Guided by Bandura's self-efficacy theory, six key factors were identified and conceptualised in the *Building Teacher Self-Efficacy (BTSE) Framework*. These six factors are grouped into two paradigms: external factors—collaborative relationships, resources, and teacher feedback—and internal factors—teaching practice, motivation and self-regulation, and reflection-on and -for learning. External factors relate to social persuasion and vicarious experiences, while internal factors connect to mastery experiences, emotional state, and cognitive enactment. The research concludes that when all six factors are present, preservice teachers are more likely to develop stronger self-efficacy for teaching mathematics and teaching overall. The BTSE Framework offers both theoretical insight and practical application for enhancing preservice teacher preparation and improving outcomes in Australian initial teacher education programs.

Doctor of Philosophy (Education)**Nikolai Lysewycz****Supervisors:**

- Associate Professor Jacqueline Ullman
- Professor Tania Ferfolja

Thesis title

Going Co-Ed – The Death of a Single-Sex School: An exploration of gender culture in a school transitioning from all-boys' to coeducational student intake

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: In Australia, increasing numbers of single-sex schools are transitioning to coeducation, amid heightened scrutiny of the gender norms such settings produce. This study examines how gender culture, defined as the shared interpretations and enactments of gender identities, shifted within one all-boys' school during its transition to coeducation from 2015 to 2019. Using a qualitative single-case design grounded in feminist poststructuralism, the research draws on interviews with students and teachers, digital artefacts, and classroom observations. The researcher's immersion as a teacher and boarding-house resident provided close access to the school's cultural dynamics. Analysis incorporated concepts of discourse, power, subjectivity, agency, intersectionality, gender performativity, and hegemonic masculinity, situated within neoliberal educational contexts. Critical discourse analysis traced how gender meanings were produced and contested across the transition. Before coeducation, the school displayed masculinist traits characteristic of Australian boys' schools. Anticipation of girls' arrival initially intensified binary gender norms, positioning female students as symbolic agents of impending change. Their eventual integration generated cultural shifts that challenged gender-essentialist assumptions and produced varied, sometimes unexpected, effects for students and staff. As the first Australian insider account of such a transition, the study shows that simply adding girls does not redress entrenched inequities. Rather, meaningful change requires confronting the intersecting structures through which gender cultures operate. Coeducation, when critically enacted, can unsettle masculinist norms and support more inclusive school environments.

Doctor of Philosophy (via HASS)**Thilakshi Mallawa Arachi****Supervisors:**

- Professor Tanya Notley
- **Professor Loshini Naidoo**
- Dr Jenna Condie
- Professor Simon Burrows

Thesis Title

Social media literacy education for everyday activism: A Design Justice Approach with Women from Refugee Backgrounds

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: This study investigated how women from refugee backgrounds, residing in Western Sydney, understand and engage in everyday activism using social media. It specifically considered the relationship between women's everyday activist aspirations and their identity-making practices on social media. The primary aim of the study is to explore how local public libraries and refugee support organisations can design adult social media literacy education interventions for everyday activism *with* women—a timely and critical concern in the fields of digital literacy and media literacy.

Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Reem Nasraldeen

Supervisors:

- Dr Maree Skillen
- Dr Jose Hanham

Thesis title

Self-Regulated Learning Strategies for Vocabulary Development: Exploring Traditional Methods and Online Tools among Saudi Female EFL Students

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: The acquisition of vocabulary is crucial for Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to develop language proficiency. Recent research indicates that traditional EFL teaching methods show limited effectiveness for vocabulary learning, highlighting the need for more effective strategies, such as self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies (Nation, 2022). SRL is recognised as significant for facilitating vocabulary acquisition, leading to increased academic research on its efficacy with online learning tools (Kizil & Savran, 2018; Tseng et al., 2006). EFL learners employing SRL strategies tend to be more creative, flexible, and proficient in language acquisition. However, there is a lack of research exploring SRL strategies for EFL vocabulary learning using online tools. This study explores how Saudi female students employ SRL strategies to learn EFL vocabulary using online learning tools.

The study used a qualitative case study approach to explore and understand how Saudi female students employed SRL strategies to learn EFL vocabulary using online learning tools. Qualitative data were collected through guided learning journals and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis of the data identified key themes and experiences related to self-regulated vocabulary learning.

Findings indicated that almost all of the Saudi female learners in this study used verbal and written repetition strategies, rehearsal strategies, and retrieval strategies (e.g., practice tests) to improve their vocabulary learning. They also used visual learning strategies, such as connecting words with images using digital tools like Quizlet, to improve understanding, memorisation, and retention of new vocabulary. The findings also revealed that some participants had goals but did not always explicitly articulate their strategies for achieving them. Notably, vocabulary learning strategies and SRL strategies are connected, and they both stress the significance of active involvement, strategic planning, and ongoing assessment. These common elements underscore the need for students to be active throughout the learning experience. The thesis provides recommendations and outlines implications for further research to support these improvements.

Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Nurwanto Nurwanto

Supervisors:

- Professor Loshini Naidoo
- Associate Professor Christine Woodrow

Thesis Title

Nurturing Peace through Education: Advocating a Pedagogy of Love in Urban Schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: This qualitative case study examines the characteristics and management of school violence in urban schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, focusing on initiatives to promote a pedagogy for peace. By investigating four senior high schools, the study reveals that: (i) the characteristics of school violence are complex in terms of direct, cultural, and structural factors; (ii) approaches to managing school violence shift between punitive measures and peacebuilding strategies; and (iii) there is an emerging pedagogy focused on fostering peace. This research contributes to the development of a dialogic and compassionate pedagogy within schools and through effective active engagement with the broader community



Doctor of Philosophy
(Education)

Wanting Sun

Supervisors:

- Professor Jinghe Han
- Professor Michele Simons

Thesis title

The Impact of Chinese EMI Lecturers' Bilingual Repertoires on Their Classroom Interaction

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: This study examines the development of English Medium Instruction (EMI) research, shifting focus from problem identification to pedagogy. It explores challenges such as teachers' language proficiency, pedagogical training, and classroom interaction. Using a case study approach at a Chinese university, the research analyzes EMI lecturers' bilingual abilities and their impact on teaching. Findings reveal that language proficiency does not significantly affect interaction patterns between EMI and Chinese-medium classes, though bilingualism influences teacher identity and language use. The study highlights pedagogical variations, advocating for translanguaging to enhance interaction and improve students' language skills, contributing valuable insights into EMI pedagogy.



Doctor of Philosophy
(Education)

Suling Yang

Supervisors:

- Professor Jinghe Han
- Associate Professor Criss Jones Diaz
- Dr David Wright

Thesis title

A multi-focussed narrative inquiry into teacher identity transformation: Chinese language teachers' stories across shifting educational contexts

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: This study explores the identity transformation of Chinese language (Mandarin) teachers in a cross-cultural context. The findings reveal 'stages' in the internal psychological processes of the participant teachers' identity transformation. Moreover, it is indicated that their self-identities and sociocultural conditions appear to shape the achievement of participatory agency, and such participatory agency serves as a potential resource for teacher identity transformation. Thus, this study portrays a multi-layered picture of L2 teachers' identity negotiation and transformation in a cross-cultural context and extends the current empirical literature on this topic. It reveals a myriad of conceptual, methodological, and practical implications. Conceptually, the holistic theoretical and analytic framework adopted for interpreting L2 teachers' identity negotiation and transformation is constructive for the teacher education community. Moreover, methodologically, an exhaustive dialogic and recursive member-checking process is employed to retain and respect the participants' voices in their stories. This technique may offer practical guidance for novice narrative inquirers. Furthermore, this study confirms that professional learning constitutes a journey for language teacher identity development. Thus, it offers empirical evidence supporting identity-oriented teacher education curriculum development.



Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

Qiong Zhang

Supervisors:

- Professor Michele Simons
- Professor Michael Singh

Thesis title

Transforming the Perspectives of Novice Teacher-Researchers from China Through Studying Abroad: Practice-Based Research in Chinese Language Education

Thesis Abstract/Synopsis: The thesis examines how studying abroad in Australia transforms the research competence and professional development of preservice Chinese teachers in international Chinese language education. Using a case study of the Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) Program, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 participants and a supervisor. Guided by postmonolingual theorising and Mezirow's transformative learning framework, the study explored challenges faced by novice teacher-researchers and how they overcame these through critical reflection.

Key findings reveal significant transformative learning outcomes, personal growth, and the metaphorical use of the Chinese concept of 水 (shuǐ, water) to illustrate the fluid nature of learning. The research underscores the value of integrating teacher research into study-abroad programs, offering insights for policy development and the design of more effective teacher education programs to advance teacher internationalisation

Higher Degree Research Conference

The second annual School of Education Higher Degree Research (HDR) Conference was held on Friday at the Bankstown City campus and was a resounding success. The event showcased impressive research presentations from HDR candidates, providing a valuable platform for students to share their work, exchange ideas, and learn from one another in a supportive and engaging environment.

The conference program featured two outstanding keynote addresses: Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, Director of Indigenous Research at Western Sydney University, and Professor Claudio Díaz from the Universidad de Concepción, Chile. Both speakers offered thought-provoking perspectives that added depth and inspiration to the day's discussions.



A highlight of the program was the open panel discussion with current candidates Matt Thompson and Caitlin Cole, who are nearing completion of their doctorates. Their reflections on navigating the HDR journey offered practical insights and encouragement to their peers.

The conference also included poster presentations and the popular Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition, which challenged participants to communicate their research with clarity and impact to a non-specialist audience. Congratulations to PhD candidate **Lauren Weatherall**, who was awarded first place in the School's 3MT competition and represented the School in the University's 3MT final in early September. Sincere thanks are extended to the 3MT judging panel and to all staff who attended and supported this successful event. Lauren is supervised by Professor Loshini Naidoo and Dr Rachael Jacobs.



The **People's Choice Award** for the best poster presentation was presented to **Dwi Arni Margiyanti**, one of our newest PhD candidates, supervised by Associate Professor Lynde Tan and Associate Professor Criss J. Diaz.

W

Western Sydney University, School of Education

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Engaging EFL Primary Teachers in the Implementation of Multiliteracies Pedagogy in Indonesia's English Curriculum

A Study through Bourdieu's Lens

Dwi Arni Siti Margiyanti (ID: 22179679)
School of Education, Western Sydney University

Supervisors:
Associate Professor Lynde Tan
Dr. Criss Jones Diaz

Introduction

- ✓ English language policy in Indonesian primary schools has shifted, from being optional (2006), removed (2013), and now planned to become compulsory again (2027). These shifts reflect tensions in the educational field involving authority, access, and legitimacy.
- ✓ In this dynamic policy landscape, primary teachers are increasingly expected to enact pedagogical approaches aligned with multiliteracies, emphasising multimodal ways of meaning-making in English teaching.
- ✓ Framed by Bourdieu's theory of social practice, this study explores how teachers' positions in the field influence their engagement with multimodal literacy pedagogy.

Research Objectives

- ✓ This study aims to explore how Indonesian primary EFL teachers engage with the pedagogy of multiliteracies in the context of English becoming a compulsory subject.
- ✓ It draws on Boudieu's theories of power, capital and social practice to interrogate how the pedagogy of multiliteracies will be implemented to teach English as a compulsory subject in primary education.

Research Question

- ✓ How does primary EFL teachers' habitus influence their engagement with the pedagogy of multiliteracies?
- ✓ How do their linguistic and cultural capital influence classroom enactment of multiliteracies?
- ✓ How does the pedagogy of multiliteracies shape and legitimise assessment practices in English classrooms?

Significances of Study

Addresses the gap in multiliteracies research by examining its implementation in Indonesian primary EFL classrooms, particularly in response to the Merdeka Curriculum.

Uses Bourdieu's concepts (habitus, capital, field) to analyse how teachers' capital (language and cultural) and habitus shape their engagement with multiliteracies and feedback practices.

Contributes to teacher education by equipping in-service and pre-service teachers with insights to navigate compulsory English and multimodal teaching.

Framework

- Draws on Bourdieu's theory of social practice, focusing on the interplay of **habitus, capital, and field** in shaping teaching.
- Considers how **symbolic power** and **legitimate language** influence authority and what counts as valued knowledge in education.

- **Habitus** explains how teachers' dispositions influence their adoption of new pedagogies.
- **Capital** (linguistic, professional) highlights how teachers' resources affect classroom practice.
- **Field** refers to the broader educational space where policies, power relations, and practices intersect.

Methodology

Research Design

Qualitative ethnography

Participants

- 20–25 primary EFL teachers (interviews)
- 3 teachers (classroom observation over 8 weeks)

Data Collection

- Semi-structured interviews
- Classroom observations
- Classroom artefacts

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis using Bourdieu's core concepts: habitus, capital, and field.

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Contact

Dwi Arni siti Margiyanti
D.Margiyanti@westernsydney.edu.au

Visiting Scholars

The School of Education offers opportunities for visiting scholars to actively engage in research, share and refine their work, and foster collaborations with academic staff and higher degree research students. Visiting scholars are encouraged to contribute their expertise, insights and diverse perspectives through the creation of collaborative research with academics in the School of Education.

Xin Chen (Vivi)
(Yanbian University,
China)

March 2024 – March 2025

Hosted by: Professor Jinghe Han

Research interests: TESOL, Bilingual education, Cross culture communication.



For nearly two decades, Xin Chen has been teaching college English and enhancing the language skills of non-English majors at Yanbian University in China. Additionally, she worked as a Chinese Language and Culture Lecturer during a three-year tenure at Emory University in the United States.

Her ongoing research project is *An Empirical Study on the Effective Combination of Foreign Language Courses and Virtual Simulation Experiments - A case of University English Intercultural Communication Course*, which is trying to seek a new curriculum design of this program of study and interdisciplinary research of psychology and linguistics. The project is supported by the Higher Education Research Institution of Jilin Province in China and CSC.

During Xin Chen's visit to Australia, her plan is to focus on furthering her research agenda, seeking to broaden perspectives and gain inspiration from academics at Western Sydney University.

Carola Aravena Rojas (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile)

March 2025

Hosted by: Associate Professor Christine Woodrow

Research interests: culturally inclusive education, family and community engagement, Funds of Knowledge, early childhood education



Carola Aravena Rojas is an Early Childhood Educator and Head of Program for Early Childhood Education at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, where she also lectures in teacher education. She holds a Master of Education and is currently undertaking a PhD in Psychology with a focus on culturally responsive pedagogy.

Her research explores how early childhood education can better engage families and communities in contexts of social exclusion. She has led curriculum innovation at her university, including the development of a Cultural Contextual Curriculum strand, and has supervised undergraduate theses on *Funds of Knowledge*.

During her visit, Carola will share her work on community-based teacher education and present on *Family and Community Funds of Knowledge: Methodological challenges to providing culturally inclusive early childhood education*, while also exploring opportunities for collaborative research.

Visiting Fellows Group from Ghana

March - April 2025

Hosted by: Dr William Nketsia

DFAT funded project: Strengthening National Reforms in Teacher Training and Inclusive Education Leadership (Ghana).



Professor Claudio Heraldo Díaz Larenas (University of Concepción, Chile)

June – August 2025

Hosted by: Associate
Professor Roberto Parada

Research interests: EFL
teacher education;
professional knowledge
construction, Language
assessment practices, cognitive and affective dimensions of
learning



Dr Claudio Díaz is a Professor at the University of Concepción, Chile, where he has spent nearly three decades training pre-service and in-service English teachers. He holds a PhD in Education and a Master of Arts in Linguistics and has taught extensively in ESL/EFL methodology and language assessment at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Dr Díaz has supervised over 50 theses and led key academic programs, including the PhD in Education and the Master's in English Teaching, Learning and Assessment. He also coordinates the Language Committee of Chile's National Accreditation Office.

His research focuses on how EFL preservice teachers construct professional knowledge and navigate the cognitive and affective dimensions of language assessment. Currently on sabbatical, Dr Díaz is visiting WSU to exchange ideas on the complexities of teacher education.

**Douglas Alves da Silva
(Universidade Federal
de São Paulo, Brazil)**

October 2025 – January
2026

Hosted by: Associate
Professor Jorge Knijnik

Research interests: racism
in sports, racism in soccer,
racial stacking.



Douglas Verônico Alves da Silva is a physical education professional and a professor of football and leisure studies at Santa Cecília University in Santos, São Paulo state in Brazil. He holds a Master degree in Health Sciences and is currently undertaking a PhD in the Health Sciences Interdisciplinary Postgraduation Program at the Federal University of São Paulo with focus on racism in soccer.

His research is on racial stacking in the Brazilian men's soccer, or the overrepresentation of black and indigenous players in on field positions associated with physical abilities and the underrepresentation of black and Indigenous players in on field positions associated with intelligence, game-overview and leadership. Also, it focuses on how soccer instructors dealing with youth in areas of social vulnerability view racism and racial stacking.

During his visit, Douglas has participated as a volunteer High Degree by Research student in the organization of the 32nd Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Conference and will share his work on the perceptions of soccer instructors about racism and racial stacking in the Australian Association for Research in Education 2025 Conference, in Newcastle.

His visit is funded by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), which is a Foundation of the Federal Ministry of Education (MEC) in Brazil.

**Professor EJ Renold
(Manchester
Metropolitan
University, UK)**

November 2025

Hosted by: Professor
Susanne Gannon

Research interests:
Relationships and Sexuality
Education, LGBTQ+
inclusive schooling, Creative
methodologies, Posthuman coproduction



EJ Renold is Professor of Childhood Studies at the School of Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Inspired by feminist, queer and new materialist posthumanist theory, their research investigates how gender and sexuality come to matter in children and young people's everyday lives across diverse sites, spaces and locales. Here, they have explored the affordances of how coproduced creative methods, resources and events can engage micro and macro political change with young people, teachers, youth workers, educators, health professionals, policy-makers and politicians (see www.agendaonline.co.uk). During their visit, EJ will be sharing their forthcoming work on creative ways to attune to, animate and amplify youth voice on gender justice, rights and equity from their forthcoming Routledge edited collection, *Creative Research on Gender and Sexuality with Children and Young People: Making Methods Matter* (with Huuki, Pihkala and Taylor).

During their visit, EJ ran workshops on their approach to using creative methods in research with young people and professional development for pre-service teachers on Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE). They spent time with School of Education scholars exchanging information on genders and sexualities research and education in NSW and the UK, connected with scholars at WSU's annual Sexualities and Genders Research (SaGR) Showcase, and met with officers from NSW Teachers Federation.

International Collaborations

The School of Education has a number of international partnerships with universities and other institutions that enable joint collaboration in research, knowledge exchange and research dissemination. Our project section covers many of our international collaborations. As well as those already listed, are the following initiatives.

Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik

Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik maintains a strong program of international collaborations across Europe, South America, and the Pacific. With Associate Professor Arnost Svoboda and Dr Simona Safarikova (Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic), Associate Professor Billy Graeff (Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Brazil), he co-led a multi-year project funded by the Prince Faisal bin Fahad Award for Sports Research, examining youth participation in sport in Saudi Arabia.

Earlier this year, AP Knijnik, Associate Professor Billy Graeff (Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Brazil), Dr Renan Wagner (Leeds Beckett University, UK), joined by Dr Luciano Jahneka (Universidad de la República, Uruguay), secured funding from the Brazilian Research Council (CNPq) to extend this research to South American contexts.

Knijnik's recent work with Associate Professor Yoko Kanemasu (University of the South Pacific, Fiji) explores "women's subversive strategies in/through sport in the Global South," resulting in a Q1 publication. Further partnerships with Associate Professor Marco Bettine (Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil) focus on intersections of football, gender, and human rights through funding from FAPESP. Collaborations with Dr Erik Pereira and Dr Rafael Garcia (Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro) have produced Q1 publications and CNPq support for studies of transgender youth in sport. He has also co-published with Dr Kelen Katia Prates da Silva (Universidade Federal da Grande Dourados/Brazil) and Associate Professor Soraya Barreto Januario (Universidade Federal de Pernambuco), whose partnership continues through joint edited collections and supervision of international doctoral students.



Professor Loshini Naidoo

Based on her work with Refugee Action Support (RAS), Professor Loshini Naidoo received an invitation from the Corporación Municipal de Villa Alemana in Chile to visit Escuela Básica Latina, a primary school, in November 2023. This school has recently welcomed migrant and refugee students from countries such as Syria, Colombia, Haiti, Venezuela, and Brazil. The school expressed interest in piloting the Refugee Action Support model, and in 2023, Loshini provided training on trauma-informed pedagogy for the teachers. In 2024, the school implemented a version of RAS to improve migrant students' literacy skills and promote inclusion through

a comprehensive design that included: a) certified training and support for in-service school librarians, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers; b) enhancement of culturally responsive pedagogical practices through reading with young children; c) after-school tutoring and homework assistance provided by trained pre-service teacher education students; and d) development of literacy skills for teaching Spanish as a second language. An evaluation of the project is currently underway during 2025.



Associate Professor Lynde Tan

Under the Western Sydney University–Fu Jen Catholic University MoU, Associate Professor Lynde Tan co-led an initiative with Professor Lydia Tseng to integrate multimodal literacies, digital composition assessment, and emerging technologies, including generative AI, in FJCU's College of Foreign Languages and Literatures. The project produced a validated assessment framework, influencing curriculum design, teacher development, and student outcomes. As an Ewha Global Fellow (2024–2026), she collaborates with Professors Hyo-Jeong So (Ewha Womans' University) and Beaumie Kim (University of Calgary) on a critical review of global AI in education guidelines using text-mining techniques and thematic analysis. Preliminary findings were presented at the 2025 International Society of Learning Sciences conference with plans for expanded research and further global dissemination.



Dr Eva Vass

As the recipient of a funded Visiting Fellowship, Dr Vass spent a month at Jyväskylän University's Department of Teacher Education, hosted by Dr Josephine Moate. They share an interest in exploring arts-mediated approaches to teacher education. During the Fellowship, Dr Vass and Dr Moate initiated collegial dialogue with Finnish colleagues around this theme through informal in-person and virtual meetings (Jyväskylän's Department of Teacher Education and Department of Music, Metropolia, University of Helsinki and Uniarts Helsinki). These gatherings shaped their development of ArtSchol—a unique arts-mediated approach to revitalise educational scholarship. ArtSchol combines varying levels of aesthetic immersion and depth of transformative potential: dialoguing about, with and through art. The intention is to re-animate educational scholarship by interrupting the mundane, suspending existing habits and habitats and aesthetically nourishing comprehensive perception at individual and community levels. Dr Vass and Dr Moate jointly developed and submitted a highly competitive (5% award rate) project application on ArtSchol to the Kone Foundation.



Professor Danielle Tracey and Associate Professor Katrina Barker

Since 2020, Western Sydney University (WSU), in partnership with the lead organisation, the Papua New Guinea Sustainable Development Program (SDP), and their implementing partner, the Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF), has advanced two key educational initiatives in Western Province, Papua New Guinea—the Balimo College and the E-Schools Learning initiatives. Professor Danielle Tracey and Associate Professor Katrina Barker have been pivotal in both projects, supporting the establishment of Balimo College, which opened in 2022, and collaborating with academic and professional staff to develop evidence-based practices aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning, ultimately enhancing students' experiences and academic outcomes. The first cohort of Diploma in Teaching (Primary) students will graduate in 2024, with a Bachelor of Education program set to launch in 2025. In the E-Schools Learning Initiative, Danielle and Katrina's expertise has significantly enhanced professional development for in-service teachers in Balimo and Morehead, resulting in measurable improvements in teaching practices and substantial gains in student academic performance over the project's initial three years of implementation. These initiatives are creating sustainable, long-term impacts on education in the region.



Associate Professor Katina Zammit

Within the Oceania area, Associate Professor Katina Zammit has been working with a Papua New Guinea (PNG) teacher-educator and curriculum writer from St Benedict's Teacher's College, Divine University, Wewak campus on a project that aims to revitalise indigenous languages through the creation of bi-/multi-lingual big books and decodable texts in home language, Tok Pisin and /or English. She has also worked with colleagues from New Zealand as Chair of the International Development of Oceania Committee (IDOC), a regional affiliate of the International Literacy Association.

Associate Professor Katina Zammit

Emeritus Professor Wayne Sawyer

Adjunct Associate Geoff Munns

The Fair Go Program's (FGP) research agenda and impact was extended in 2025. The FGP – Chile Pilot Project, consisting of three stages, began Stage 1 in March, 2025 in three schools, involving 6 classroom teachers and 6 university mentors. Teachers and the university mentors completed a 3-day professional learning workshop about FGP student engagement frameworks, action research and gathering data, and planned their action research project based on FGP student engagement frameworks. The teachers have been implementing their projects, meeting with their university mentors, and attending reflection sessions across school teams. The University of Concepcion leads the Pilot in Chile, under the oversight of Professor Oscar Nial, with support from the CIAE Centre at the University of Chile which is coordinating the evaluation of the Pilot.

Conversations have also commenced on the introduction of a Diploma in Fair Go Student Engagement for teachers and the possibility of also embedding the FGP principles into the initial teacher education programs at the University of Concepcion. In addition, the inclusion of the FGP principles in one or more subjects in the Masters of Innovation/ Education offered through the CIAE Centre at the University of Chile have commenced.

Centre for Innovation in Teaching



Project Lead: Professor of Practice Stacey Quince

Research Team:

- **Professor Michele Simons, Dean of Education**
- **Emeritus Professor Wayne Sawyer**
- **Distinguished Professor Kathryn Holmes**

The Centre for Innovation in Teaching (the Centre) represents a bold step in reimagining how Western Sydney University (WSU) educates, supports and empowers educators to thrive.

The Centre will build on the expertise and experience within the School of Education, providing a coordinated mechanism for translating the best of WSU's educational research into practice, with a specific focus on addressing equity gaps, both locally and through international collaborations.

Through research-informed innovation, the Centre will adopt a whole-of-life cycle approach to supporting teachers to respond to the complexity, diversity, and opportunity of modern classrooms - from reimagining initial teacher education to providing high-quality in-service professional learning.

Guiding principles

The Centre will be shaped by guiding principles that have been co-created with representatives of the teaching profession

Responsive Co-design

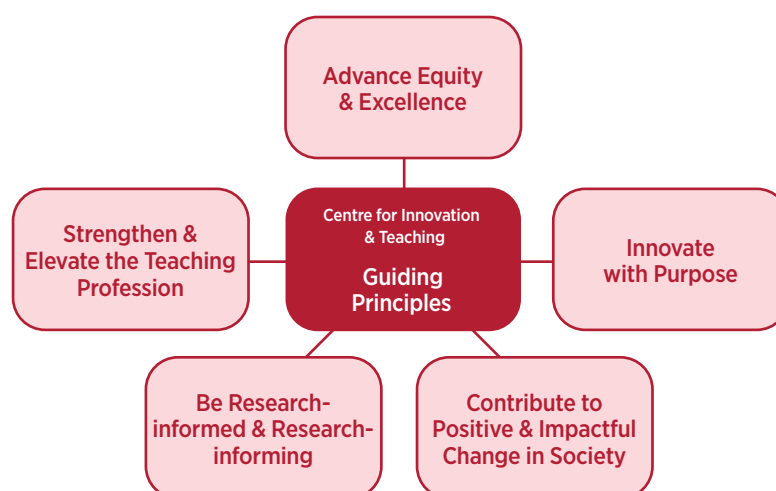
Contributions to shaping the work of the Centre to date have included co-design workshops with teachers, school leaders, pre-service teachers, and WSU academics; foundational research being undertaken by School of Education faculty; and engagement and input from partners across WSU, system leaders, professional associations, international collaborators, and community organisations.

Priority Initiatives

The Centre's initiatives will respond to the needs of the profession and be clustered around five key areas:

- Reimagining ITE, integrating case-based learning and immersive professional experience in partnership with schools.
- Providing continuous, tailored professional learning pathways for teachers across all career stages.
- Co-creating, testing, and scaling practices through disciplined, research-informed innovation.
- Strengthening partnerships with the teaching profession including through networks of schools.
- Leading research and evaluation to inform, sustain, and scale educational reform and innovation.

The Centre is committed to continuing to co-create its vision and strategic directions with the teaching profession, ensuring its priorities reflect educators' expertise and realities, and will continue to evolve in response to partner input and ongoing research.



Linking Research to Practice

Education Knowledge Network (EKN)

The Education Knowledge Network (EKN) continues to offer a range of professional learning opportunities designed to provide cutting edge, research-based professional learning for educational leaders, educators, and teachers. The goal of all EKN professional learning opportunities is to build the capability of educators so that all children and young people will have the best possible opportunities to optimise their learning and achieve their aspirations. All EKN professional learning offerings are linked to research conducted by academics from the School of Education, providing the translation of research into practice.



EKN Workshops

The Education Knowledge Network aims to respond to the current professional learning needs of schools by providing sessions that draw on research conducted by academics within the School of Education. These sessions see academics translate research into practice, providing practical advice to teachers to ultimately improve student outcomes and school experiences. The webinar format employed by EKN provides important opportunities for teachers across the country, including in regional and remote areas, to access cutting edge research and professional learning, while providing our researchers opportunities to disseminate their findings to ensure maximum impact where it matters, in classrooms.



2025 EKN Webinars

Professor Catherine Attard, Dr John Ley, Mr Matt Thompson

Mathematics Education Masterclass: Teacher Professional Learning

19 participants

January 2025



Dr Rachael Jacobs

Deep Harmony Every Day: Is it possible?

9 participants

March 2025

Matt Esterman, Nick Jackson, Shahenda Kandil

Educator Intelligence: The Future of Teaching and Learning with AI

56 participants

March 2025

Dr Rachel White

Explicit Teaching in Context

116 participants

May-June 2025

Karen May

AI in Education: From Automation to Amplification

82 participants

July-August 2025

Symposium

Dr Rachael Jacobs and Dr Rachel White

Arts Nexus Wild West Symposium

59 participants

March 2025

Consulting and Advising

Research expertise has also contributed to decision-making in government and non-government organisations, and educational institutions. WSU academics have provided expertise in several ways.

Dr Rachael Jacobs

Dr Jacobs delivered two keynote presentations to the NSW Department of Education on anti-racism education, with particularly emphasis on her research on arts pedagogies. The keynotes, delivered to over 400 Department employees all over NSW, presented compelling research on anti-racist education through the arts, and the unique place of schools to help bring about social cohesion in society.



Dr Rachael Jacobs

Dr Jacobs was engaged by NSW Department of Communities and Justice to provide anti-racism training to the HR Department led by WSU colleague, Dr Rachel Sharples. This engagement was facilitated as part of WSU's research program, the Challenging Racism Project. Dr Jacobs went on to travel to Coffs Harbour to deliver anti-racism training to school students as part of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice's multicultural engagement strategy.

Professor Loshini Naidoo and Dr Azadeh Ardakani

Professor Loshini Naidoo and Dr Azadeh Ardakani, Refugee Education Australia (REA) members, contributed to an upcoming State of Refugee Education advocacy report by Refugee Education Australia (REA) and the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN). The report calls for a unified national framework for refugee education to better support students from refugee backgrounds across all levels of education. A key recommendation of this initiative is detailed data collection from this cohort and the formal recognition of students from refugee or refugee-like experiences, whether through visas, asylum-seeking status, or intergenerational displacement as an equity cohort. The recommendations will have a significant impact on education by allowing educational institutions to address the unique challenges and needs of this diverse group through consistent identification and tailored support.

Associate Professor Jacqueline Ullman

Associate Professor Jacqueline Ullman served the Australian Public Policy Institute (APPI; formerly the James Martin Institute) as a member of their Research Advisory Group, representing Western Sydney University as a member of the HASS disciplines. In this role, Jacqueline assisted with the direction and foci of their 2025 Policy Challenge Grants scheme and, previously, with grant assessment and ranking. Additionally, Jacqueline served as an invited expert and featured presenter to the NSW Premier's Department's *LGBTIQ+ Advisory Council*, using findings from her multiple national projects focused on gender and sexuality diversity in K-12 schooling to provide evidence-based recommendations to the NSW Department of Education. Alongside her recent article in *The Policymaker* (<https://thepolicymaker.appi.org.au/supporting-gender-and-sexuality-diverse-students-in-nsw-public-schools/>), this presentation to Council informed the government's new *NSW LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy*, currently open for public consultation. Finally, Jacqueline continued her ongoing consultancy with Marrickville West Primary School, and their role out of the "All In!" initiative for a more diversity-inclusive school culture, which she co-designed with Professor Tania Ferfolja. During 2025, continued socialisation of the program included delivery of multiple whole-school assemblies; classroom lesson plans for follow-up; student-led logo, motto, and mascot design and the formation of a teacher "All In!" Leadership team. With Dr Cris Townley (TeEACH), Jacqueline has applied for Rainbow Western funding to conduct formal evaluation research of this initiative.

Kerry Staples, Jaydene Barnes, Associate Professor Christine Woodrow and Associate Professor Jacqueline D'warte

From 2024 - 2026, the NSW Department of Education provided funding to Western Sydney University for the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Early Childhood Pedagogies (CLRP) research project. School of Education researchers Kerry Staples, Jaydene Barnes, Associate Professor Christine Woodrow and Associate Professor Jacqueline D'warte, examined how culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies are enacted and progressed in NSW public schools and early childhood education services in NSW. The NSW Department of Education reported on the project to Multicultural NSW (*Multicultural Policies and Services Program Report 2023-2024*, published November 2024) as follows: "Multicultural NSW commended the department for investing in research and data collection to inform evidence-driven planning, including committing funding to the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Early Childhood Pedagogies research project."

Publications

This list includes all publications from 1 November 2024 and includes publications that are in press or forthcoming. School of Education authors are in bold.

Q1 Journal Articles

Peer reviewed journal articles are an important outlet for disseminating educational research. In this section we highlight articles published in Q1 journals, using the Scimago ranking system. These journals are recognised as being in the top quartile of all journals world-wide in their particular field. The list includes articles from 31 October 2024 – 31 October 2025. School of Education authors are in Bold. Many of these articles are available as open access, meaning that they can be read and shared with people outside the university.

Abraham, J., & Sickel, A. J. (2025). Testing the Associations Among Pre-Service Teachers' Sense of Preparation, Readiness to Engage in the Profession, and Self-Efficacy for Teaching: Validation of a Causal Framework. *Education Sciences*, 15(9), 1215.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15091215>

This study investigated shifts in preservice teachers' perceived preparedness, readiness to engage in the profession, and teaching self-efficacy before and after a culminating field experience within a two-year, master's level initial teacher education program at a large Australian university. Employing the Pre-service Teacher Professional Experience (PTPE) scale, we examined pre-service teachers' pre- and post-field experience changes for each construct. We then used structural equation modeling to test a hypothesized causal framework, confirming theorized relationships among preparedness, readiness to engage, and self-efficacy for teaching. Path analyses revealed significant shifts in how specific dimensions of preparedness contributed to preservice teachers' readiness to engage in the profession, which, in turn, influenced their teaching self-efficacy. Findings support the utility of the PTPE and causal framework in future research on teacher preparation, particularly as a means for teacher education programs to assess pre-service teacher development in alignment with professional standards for teaching.

Alnuaimi, A., Opoku, M. P., & Nketsia, W. (2025). Assessment of school leadership and quality of inclusive practices in early childhood education in the United Arab Emirates. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 0(0).

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/17411432251319999>

Discussions at the World Early Childhood Conference in 2022 suggested that children from vulnerable backgrounds are excluded from accessing early childhood education. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) context, although leadership is pivotal in this discourse in extending early childhood education to all children, there is a lack of empirical studies on the perspectives of school leaders regarding the implementation of inclusive education for all children. In view of this, the current study explored the relationship between heuristic leadership and the quality of inclusive practices. This study was guided by two conceptual models, namely the heuristic inclusive education framework and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. One hundred and fifty-one public school leaders, recruited across the UAE, completed a survey employing the Quality Scale of Inclusive School Development and the Heuristic Inclusive Education Leadership Scale. The data were subjected to correlation, hierarchical and moderation analysis. The results showed ambivalence among the participants regarding both heuristic leadership and inclusive practices; however, a positive relationship was found between them. The study recommends that policymakers reflect on heuristic leadership and inclusive system development in early childhood education reform in the UAE.

Ambrosy, J., Polley, S., Rankin, J., & Gray, T. (accepted). Outdoor Education and the Australian Curriculum: A descriptive policy analysis. *Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education*

Outdoor education continues to be a key part of many students' school experience in Australia. Yet, the role of outdoor education in Australian curricula frameworks is fragmented. Despite the well-established and growing offerings of senior secondary outdoor education courses in Australia, there are no formally established knowledge, understandings, and skills specific to outdoor education in the Australian Curriculum F-10 (v9.0) and its state-based versions; despite the increasing relevance of what outdoor education can offer young people during their formative years of schooling. This omission of outdoor education from the F-10 curriculum places the current and future ability of teachers to engage students in this meaningful learning area at risk, particularly outside the non-government school sector. In this paper, we employ a descriptive policy analysis to examine the possible inclusion of outdoor education in future versions of the Health and Physical Education Learning area of the Australian Curriculum F-10. Through this approach, we argue that outdoor education encompasses unique knowledge, understandings and skills not currently articulated within the Australian Curriculum F-10. Accordingly, we propose that their inclusion would complement the overarching aims of the Health and Physical Education learning area.

Amponteng, M., Tracey, D., & Nketsia, W. (2025). Exploring teachers' concerns and recommendations regarding inclusive education in Ghana: an application of the ecological systems theory. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–18.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2025.2541910>

Across the world, inclusive education has been endorsed to improve access and participation for all students including those with special educational needs. Teachers' concerns are often seen as closely associated with the unsuccessful implementation of inclusive education; for this reason, they have drawn considerable research attention, particularly in Western countries. This study investigated teachers' concerns and their suggested solutions regarding the implementation of inclusive education in Ghana, a country that has attracted relatively little attention despite having a strong national framework for inclusive policies. The study used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 initial inclusive-school teachers (regular teachers, $n=6$; resource teachers, $n=6$). The results of the thematic analysis of the verbatim transcripts showed that teachers' concerns, while many and diverse, focused on the microsystem and macrosystem. Some of their key concerns were the inaccessibility of the learning environment, insufficient government funding for inclusive education, limited teaching resources and materials, and inadequate teacher preparation for inclusive education. The participants' recommendations for policies and practices aimed at addressing these concerns and advancing inclusive education in Ghana are also discussed in the article.

Attard, C., Grootenboer, P., Edwards-Groves, C., & Tindall-Ford, S. (2025). An investigation of the practices of middle leaders in Australian schools. *The Australian Educational Researcher* 52, 2345–2367

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-025-00814-8>

The role of middle leaders in Australian schools as influencers on classroom practice has been the focus of increased attention in recent years. Although there is recognition of the importance of middle leaders, there are gaps in what we understand about their practices and the nuances of practice that occur due to site-based conditions, or practice architectures, within each individual school context. This paper explores the self-reported practices of 25 middle leaders from a range of primary and secondary schools across Australia to deepen our understanding of how those practices are played out and how best to support the development of middle leaders. Analysis of data from in-depth interviews revealed the need to provide resources, conditions, and arrangements that are focused on what happens in classrooms, along with professional learning that is individualised and contextualised to assist the transition from teacher to leader of teaching and learning. Further, middle leaders require support from senior leaders that recognises the complex and hectic nature of middle leading.

Baak, M., Baker, S., Hartley, L., Burke, R., Phipps, A., Kindon, S., Dunwoodie, K., **Naidoo, L.** & Ziersch, A. (2025). Decolonising solidarity in higher education: navigating barriers and enablers in advocacy with people from displaced backgrounds, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-17.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2025.2543164>

In a world marked by escalating displacement and anti-migrant sentiment, scholars and practitioners face significant challenges in cultivating genuine solidarity with refugees and displaced individuals. This article critically examines the complexities of creating decolonising solidarity within higher education institutions (HEIs), drawing on our collective experiences of advocacy with people with lived experience of forced migration in Scotland, Australia, England and Aotearoa New Zealand. Using data from online semi-structured interviews conducted in 2020, we reflect on how individuals and collectives navigate, resist and transform institutional and structural constraints that often reinforce colonial hierarchies. Through the lens of structural decolonisation, we examine how our collectives attempt to facilitate solidarity with refugees in a range of ways 'within/against' and beyond institutional and structural constraints. Barriers include competition for resources and a focus on individual success; enablers include grassroots organising, cross-institutional alliances and the solidarity of like-minded academic colleagues. Extending a framework for enacting decolonising solidarity, we argue that its aim is not merely to provoke discomfort but to cultivate trust, mutual recognition and collective liberation. These affective dimensions – joy, humour and the strengthening of relationships – enhance its transformative potential within HEIs despite systemic challenges.

Baker, S., Baak, M., Burke, R., Hartley, L., Kindon, S., **Naidoo, L.**, Phipps, A., & Ziersch, A. (2025). Making sense of academic service in unpredictable times: exploring the risks and benefits of academic activism in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 44(7), 1608-1623.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2025.2482809>

Despite operating in unpredictable times and rhetoric to the contrary, universities make it hard for academics to pursue transformative agendas, meaningful community engagement, and activism to inform social and policy changes. This disjuncture is acute for academics working in fraught areas, such as forced migration. The frailty of higher education, caused by decades of neoliberal governance, increasingly restricts what 'counts' as academic service to activities that ultimately preserve the status quo, rendering activism invisible and unvalued. Misalignments therefore exist with what counts as academic work which create risks in the forms of critique, misrecognition and exploitation for both scholars and their students. Drawing on a collective biography with academics from Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the UK involved in refugee-focused social movements, we explore academic activism against a backdrop of hegemonic assumptions about what academic service is and can be. We also consider what this means for academic work, and the implications for collectivising for change, both in and beyond the classroom. We argue for institutions to better value the kinds of academic service that amplify diverse perspectives, voices, and knowledges, and help us to navigate uncertainty.

Breaden, M. & Johnston, C. (in press). Building Relationships Between Autistic and Non-Autistic Family Members in Music Therapy: An Interpretative Case Study, *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*.

Contemporary music therapy interventions involving autistic children frequently take family-centred approaches, which seek to situate and inform the therapeutic process within a child's wider family life and environment. Despite this, there is limited research into the ways in which music therapy can facilitate the development of relationships between family members. This paper presents an interpretative case study of a series of music therapy sessions with the family of a 9-year-old autistic girl ("Anna"). An adapted music notation, Figurenotes, using symbols employing colour and shape to represent pitch and duration, was used to facilitate music-making by family members on piano keyboard and tuned percussion instruments. Qualitative data was collected consisting of transcriptions of video recordings from sessions, researcher notes, and a parent interview. Reflexive thematic analysis, an approach which highlights the researcher's active role in knowledge production, was conducted with these data. Four themes emerged: 1. Shared music-making providing a new way for the siblings to relate to each other; 2. Anna's leadership in family music-making; 3. Independence of the family in playing music together; and 4. Usefulness of Figurenotes as a shared resource. The themes offer insights into the mechanisms of change within family music therapy and the utility of Figurenotes as a therapeutic tool for facilitating musical engagement and social interaction. This study demonstrates how shared re-creative music-making can improve relationships within families involving autistic and non-autistic members, expanding the scope of family-centred music therapy interventions beyond individual client goals.

Breault-Hood, J., Gray, T., Ullman, J., & Truong, S. (2025). Redefining body-self relationships Through outdoor physical activity: Experiences of women navigating illness, injury, and disability. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(8), 1006.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15081006>

Physical challenges such as illness, injury, and disability significantly alter women's relationships with their bodies, disrupting established notions of functionality and self-worth. This study re-examines the Holistic Model of Positive Body Image and Outdoor Physical Activity through secondary analysis focusing on women with illness, injury, and disability. From the original sample of N = 553 female participants, open-ended survey responses were identified from n = 84 participants (15.2%) who self-disclosed as having illness, injury, or disability to examine how outdoor settings facilitate positive body image. Through reflexive thematic analysis, the study revealed three key mechanisms: (1) personalized redefinition of functionality transcending standardized metrics, (2) therapeutic engagement with natural environments fostering embodied acceptance, and (3) cyclical reinforcement between physical capability and psychological wellbeing. The findings confirm the model's utility while indicating necessary adaptations to address the fluctuating nature of body functionality. The adapted model emphasizes how outdoor recreational activities create contexts for reimagining body-self relationships across the spectrum of physical experiences—from temporary recovery to ongoing adaptation of persistent conditions—with implications for rehabilitation professionals, outdoor educators, and healthcare providers.

Cooper, H., **Gray, T., Ullman, J., & Curry, C.** (2025). Wellbeing, Sense of Belonging, Resilience, and Academic Buoyancy Impacts of Education Outside the Classroom: An Australian Case Study. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(8), 1010.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15081010>

This paper examines the importance of 'education outside the classroom' (EOtC) in an Australian secondary school. The primary aim was to develop a sense of belonging, build resilience, and enhance wellbeing in female students. This study investigated two cohorts of Year 9 students (aged 14–15 yrs) who participated in a four-week residential EOtC pilot program. The first cohort (Wave 1; N = 58) undertook the program alongside (N = 39) boys. The second cohort was single-sex girls (Wave 2; N = 28). A mixed-methods research design was implemented to inform experiences of students, parents, and staff and to triangulate inferences drawn from the data. Quantitative data was gained from pre- and post-program surveys with students and parents, whilst qualitative data was gathered from student focus groups, staff, and parents through semi-structured interviews to assess more nuanced impacts. School belonging was measured using the PISA six-item scale. Academic buoyancy was quantified using the four-item Academic Buoyancy Scale. Self-efficacy, peer relations, and resilience were evaluated by employing the 34-item Adolescent Girls' Resilience Scale. The findings revealed significant improvements in students' sense of belonging, including higher levels of school belonging than reported Australia-wide averages for 15-year-olds. Despite students' mean academic buoyancy scores being more than a point lower than reported baseline scores for Australian high school students, it was promising to see a modest increase following the EOtC program. In conclusion, EOtC is a potent vehicle for developing a sense of belonging, enhancing resilience, and equipping students to deal with academic challenges.

Cowling, M., Sim, K.N., **Orlando, J.** & Hamra, J. (2025). Untangling Digital Safety, literacy, and Wellbeing in School activities for 10 to 13 Year Old Students. *Education and Information Technologies*, 30, 941–958.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-13183-z>

In an era where digital technologies penetrate every aspect of education and a growing body of research examining various aspects of digital safety, there exists a significant research gap concerning the overarching (holistic) influence of digital activities on the schooling of 10 to 13 year olds. This paper presents a comprehensive review that untangles the complex relationship between digital safety, literacy, and wellbeing in this context based on 24 papers appearing in international peer-reviewed journals published from 2010 to 2023, and critically examines the impact of digital safety protocols on online student activities, the role of digital literacy in enhancing learning outcomes, and the intricate interplay between digital wellbeing and academic engagement, taking into account the changes created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings showed that the online engagement of students between Year 6 and Year 8 is deeply impacted by factors like digital literacy, digital communication/relationships, digital well-being, and digital habits; that COVID-19 put a spotlight on health; but that in general more research into digital safety needs to be conducted from a holistic and longitudinal viewpoint. Through careful analysis of the literature, this study provides insight into the challenges faced by 10 to 13 year olds, providing valuable directions for educators, policymakers, and researchers striving to create a safe, supportive, and empowering learning environment.

Dwyer, R., **Jacobs, R.**, Tuxworth, J., Qi, J., Harris, D. X. & Manathunga, C. (2025). Schools as inclusive workplaces: understanding the needs of a diverse teaching workforce in Australian schools. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 52(1), 765-779.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-024-00740-1>

This paper draws together academic and policy literature around the value of a culturally, linguistically and racially diverse (CLRD) teacher workforce in Australia. While Australia's population is becoming more diverse, the teaching population is significantly less so, with far fewer teachers born overseas and/or speaking a language other than English at home. This paper seeks to address some reasons for this lack of diversity, and the lived experiences of teachers from diverse backgrounds, including the unique contributions CLRD teachers make to their school communities and the challenges they face. We begin by describing how CLRD experiences are understood within the Australian education context, and the contributions made by CLRD teachers to their school communities, the barriers to entry, and the experiences of exclusion and discrimination faced by many CLRD teachers in Australian schools. We conclude by highlighting the critical need to support CLRD teachers, by ensuring that schools are culturally safe and inclusive workplaces for teachers, as a necessary precursor to ensuring the same for students.

Edwards-Groves, C., Grootenboer, P., Tindall-Ford, S., & **Attard, C.** (2025). Relational coherence in middle leading for school-based professional development. *Professional Development in Education*, 1-15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2024.2445549>

Middle leadership is recognised as being critical in and for school-based professional development. Increasingly over the last decade, the nature, role, and practices of middle leaders in leading change in their schools have been the focus of research attention. Much of the research literature has established the importance of the relational (relatings, relationality and relationships) in creating enabling conditions for changing practices. Drawing on the theory of practice architectures, this article examines the significance of relational coherence for creating conditions for leading school-based change. Drawing on in-depth case studies of middle leaders' practices conducted in primary and secondary schools in Australia, the results of thematic analysis show what relational coherence means in and for the work of middle leaders in leading school-based professional development. The centrality of relational coherence as an enabling condition for shaping the dynamics of middle leadership is established and exemplified. Results illustrate the complex dynamics of change and the interrelated dimensions that influence and promote site-based conditions that enable development. Implications for supporting the development of middle leadership are explicated.

Ferfolja, T. & Ullman, J. (2024). Australian parents of gender and sexuality diverse children: Labouring through the schooling experience. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 166, 2024, 107888.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107888>

This paper focuses on 16 parents of gender and sexuality diverse (GSD) children and their experiences of negotiating their child's education in Australian public schools. It reports on the ways these parents worked to protect their child/ren from an educational climate that is frequently, but not always, institutionally and interpersonally hostile towards, and/or uninformed about, gender and sexuality diversity. Applying a descriptive thematic analysis to qualitative data arising from an online forum, the discussion illustrates how parents of GSD children provide considerable labour to foster the well-being of their child at school. Several themes illustrated this labour, including: building understanding; seeking external support; checking in and proactive problem solving; addressing marginalisation and abuse; dealing with bureaucracy as well as curriculum surveillance and monitoring. Much of the parent labour stemmed from hetero-cis-normative educational policy, curriculum, practice and environments.

Garcia, R.M., Morais, V.S.C.L. de, Pereira, E.G.B., & **Knijnik, J.** (2025). Sport, sexuality, and films: A critical analysis of the documentary series "Coming Out Colton". *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 0(0).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902251356692>

Films are undoubtedly part of the unofficial curricula that shape young people's values and social behavior. This paper addresses key questions about the interplay between pedagogies of visual culture and the construction and acceptance of gender diversity in the realm of sports, with a central focus on representations of masculinities. It critically analyzes the documentary series "Coming Out Colton." Released in 2021 by Netflix, the series highlights the challenges and drama of a former NFL player's coming-out journey. By employing a qualitative analysis of audiovisual narrative combined with thematic analysis of the main messages contained in the episodes of the documentary, the study explores how the sports environment, often seen as a heteronormative and masculinized social context, places significant pressure on athletes to conform to heteronormative gender expectations. Our findings suggest that while the documentary does not emphasize intersections between issues of race, ability, or gender diversity beyond the binary, it holds substantial potential in shaping discussions about gender, masculinities, and sexualities in sports. Recognizing that the documentary prompts reflections on pedagogical approaches through films, we identify an opportunity to foster meaningful discussions that empower our society to embrace diversity and contribute to a more inclusive sporting culture.

Grace, R., **Woodrow, C., Johnston, C.,** Ballantyne, C., Townley, C., & Faraj, L. (2025). Check-Ups Before School: Accessible, Collaborative and Integrated Health and Education in Early Childhood for Families Experiencing Economic Disadvantage in Australia. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 2025, 8859999.

<https://doi.org/10.1155/hsc/8859999>.

Children in families experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage are more likely to start school with unaddressed developmental needs than children who do not experience disadvantage. Participation in well-child checks and developmental screening programs is low in Australian disadvantaged communities. This research explores an integrated approach to addressing this challenge by embedding place-based child and family nurses in early childhood education settings and community centres to facilitate easy access for families to health services. We conducted a mixed methods study, employing focus group, survey, interview and data linkage methods to evaluate a trial of the 'Check-Ups Before School' (CUBS) program. Our participants included health and community service providers, early childhood educators, primary school teachers, parents and carers. We found that a child health check, conducted in a safe and familiar environment for the child and their family, can act as a catalyst for wrap-around care and service integration. Such an approach should be place-based, listen to families and provide them with tools and information for agency, where relationships are fundamental to good care and supported by information flow through the family's ecological environment, particularly in the transition to school. These findings can inform agencies in the design and implementation of integrated health and school readiness initiatives for children in the early years. Also discussed in the paper are policy implications for realising the potential of early childhood services as 'community hubs' and sites for integrated health and education, as well as implications for the role of educators as 'brokers' in relationships between parents/family members and health professionals.

Harper, A., Hespos, S., & **Gray, T.** (2025). Nature Play in Primary School: Supporting Holistic Development Through Outdoor Learning. *Education Sciences*, 15(11),1487.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15111487>

This study demonstrates that nature play meaningfully supports children's well-being, engagement, sense of belonging, and connection to nature. Over 10 weeks, Year One students ($n = 25$) from a metropolitan government school in Sydney Australia, participated in a Bush School program, experiencing it as a space of joy, calm, challenge, and growth. Children came to see Bush School not as a break from learning but as a different kind of learning: active, relational, and purposeful. Using a quasi-experiment mixed-methods design, including reflective journals, self-report tools, and class assessments, the study found no negative impact on reading or mathematics outcomes, addressing concerns about lost instructional time. Instead, nature play enhanced number and algebra development, self-regulation, collaboration, and motivation to learn. The findings from this study highlight the potential of nature play to complement formal education in a developmentally appropriate way. Moreover, embedding nature play into mainstream schooling provides a timely and relevant response to current challenges facing education. The study also highlights the importance of listening to children as capable meaning-makers with valuable perspectives. In an era of growing pressure on children and schools, nature play invites a shift in mindset; to slow down, trust children, and embrace the natural world as a co-teacher.

Jeffrey, S., Adler, H., Gunther, K., Newman, C. E., **Ferfolja, T., Ng, C., & Armour, M.** (2025). Increasing Gender Affirming Content in the Australian Gynaecology Curriculum: A Commentary. *Women's Reproductive Health*, 1-16.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23293691.2025.2508978>

Trans and gender diverse people require access to gender-affirming gynaecological care, yet health care providers often lack the training needed to provide such care. This commentary explores the inclusion of trans health in the Australian gynaecology curriculum and identifies key enablers and barriers to the inclusion of content relevant to trans health care. We draw from global education research to develop curricula recommendations to improve future medical doctors' knowledge of, and ability to provide care for, trans patients. We highlight the need for unbiased, nonpathologizing, and intersectional content that centers the lived experience of trans and gender diverse people.

Liang, L., Chik, A., & Li, H. (2025). English as a foreign language education in East-Asian early childhood education settings: A scoping review. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 53(3), 835-850.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-024-01646-4>

English as a foreign language (EFL) education has become increasingly ubiquitous in Eastern Asian early childhood education (ECE) settings, but the studies on this phenomenon have not been thoroughly reviewed. This scoping review investigates the scope and findings of the current literature regarding this under-researched phenomenon. Through a five-step protocol, 17 empirical studies published during 2012–2022 are included. Findings indicate that: (1) there are four major research areas: education policy, education technology, teacher and teacher education, and curriculum and pedagogy; (2) Hong Kong receives the most research attention; (3) teachers' knowledge and beliefs, implementing early EFL education, and effects of interventions constitute three prominent research themes. This review also identified research gaps and highlighted the need for more quantitative research on early EFL education in other parts of Asia, the planning and implementation of EFL policies in micro-level contexts, and in-service educators' beliefs and practises.

Locke, M., Trudgett, M., & Page, S. (2025). 'Treat them well and keep them': Advice from managers about Indigenous early career researchers. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 1-16.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2025.2458891>

This paper reports on advice provided by senior scholars responsible for managing or supervising Indigenous Early Career Researchers (ECRs) in universities across Australia. Specifically, the paper shares recommendations that two Indigenous and three non-Indigenous Managers participating in the 'Developing Indigenous Early Career Researchers' project offer to Indigenous ECRs, Managers of Indigenous ECRs and universities more broadly. Three key themes are drawn from nine recommendations that recognised and advocated the strength, ability and capacity of Indigenous ECRs and the benefits of these attributes to the institutions that employ them.

Kanemasu, Y., & Knijnik, J. (2025). Towards south-south comparative feminist inquiry: 'Patriarchal varieties' and women's subversive strategies in/through sports in Fiji and Brazil. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 0(0).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902251342322>

Research into women's sporting experiences in the Global South has grown significantly in recent decades, with North-South asymmetries as an overarching reference point. The present article is an exploratory attempt to shift the focus of inquiry in this literature by considering the value of feminist South-South comparison. Guided by Gwen Hunnicutt's theorisation of 'varieties of patriarchy', we examine the historical and socio-political dynamics of two very different postcolonial societies, Fiji and Brazil, and how these impact the subversive strategies and resources available to women in pursuing sports against (hetero)patriarchal barriers. Our case studies of women's rugby in Fiji and women's football in Brazil reveal that Fijian and Brazilian women claim their nation's most privileged masculine sport in considerably differential contexts and with differential approaches. Fijian women rugby players engage in counter-hegemonic struggle marked by an 'implicit' feminism largely outside of formal political activism, while Brazilian women footballers have practiced an 'explicit' sporting feminism, increasingly aligned with the country's successful feminist movements. The difference is considered through the prism of (hetero)patriarchal configurations mediating the conditions and potentials of Fijian/Brazilian women's sporting practices, with particular attention to four interrelated points of comparison: cultural traditionalism, violence, political activism and nationalism. We conclude that comparative analysis of Southern regions can contribute meaningfully to feminist sport scholarship by shedding light on how sports intersect with various forms and spaces of gendered power dynamics.

Liu, W., **Han, J.H.**, Singh, M., Wright, D. (2025). A Translanguaging Approach to Doctoral Supervision: Leveraging Students' Multilingualism as Intellectual Resources. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12748>

Translanguaging theory and practices have enabled multilingual spaces where students' full linguistic repertoires are valued, explored, and utilized by educators as resources across educational settings. However, research reporting supervision pedagogies incorporating international doctoral students' multilingualism as intellectual resources in doctoral research education in Australia remains scant. This paper reports a case study that explored a PhD program at an education faculty in an Australian university. The data, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews were collected from seven multilingual doctoral students, and nine supervisors. These data were analyzed within the framework of post-structuralist translanguaging and translanguaging pedagogy. This research found supervisors demonstrated a consistent translanguaging stance and valued their students' multilingual resources for knowledge production. Through spontaneous and planned translanguaging pedagogical practices, they endeavored to enhance students' deployment of their multilingual capability for knowledge production.

Lombard, M., Ullman, J. & Denson, N. (2025). Caring for the carers: Compassion fatigue among secondary school Year Coordinators. *The Australian Educational Researcher*.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-025-00885-7>

Year Coordinators in Australian secondary schools are on the front line of support for students' wellbeing. Given rising rates of psychological distress amongst high school students and increases in the workload and work complexity of teachers, Year Coordinators may be at particular risk of secondary traumatic stress and burnout—the two components of compassion fatigue. This study examines the prevalence of compassion fatigue and its correlates among Year Coordinators (N=288) to gain deeper understandings of its risk and mitigation. Findings revealed that compassion fatigue is a significant occupational hazard for Australian Year Coordinators. Gender identity, years of experience and reported caseload were shown to have a significant positive association with compassion fatigue. Conversely, engagement in self-care practices, having stronger social supports, higher levels of compassion satisfaction and reported emotional separation were found to have a significant negative association with compassion fatigue. These findings may be used by schools to identify staff at risk of compassion fatigue and implement measures to protect teachers' psychological well-being and their ability to support their students.

Maïano, C., Morin, A.J.S., Hue, O., **Tracey, D.**, & Craven, R.G. (2025). Profiles of Physical Fitness Among Youth with Intellectual Disabilities: A Longitudinal Person-Centered Investigation. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-025-06918-5>

The main objective of this person-centered study was to identify the main profiles of physical fitness present among a large sample of youth with intellectual disabilities (ID). Moreover, we also investigated associations between several personal and sport-related characteristics and youth's physical fitness profiles. Participants were 375 Australian (N=242) and Canadian (N=133) youth (60.4% boys) with mild (49.6%) to moderate (50.4%) levels of ID. Latent profile analyses revealed five profiles, which were fully replicated over two time points taken with a one year interval: (1) *Average Flexibility with Low Strength, Balance, and Locomotor Capacity* (22.7%); (2) *Moderately High Flexibility with High Strength, Balance, and Locomotor Capacity* (8.2%); (3) *Moderately Low Flexibility with Moderately High Strength, Balance, and Locomotor Capacity* (30.8%); (4) *Average Flexibility with Very low Strength, Balance, and Locomotor Capacity* (6.5%); and (5) *Normative* (31.9%). Profile membership was essentially unchanged over time, with rates of stability ranging from 99 to 100%. Relative to the most physically fit profiles (2 and 3), the less physically fit profiles (1 and 4) and the Normative one included a higher proportion of younger Canadian girls with moderate levels of ID, comorbid conditions, and an unhealthier lifestyle (i.e., higher BMI, and a lower frequency of sport involvement in and out of school). The present results highlight the relevance of targeted fitness interventions strategies focused on youth with ID from the less physically fit profiles.

Miezah, D., Opoku, M.P., Fenu, C., Deila Yankey, K., Mensah Gyimah, E., & **Nketsia, W.** (2025). Does preservice teachers' contact with children with intellectual disabilities during their practicum impact their attitudes and teaching practices? "If you don't have the heart, you can't cope ...". *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability* 50(3), 301-315.

<https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2024.2437757>

This study sought to explore the effects of preservice teachers' contact with children with intellectual disabilities on their attitudes. The study was conducted against the backdrop of the exclusion and discrimination experienced by children with intellectual disabilities in Ghanaian schools. Twenty-two preservice teachers who interned at a special school for children with intellectual disabilities were interviewed before and after their practicums, and the gathered data underwent thematic analysis. There were changes in the participants' knowledge and willingness to interact and work with children with intellectual disabilities. For instance, before the practicum, the participants held stereotypical understandings of intellectual disabilities. However, after their practicums, their level of discussion of the core characteristics of intellectual disabilities had improved. Based on these findings, this study concludes by recommending that contact with children with intellectual disabilities be included as an integral part of preservice teacher training programmes.

Mills, C., **Tracey, D.** & Sharp, N. (2025). "Good Luck Out There Without NDIS": Challenges Accessing Individualized Support Packages by Autistic Young People Leaving School. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 6830644.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1155/hsc/6830644>

The transition from schooling to adulthood is an important and complex time in a young person's life, especially when they have a disability. For young autistic people, it is critical to receive the right support to ensure a successful transition. In Australia, disability supports are provided by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), a scheme implemented and administered by the Australian Government (specifically the National Disability Insurance Agency [NDIA]) since 2013. Implementation of Australia's NDIS has been inadequate in supporting the needs of many autistic young people. Autistic people are the largest group of participants in the NDIS. Support for this group is important considering the significant investment involved in the provision of NDIS funding, coupled with the potential negative consequences if they are not well-supported. This study explores the experiences of key stakeholders in relation to young autistic school leavers and their challenges accessing NDIS Tier 3 individualized support packages. This study adopted a qualitative methodology using a constructivist paradigm. This study draws on the perspectives of four key groups: young autistic people, parents/carers, educators, and disability service providers. Reflexive thematic analysis of the interview data was conducted. Two overall themes were identified. The first theme was related to fighting to get access to the NDIS, encompassing subthemes related to the NDIS maze, a heavy emotional and practical toll as well as inconsistencies in access. A second theme highlighted a worry for the future if autistic young people did not receive the support they needed postschool. Findings highlighted a range of difficulties accessing individualized funding packages (Tier 3) for autistic young people. There has been a critical failing of service provision at "Tier 2" of the NDIS (also referred to as information linkages and capacity building or foundational support), which was intended to facilitate access and participation in mainstream community services for people with disability. This placed additional pressure on Tier 3 and exacerbated the toll that interacting with the NDIS took on participants. Urgent work is needed to ensure that systems within the NDIS are funded appropriately and operating as intended to ensure good and equitable outcomes for autistic people leaving school.

Motevali Zadeh Ardakani, A. (2025). Language, culture, and education: Exploring Middle Eastern refugee mothers' perspectives on navigating Australian schools. *Journal for Multicultural Education*.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-10-2023-0104>

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges of Middle Eastern refugee mothers in using technology for language learning in regional Australian context. This study used a qualitative research design and used a narrative enquiry technique to understand participants' experiences of language acquisition with limited access to technology in new resettlement setting. The findings presented in this paper were derived from a qualitative investigation conducted on a sample of 21 refugee mothers from Middle Eastern countries. The research aimed to explore the role of a language education programme on their integration within the regional Australian context. Participants discussed a variety of aspects of their everyday lives within their new resettlement context while offering insights on the language education programme and its impacts on their educational progress. The theme "lack of access/use of technology in English language learning" emerged from the narratives. This paper draws on selected interview data from the participants. This study fills the gap in the literature on Middle Eastern refugees in regional Australia by exploring how lack/limited technology access can impact language acquisition of women from under-represented contexts.

Moura, E.S., & Knijnik, J. (2025). Regimes of hope: livelihood, social mobility, and autonomy in Sport for Development programs in the Global South. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1-14.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2024.2446526>

Sport is widely recognized as a powerful tool for promoting 'social good,' with significant potential for advancing personal, community, and economic development. In this context, the impact of Sport for Development (SfD) programs on livelihood and social mobility has been examined. However, research remains limited on the autonomous steps youth take to enhance their livelihood chances. This study examines how participants in SfD programs within the Global South navigate the program's objectives to pursue their career pathways and opportunities in sport. Drawing on eleven months of ethnographic research in two sport-based organizations in São Paulo, Brazil, and semi-structured interviews with diverse actors, this paper uses Freire's pedagogy of autonomy and the notion of hope as theoretical lenses. The findings reveal that participants actively shape their futures through SfD projects, crafting autonomous pathways toward improved livelihoods and aspiring for professionalization within the sport sector. Although their opportunities are influenced by neoliberal ideals, the SfD initiatives foster hope and nurture a strong sense of identity among participants. In their pursuit of better livelihoods and social mobility, young people strive to break free from the likelihood of failure within the 'regimes of hope' in the Brazilian football system. Findings show how the pedagogy of autonomy can be a promising theoretical avenue to conceptualize SfD in terms of its participants' search for independent livelihood and social mobility. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for SfD actors to view the SfD curriculum as an ongoing dialogic construction, collaboratively shaped with participants, to better reflect their lived experiences and aspirations.

Naidoo, L., Tan, L., & Wagner, S. (forthcoming). Relational agency in practice: How migrant and refugee parents navigate digital learning in Western Sydney. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2025.2573826>

Despite increasing attention to the challenges faced by migrant and refugee background students in Australia, significant gaps remain in understanding how digital exclusion influences parental engagement in education. Existing research focuses on language barriers, technological access, and regional disparities, but tends to generalise the experiences of migrant and refugee families, especially in Western Sydney. This paper highlights the often-overlooked issue of how the 'digital divide' limits parental agency and deepens educational inequalities. The study investigated how the lack of digital access among migrant and refugee background parents affected their engagement with schools and communities. Using a parental engagement framework, the research employed qualitative interviews and focus groups with parents in Western Sydney to gather detailed perspectives often obscured by broad labels like 'refugee' or 'migrant'. Findings show that digital exclusion not only hinders communication between parents and schools but also reduces parents to passive recipients rather than active partners in their children's education. This exclusion sustains stereotypes and further entrenches inequalities related to language, technology, and geographical location. This paper highlights the urgent need for more inclusive educational policies and digital initiatives that are vital for fostering genuine engagement and ensuring fair educational outcomes for all students.

Noetel, M., Sanders, T., **Tracey, D.** et al. (2025). Effects of a school-based physical activity intervention on children with intellectual disability: a cluster randomized trial. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 22(103).

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-025-01798-5>

Children living with disability have poorer health outcomes than their typically developing peers. They are less physically active and at increased risk of chronic disease. Teacher-led, whole-of-school physical activity interventions are promising levers for population-level change, but are seldom tested among children with disability. We aimed to evaluate the effect of a blended teacher-professional learning program (online and in-person) on fundamental movement skills (FMS) and physical activity among children with intellectual disability. In this cluster randomized clinical trial, we randomized 20 government-funded primary schools, including 238 consenting students (Grades 2–5; aged 8–11 years at baseline). Ten schools received the blended teacher-professional learning intervention and 10 were assigned as waitlist controls. The professional learning was designed to support teachers as they implemented a whole-of-school intervention designed to enhance FMS and increase physical activity levels. The school-based intervention was mostly online learning, followed by lesson observations and site visits from project staff. Blinded assessors measured FMS competency using the Test of Gross Motor Development-3. Secondary outcomes were self-concept, enjoyment, wellbeing, 300-yard run time, and accelerometer-measured physical activity. We found no significant group-by-time effects for the primary outcome (FMS competency: $b = 1.07$ [95% CI -3.70, 5.84], $p = .658$) or any secondary outcomes. A school-based intervention did not improve FMS competency or physical activity in children with intellectual disability. Results may be attenuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Alternatively, low intensity teacher-professional learning interventions may not be enough to improve FMS or physical activity among children with intellectual disability.

Olivier, E., Jolin, A., Dubé, C., Maïano, C., **Tracey, D.**, Craven, R. G., & Morin, A. J. (2025). Psychosocial difficulties profiles among youth with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 55(8), 2744-2760.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-024-06359-6>

This study sought to identify the various configurations, or profiles, of internalizing and externalizing behaviors found among a sample of youth with intellectual disabilities (ID). These behaviors were assessed twice over one year, using self, parental, and teacher reports. Six variables were hypothesized to predict profile membership: Parent-child relationship (i.e., warmth and conflict), student-teacher relationship (i.e., warmth and conflict), peer acceptance, and peer victimization. To this end, we conducted Latent Profile Analysis among a sample of 393 youth with ID (aged 11-22 years old) recruited in Canada (French-speaking; n = 142; 49.30% boys) and Australia (English-speaking; n = 251; 67.30% boys). Our results revealed five profiles: (1) Adjusted (13.48%), (2) Mild School-related Difficulties (34.38%), (3) Underestimation of Mild Difficulties (12.40%), (4) High Difficulties (19.45%), and (5) Internalizing Difficulties Unobserved at School (20.19%). These profiles, as well as profile membership, remained stable over time. Lower levels of student-teacher warmth, lower levels of peer acceptance, and higher levels of peer victimization were associated with a higher likelihood of membership into profiles characterized by above-average levels of psychosocial difficulties, especially self-reported. Based on these findings, future interventions addressing internalizing and externalizing behaviors could benefit from focusing on the school environment, notably peer acceptance and student-teacher warmth.

Opoku, M.P., & **Nketsia, W.** (2025). Teachers' access to professional development in inclusive education: an exploration of the Ghanaian context. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-22.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2025.2470195>

The implementation of inclusive education appears to have stalled in secondary schools in Ghana, coupled with the fact that there is a dearth of literature on teachers' access to PD in inclusive education. This study adopted the complexity system professional development (PD) model as a conceptual framework to explore the experiences of stakeholders in relation to teachers' access to PD opportunities in inclusive education. This qualitative study draws on a purposive sample of 37 participants consisting of school leaders, special educators and teachers from both public and private secondary schools recruited in a region in Ghana. A semi-structured interview guide was developed, and data were collected via face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. Although the majority of the participants indicated that their pre-service teacher education exposed them to inclusive education, only a few felt that this training adequately prepared them to adopt inclusive pedagogical skills to address the diversity of learning needs in the classroom. At the individual teacher, learning activity and school and system support levels, the participants recounted major barriers to PD accessibility in inclusive education. We also discuss the implications of the study for policymaking.

Opoku, M. P., Ashour, S., **Nketsia, W.**, Anwahi, N., Alsumaiti, R., & Moustafa, A. (2025). Using Epstein's model to understanding maternal involvement in the education of children with disabilities in an Arab Context. *Community, Work & Family*, 1–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2025.2557257>

Although previous research on parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities in non-Western contexts remains very scarce, mothers are consistently reported to be the primary caregivers involved in the day-to-day nurturing of their children with disabilities. In this study, we investigated the nature of maternal involvement in the education of children with special needs in both public and private schools in the UAE. The data collected during semi-structured interviews with 24 mothers of children with disabilities were analyzed thematically using [Epstein, J. L. (1994). Theory to practice: Schools and family partnerships lead to school improvement and student success. In C. L. Fagnano & B. Z. Werber (Eds.), *School, family, and community interaction: A view from the firing lines* (pp. 39–52). Westview Press] six indicators of parental involvement – namely, parenting, home–school communication, home learning activities, volunteering, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. The results revealed that, in an effort towards promoting the education of children with disabilities, parents perform some functions related to the Epstein model. For instance, the participants recounted providing their children with basic necessities; yet, some participants reported struggling with purchasing assistive devices for their children. Taken together, the results contribute to the literature on the education of children with disabilities in non-Western contexts and provide meaningful insights for practitioners, such as educators and policymakers, with regard to future educational reforms aimed at improving the education of children with disabilities in the UAE.

Opoku, M.P., Belbase, S., **Nketsia, W.**, Side, A.S., Were, D., & Gemed, F.T. (2025). Comparative study of teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy and job satisfaction when teaching gifted students in Ethiopia and Kenya. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, 1-18.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2025.2452467>

In sub-Saharan Africa, the literature is scarce on teachers' preparedness to support gifted education in classrooms. Thus, attempts have been made to understand the association between teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy and job satisfaction when teaching gifted students in classrooms. Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour was operationalised as a framework to estimate attitudes and self-efficacy's effects on variance in job satisfaction. Altogether, 308 teachers were recruited from Ethiopia and Kenya. The data were subjected to structural equation modelling, confirmatory factor analysis, path and moderation analyses, and two-way analysis of variance. A strong correlation was found between attitudes and self-efficacy, but both variables did not predict job satisfaction. The study recommends developing teacher training programmes to help improve teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy.

Opoku, M.P., Mprah, W.K., Duorinaah, J., Gyimah, E.M., **Nketsia, W.** & Adwan-Kamara, L. (2024). Mental health services for the deaf: an exploratory study of the aetiology, sources of information, and access to mental health services among deaf persons in Ghana. *BMC Health Services Research*, 24, 1379.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-024-11849-5>

The global burden of mental health disorders is on the increase, which has contributed to discussions on mitigation strategies. While mental health discourses in respect of access to services are still ongoing, there is limited focus on vulnerable groups. Deaf persons are at risk of exclusion from health services due to their unique modes of communication. In order to advocate for the inclusion of deaf persons in mental health services, there is a need for a study eliciting information on their knowledge about mental health and accessibility to services. The study was guided by a mixed-methods design and a two-phase data collection. In phase one, a questionnaire was distributed to 284 deaf persons to gather information on their knowledge of mental health conditions, causes, sources of information, and accessibility of services. Frequencies were used to report the trends identified in the data. Following this, an interview guide was designed based on the trends identified in the first phase to develop an in-depth insight into the experiences of deaf persons ($n = 40$) in respect of awareness and accessibility to mental health services. The results showed convergences and divergence between the qualitative and quantitative data. For instance, they were convergences between both datasets relative to knowledge on and causes of mental health conditions. The study highlights the need for health policymakers to leverage the information gathered on the study participants' knowledge to develop appropriate mental health training programmes for deaf persons.

Qi, J., Manathunga, C., Tuxworth, J., Dwyer, R., Harris, D.X., & **Jacobs, R.** (2025). Australia's policy discourse of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 1-14.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2025.2525128>

Recruitment of more culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) teachers is considered a strategy to address the current national teacher shortage and increasing community diversity in Australia. However, the success of this strategy is cast into uncertainty when considering the historical underrepresentation of CALD school leaders and teachers in Australia. We approach this issue through policy analysis and examine two questions: How are CALD teachers represented in Australian policies about teacher workforce and teacher education? How can CALD teachers be better supported through inclusive policymaking? Using Bacchi's WPR approach, we analyse the problematisations, assumptions, silences, and contradictions in the representations about CALD teachers in Australian federal policies. Findings show a blurred picture and a deficit view of the cohort without genuine understanding of their backgrounds, distinctive contribution and additional challenges they experience. We argue that future policymaking should critically and differentially support CALD teachers towards sustainable careers in Australian schools.

Sanagavarapu, P., Rika, S., Katelaris, C.H., Said, M., Collison, L., & Dadich, A. (2025). The management of children's food allergy in childcare centres, preschools, and schools: A scoping review. *Nutrients*, 17(17), 2722.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/nu17172722>

Background: There are very few reviews on how children's food allergy is managed across various educational settings, and none have considered psychological support in addition to child safety. This scoping review aimed to understand interventions to manage food allergy, addressing children's safety and psychological support in childcare centres, preschools, and schools. Methods: Following the JBI methodology for scoping reviews and applying the PCC (population, concept, and context) mnemonic, a search was conducted via Medline (Ovid), Embase (Ovid), CINAHL (EBSCOhost), ERIC (ProQuest), PsychInfo (EBSCOhost), Scopus, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (ProQuest). Furthermore, two supplementary searches were conducted: first, backward citation tracking of all publications included in this review; and second, a search of seven peak allergy organisation websites, including Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia and the World Allergy Organization. Findings: Eighteen publications were included from 6812 records retrieved from the databases. Most publications were from the United States of America (61%), representing food allergy management mainly in schools (39%), followed by preschools (22%), childcare centres (17%), and mixed settings (11%). All the interventions focused on child physical safety, largely neglecting psychosocial support for children or their families, and only four publications reported the use of control groups to test intervention benefits (22%). Furthermore, safety-focused interventions were centred on building educator or staff knowledge of food allergy and their skills, confidence, and self-efficacy to manage it (72%); these were found to be highly effective. Most interventions were aimed at adults, and none considered children. Interpretation: The findings suggest a need for more research on food allergy management involving child-focused, developmentally appropriate approaches, especially in childcare and preschool settings. There is also a need for research on psychological support, particularly that which involves control groups and encompasses different nations.

Silva, K., Cassel, M., & Knijnik, J. (2025). Football and eugenics in Brazilian society during the first half of the 20th century: Enhancing the 'national race.' *Soccer & Society*, 1-15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2025.2538793>

This paper addresses key questions regarding football, gender and national identity in the emerging Republic of Brazil during the transition from the 19th to the 20th centuries. It examines how eugenics ideology became intertwined with the sport to forge an identity based on the 'enhancement of the national race'. In doing so, eugenics emerged as a force promoting social exclusion, rooted in so-called scientific concepts of race and gender. We employed historical newspaper archives as primary sources to support our findings. The evidence indicates that football served as the flagship sport for the state to disseminate eugenic ideals of health and a 'superior race'. Moreover, our data highlights how football was used by the populist government of Getúlio Vargas to propagate notions of a new Brazilian national identity. In conclusion, we find that eugenics, as a political ideology, significantly influenced state control over sporting activities and shaped racial and gender constructs during Brazilian history.

Stoilescu, D. & Molnar, A. (2025). Views on teaching and learning preferences for women and men in undergraduate computer science. *ACM Transactions on Computing Education*, 25(3), 1-22.

<https://doi.org/10.1145/3742441>

This article explores differences between women's and men's views on teaching and learning in undergraduate computer science studies at a Canadian university. The research focuses on perceptions and experiences about learning activities and teaching computer science and how students and teachers view these aspects as valuable for these activities. To better understand research problems and complex phenomena, a mixed-methods concurrent approach was developed for this research, with the qualitative part being the major component (QUAL + quant). The data collected was based on interviews with students and academic staff, surveys, and class observations. Quantitative data from surveys were converted into narratives that were analyzed qualitatively (meaning we qualitized the data). The results show that students who identify as women relied more on formal teaching, while students who identify as men found informal teaching and smaller class sizes more important in their learning approaches. The interaction with the teaching assistants (TAs) was found to be more important for the students who identify as women than for the students who identify as men. As for learning preferences, women preferred more direct instruction, while male students were interested in more complex settings flexibly commuting between competitive, cooperative, and individual learning approaches. Neither women nor men preferred single-gender classes. It was noticed that a small class size is not automatically a solution, as in our case, male students benefited from small classes, while some women felt without adequate support.

Sturges, M. & Knijnik, J. (2025). Out of bounds: place, children's mobility and spatial experiences in Australian early childhood education. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 1-23.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2025.2569396>

This paper addresses key pedagogical topics related to children's socially and culturally constructed educational places. The study stems from an examination of how children engage with and make use of place and space in two Australian early-childhood centres. It explores how educators from these centres managed their educational space and how this impacted children's use of it. It also highlights the usefulness of spatial mapping as a methodological research tool and offers possibilities for others to adopt this as a tool. We focus on the children's use of the physical spaces, their mobility and the bathroom space. Our findings indicate that when locating themselves in the preschool, children mostly followed the rules and norms put in place by adult educators. At times, children would subvert, resist, redefine or play with these rules and locate themselves in spaces deemed 'out of bounds' by the educators, particularly the bathroom. Our analysis shows that the ways in which educators are gatekeepers of educational places and their decisions impact how children use their places. The implications of children's push back attitude are significant, opening avenues for educators to embrace more participatory and democratic pedagogies. This shift may amplify children's rights to use their educational spaces in ways that better serve their needs.

Tseng, M. L., **Tan, L.**, Chou, T. L. (forthcoming). Place-based digital composing practices in multimodal pedagogy: A designed-based approach to enhancing bilingual educators' professional development. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*.

Whilst existing studies on multimodal pedagogy frequently focus on teaching English, bilingual educators' professional knowledge and practice in integrating multimodal pedagogy into teaching English or other foreign languages as L2 remain underexplored. This gap is particularly pronounced in research on digital multimodal composing (DMC). Creating multimodal compositions is widely recognized as an approach to enhancing students' metasemiotic awareness. Guided by a social semiotic perspective on language teaching and learning and the New London Group's pedagogy of multiliteracies, this study examines how a team of six Taiwanese bilingual educators engaged in professional development on using *ArcGIS StoryMaps* to teach foreign languages to 36 university students. In this study, we adopted a design-based approach to develop a professional development program to equip participating bilingual educators with *ArcGIS StoryMaps* to teach foreign languages. Drawing on qualitative data such as students' digital compositions, teacher and student reflections, and interviews, we discuss the bilingual educators' professional development when shifting their use of *ArcGIS StoryMaps* from a direct replacement of *PowerPoint* to a more advanced use that facilitates transformed practice. We also discuss the complexities of implementing the pedagogy of multiliteracies in the bilingual context of teaching foreign languages in higher education.

Townley, C., & Ullman, J. (2025). Hypervisibility and erasure: parents' accounts of transgender children in early childhood education and care and primary schools. *Gender and Education*, 37(3), 278-294.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2024.2442955>

While much is known about transgender students' experiences of high school, less research has explored their experiences in primary/pre-schooling settings. This paper presents an analysis of parents' (N=15) recounts of their transgender children's (N=12) experiences in Australian early childhood education and care (ECEC) and primary schools. The research is situated in a trans-emancipatory theoretical framework that recognises the impact of cisnormativity in educational spaces. We find that the early years play-based approach contrasts with primary school settings, where children are regularly organized by binary gender categories. Whilst early childhood settings are child centred and often celebrate transgender children's individuality using a trans-accommodative approach, they can simultaneously reinforce cisnormativity through enforcing binary gendered norms. Binary norms erase transgender identities while, paradoxically, making the transgender child hypervisible. Findings can inform a whole-of-school approach to the inclusion of transgender identities and the wellbeing of trans children in ECEC and primary schools.

Van Bergen, P., Sweller, N., Andrews, R., Sutherland, E. L., Bussey, K., McMaugh, A., **Mackenzie, E.** & Maurice, O. (2025). Redshirting for Remediation or Advantage? Which Australian Families Delay Children's School Entry and Why. *Early Education and Development*, 36(4), 912-930.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2025.2449689>

Redshirting, in which children are held back from entering school until their second year of eligibility, is increasingly common. Parents' perceptions of school readiness may explain this trend but have not been investigated in relation to financial and other explanations. The aim of this study was to determine why parents choose to redshirt. Participants included 226 Australian parents whose preschool-age children were eligible to attend school in the year they turned five or six. Parents completed an online survey asking when they intended to send their child to school. They also rated a series of reasons for this decision, their expectations of school, and their perceptions of their child's development. Principal component analyses were used to identify discrete clusters of responses. *Research Findings*: Approximately two-thirds of parents (65.9%) intended to redshirt their child, with four discrete predictors identified. These included child gender, child socioemotional and behavioral readiness, practical realities (e.g. children's physical size, parent work intentions, and childcare costs), and concerns for child and family milestones (e.g. time together and relative age when learning to drive). *Practice or Policy*: To inform decision-making, parents consulted professionals, their community, and close family. Interestingly, academic skills were not a consideration. This finding can guide policymakers and educators in considering how best to support children's school transitions.

Wall, N.G., Wallis, M., Smith, O., Campbell, L., Loughland, C., & Schall, U. (2025). Teach Yourself to Learn (Facial) Expressions: An Acceptability and Usability Study of an App Teaching Facial Emotion Recognition Skills to Autistic Children. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 1-15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2025.2474491>

This study investigated TYLES, an iPad app adapting a tile-matrix task to support facial expression recognition in autistic children. The main aims of the study were to create an engaging app, assess user engagement and gauge its appeal with this population. Fifteen autistic children and their caregivers participated. Children used the iPad app daily for two weeks. While usability of the app was high, caregivers reported it as monotonous despite being easy for the child to navigate. Interestingly, children used the app for 12.6 minutes per day and achieved high accuracy (>90%) in recognizing emotions regardless of the expression type. These findings suggest children were already skilled at recognizing basic emotions, rendering the task unchallenging. Overall, the study results suggested that the TYLES app was usable but not accepted in its current form. This highlights the need for co-produced interventions and reconsidering the population on which the app is tested.

White, R. (2025). What is the intersection between musical giftedness and creativity in education? Towards a conceptual framework. *Education Sciences*, 15(9), 1139.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/15/9/1139>

This article proposes a pluralistic conceptual framework for fostering creativity in musically gifted students, exploring the complex and non-linear nature of creativity development and manifestation. It aims to address a core research question: what is the intersection between musical giftedness and creativity in education? The proposed framework integrates two prominent theoretical models—the systems theory of creativity and the ‘four C’ model of creativity. Together, these models offer a dynamic and developmental understanding of creative expression, ranging from everyday creativity to potential for eminent achievement, as it manifests in musically gifted learners. The role of the teacher is placed at the heart of the creative developmental process, and the teacher is conceptualised not merely as a knowledge provider but as a central catalyst for creativity. This framework argues that the teacher functions as an environmental mediator shaping classroom climates that support innovation and as a curator of meaningful musical experiences. The article considers how established gifted education strategies, including enrichment, acceleration, and differentiated instruction, can be oriented toward fostering creative musical growth. Implications for research and practice will be discussed. This article proposes a pluralistic conceptual framework for fostering creativity in musically gifted students, exploring the complex and non-linear nature of creativity development and manifestation. It aims to address a core research question: what is the intersection between musical giftedness and creativity in education? The proposed framework integrates two prominent theoretical models—the systems theory of creativity and the ‘four C’ model of creativity. Together, these models offer a dynamic and developmental understanding of creative expression, ranging from everyday creativity to potential for eminent achievement, as it manifests in musically gifted learners. The role of the teacher is placed at the heart of the creative developmental process, and the teacher is conceptualised not merely as a knowledge provider but as a central catalyst for creativity. This framework argues that the teacher functions as an environmental mediator shaping classroom climates that support innovation and as a curator of meaningful musical experiences. The article considers how established gifted education strategies, including enrichment, acceleration, and differentiated instruction, can be oriented toward fostering creative musical growth. Implications for research and practice will be discussed.

Yang, S., & Han, J.H., (2025). Becoming teacher-researchers through action research: The experiences of Chinese language teacher candidates in a cross-cultural context. *System*, 103632.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103632>

This study is situated in the problematic context where research and practice are divisive due to the dominant epistemological positioning of school teachers being trained for teaching and tertiary academics for research. It explores the experiences of two teacher candidates' becoming teacher-researchers through [action research](#) in a cross-cultural context. This is retrospective research. The participants were enrolled in a Sino-Australian language teacher-researcher [education program](#) for their Master of Education Degree. The data were collected from them through multiple interviews and documentation at the stage of their early career teaching after the completion of their degree study. The researchers took an integrated lens of [narrative](#) psychology and [ecological approach](#) as theoretical stance. Through thematic analysis, a few key findings emerged. First, the teacher candidates' identity-agency in becoming teacher-researchers experienced emerging, strengthening, and sustaining phases. Second, experiences central to the development of their teacher-researcher identity-agency encompassed their educational background, the benefits of action research internalized through the program, and their engagement in knowledge communities. Third, internal and external forces intertwined and influenced their involvement in knowledge communities, thereby steering the evolution of their identity-agency. This research is expected to provide insight into the landscapes of future language teacher-researcher education.

Yang, W., Liang, L., Xiang, S., & Yeter, I.H. (2025). Making a Makerspace in early childhood education: effects on children's STEM thinking skills and emotional development. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 56, 2025, 101754.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101754>

Makerspaces are used to promote classroom change and creativity for the 21st century. Building on the learning theory of Constructionism, this intervention study used a curriculum intervention program, "Making a Makerspace" (MM), to integrate the makerspace into Chinese kindergartens. We used a quasi-experimental research design to evaluate the effects of this curriculum intervention, with 120 children enrolled in the experimental classrooms, while the other 111 children enrolled in the waitlist control classrooms. Teacher-report child performance ($N = 231$) showed that the MM program resulted in significantly higher scores in children's STEM habits of mind in the intervention group, relative to the control group. Analyses of parent-report child behaviors revealed that there was a significant effect of the MM program on post-intervention temperamental surgency. Our evidence shows that such a scalable program encourages and guides teachers to build a positive learning environment for supporting young children's making and thinking in everyday preschool experiences. The makerspace further sets a solid foundation for the development of children's STEM thinking skills and socioemotional skills in a rapidly changing digital society.

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Research Reports

Barker, K. & Tracey, D. (2025). *Lake Murray Schools E-Learning Initiative: Initial Needs Assessment and Reported Impact of the Qhatapa System Implementation.* PNG Sustainable Development Program. Western Sydney University.

<https://researchers.westernsydney.edu.au/en/publications/lake-murray-schools-e-learning-initiative-initial-needs-assessment>

This report presents survey findings from teachers in Lake Murray to inform Sustainable Development Program's (SDP) and Kokoda Track Foundation's evidence-based school programs. It draws on pre-implementation data about teachers' needs and expectations for the Schools E-Learning Initiative and follow-up data on teachers' understanding of the Qhatapa system and its reported effects on schools and the wider community. The analysis, conducted in partnership with Western Sydney University, is used to guide future program design and implementation.

Dwyer, A., Barnes, J. & McClean, T. (2025). *Supply-side barriers to ECEC: Insights from Early Learning practitioners.* Uniting NSW. ACT and Western Sydney University: Sydney NSW.

<https://www.uniting.org/blog-newsroom/research-publications/Articles/supply-side-barriers-to-ecec-qualitative-research-paper>

This paper reports on the findings of qualitative research with early childhood educators on the features of the early learning system, and broader social systems, that present barriers to families accessing early learning. It furthers our understanding of how these systemic barriers play out in the lives of individual families experiencing a range of different kinds of vulnerability, and how early learning services are currently responding and/or think the system should respond. In Australia, there is current recognition at a policy level of the need to expand access to quality early learning. In this context, it is imperative to understand barriers to early learning for families experiencing disadvantage, so that effective responses to overcoming them can be formulated. This paper is the second in a two-part series examining supply-side barriers to early learning in Australia, firstly through the lens of existing literature and secondly through the perspectives of early childhood educators at Uniting.

Gannon, S., D'warte, J., Naidoo, L., & Dove, J. (2024). *Learning from Lockdown: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Australian Students, Families, and Teachers.* Western Sydney University.

<https://doi.org/10.26183/ywg7-kc69>

This report investigates the educational inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, focusing on the perspectives of students, families, and teachers. Conducted between 2020 and 2023, the study examines the long-term effects of school lockdowns and transitions to online learning, revealing how existing socioeconomic, geographic, and technological disparities were intensified. Through a multi-phased qualitative research design, insights were drawn from surveys and interviews with students aged 15-19, parents, and teachers who either left or considered leaving the profession. Key findings highlight increased mental health challenges, engagement difficulties, and the digital divide, with disadvantaged communities, particularly in Western Sydney, suffering the most. The report underscores the ongoing pandemic legacies, including the reshaping of family learning dynamics, the burden on teachers, and the call for systemic reforms. It provides recommendations for policy improvements to address mental health, equity, and the future of education in a post-pandemic landscape.

Gray, T., Pigott, F., Panagiotaros, C., Lisle, C., & Schaefer, J. (2025). *Fostering Nature Connectivity with Adolescents Living in Western Sydney: A Research Report.* Western Sydney University.

<https://doi.org/10.26183/64j3-2162>

This mixed-methods research examined the impact of the Guardians of the Park program, a 10-week nature-based intervention supporting adolescents experiencing social and educational disadvantage in Western Sydney. Grounded in biophilia theory and utilising a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the study explored whether immersive habitat restoration, cultural learning, and outdoor education could strengthen nature connectedness, self-esteem, and social-emotional wellbeing. Quantitative data were collected using the Extended Inclusion of Nature in Self (EINS) scale, complemented by qualitative data from observations, interviews, and reflective field notes. Due to irregular attendance and literacy challenges, qualitative data emerged as the most reliable indicator of student experience and change. Findings demonstrated notable improvements in social skills, confidence, autonomy, and executive functioning. Participants showed strengthened peer relationships, increased willingness to take on leadership roles, and greater emotional regulation. A deepening attunement

to place emerged as students became more observant, appreciative, and respectful of the natural environment. Cultural engagement with First Nations educators proved particularly influential, fostering belonging, curiosity, and connection to Country. The program structure—flexible, relational, experiential, and strengths-based—was central to its effectiveness, with “interrupted spaces” enabling new ways of relating, learning, and experiencing success.

Knijnik, J., Hunter, J., & Paterson, C. (2025). *Education and democracy in the Australian Media – A decadal report.* Western Sydney University, Penrith.

<https://doi.org/10.26183/gzcy-6571>

This report explores the representations of democratic education, youth, citizenship education and curriculum change in Australian schools in national print media. A collection of keywords from the education literature were used to systematically select print media articles (n = 746) across four major Australian newspapers (The Sydney Morning Herald, The Daily Telegraph (Sydney), The Age (Melbourne) and The Australian) over a 10-year period (2014 to 2023). From this selection of articles we identified clear themes which provide a window, at least from a reportage point of view, into the importance or otherwise of the broader issues of democratic education, youth, citizenship education and curriculum change in Australian schools.

Robinson, K. H., Allison, K., Jackson, E. F., Davies, C., Smith, E. K., Hawkey, A., Ussher, J., Ullman, J., Marjadi, B., & Byron, P. (2024). *#SpeakingOut@Work: Sexual harassment of LGBTQ young people in the workplace and workplace training (Research report, 10/2024).* ANROWS.

<https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/sexual-harassment-lgbtq-young-people/>

This report, commissioned under ANROWS’s Sexual Harassment Research Program (SHRP), offers crucial insights into the workplace sexual harassment experienced by LGBTQ young people and is critical for informing workplace policy and practice specific to LGBTQ young people. The study featured: a national online survey with 1,001 LGBTQ young people aged 14–30; individual in-depth interviews with 40 survey participants; a photo exercise where 8 participants shared images representing their experiences of workplace sexual harassment; and, an intersectional approach exploring how multiple social inequalities intersect in experiences of workplace sexual harassment. Findings highlighted the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace experiences of LGBTQ people and pointed to the need for increased workplace training and sexual harassment

literacy. 77% of LGBTQ young people surveyed had experienced workplace sexual harassment, often directly connected to their LGBTQ identities. Most perpetrators were men who acted alone. Some LGBTQ young people experienced behaviours they felt were inappropriate, unwelcome and targeted them based on their sex, gender or sexuality, yet were often unsure if their experiences counted as sexual harassment. This was, in part, because LGBTQ young people often reported receiving minimal or no training on workplace sexual harassment. Most LGBTQ young people who experienced sexual harassment at work chose not to make a formal report and often chose instead to leave their jobs.

Robinson, K. H., Allison, K., Jackson, E. F., Davies, C., Smith, E. K., Hawkey, A., Ussher, J., Ullman, J., Marjadi, B., & Byron, P. (2024). *#SpeakingOut@Work: Sexual harassment of LGBTQ young people in the workplace and workplace training (Research report, 10/2024).* ANROWS.

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Skattebol, J., Blaxland, M., Fenech, M., **Woodrow, C.**, Press, F., Newton, B.J., & Jones, A. (2025). *Engaging Families in Early Education*. University of New South Wales.

The Engaging Families in Early Education project produced nine digital stories with families and educators. The stories capture real life experiences and serve as valuable tools for reflection. In this document, we briefly describe the research, how we partnered with participants to produce the digital stories and offer some suggestions on how they could be used for professional learning. Beyond professional learning, we encourage educators, services, service providers, policy makers and advocates to draw on these stories in their own ways to improve the experiences of families who experience economic adversity in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Taylor, N., Bennie, A., **Gray, T.**, White, R., Curry, C., Farmer, Y., & Delaney, S. (2025). *Cooling the Schools Research Report*, Western Sydney University

<https://researchers.westernsydney.edu.au/en/projects/cooling-the-schools-evaluation-2024-10>

This evaluation, commissioned by Greening Australia, examined the 2024 Cooling the Schools program across 20 Sydney primary and secondary schools. The program addressed urban heat through tree planting and place-based environmental education, aiming to cool school environments while strengthening ecological understanding. Teacher interviews indicated that the program substantially enhanced students' environmental awareness, wellbeing, and connection to nature. Educators observed improved emotional regulation, cooperation, and physical activity through outdoor learning, alongside a deepened respect for Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge delivered by Aboriginal educators. Hands-on planting fostered students' sense of care and stewardship, and many teachers reported increased confidence in using outdoor environments as learning spaces. However, limited uptake of the pre-planting materials suggests these resources require redesign, with greater emphasis on post-planting learning or on-site teaching support. Overall, the program generated meaningful environmental, cultural, and educational benefits, with potential for strengthened curricular integration to enhance long-term impact.

Non-traditional Outputs

Blaise, M., Gray, E., **Ullman, J.**, Fishwick, E. & Beardman, G. (2025). *Cards against everyday sexism*. *Everyday Sexisms in Australian Universities*. Edith Cowan University.

<https://doi.org/10.25958/annq-p672>



This deck of cards has been created using direct quotes from participants who took part in a nation-wide survey about everyday sexism in Australian Universities. For more information about the project see: www.everydaysexismsau.com

Blaise, M., Gray, E., **Ullman, J.**, Fishwick, E. & Beardman, G. (2025). *Micro-Credential: Understanding and addressing everyday sexism*. *Everyday Sexisms in Australian Universities*. <https://doi.org/10.25958/wmtz-kk33>

In 2021, a research team was awarded Australian Research Council Discovery Project funding for a project entitled Understanding and Addressing Everyday Sexisms in Australian Universities.

To investigate this topic, a four phased, mixed methods research project was designed that involved:

- 1) Auditing all 39 of Australian public university websites, looking for gender equity policies and if and where the word 'sexism' appeared;
- 2) Interviewing key women and gender diverse stakeholders with diverse identity characteristics (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; women of colour; sexuality diverse) working in relevant positions (STEM leaders, Equity Officers, Complaints Officers);
- 3) Designing and distributing a mixed methods large-scale survey to 12 Australian universities ($N = 1257$ responses);
- 4) Conducting three creative focus groups in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. Based on these findings this micro-credential was developed. It is intended to be taken by all employees at Australian Universities

Blaise, M., Gray, E., **Ullman, J.**, & Fishwick, E. (2025). *Everyday sexism takeaway tote bags: Tools for communicating research findings*.

<https://doi.org/10.25958/p4gg-fd55>

In 2023 Takeaway Tote Bags bags were created and handed out to delegates attending an Australian national educational research conference. Usually conference bags are filled with corporate sponsored freebies like branded pens, notepads, and water bottles. The Everyday Sexisms Takeaway Tote Bags were different because they were conceptualised as a tool for creatively communicating research findings from a national mixed-methods research project about everyday sexism in Australian Universities to a broad audience. Several resources were developed to open- up opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and pathways to action.

Ullman, J. & Townley, C. (2025). Supporting gender and sexuality diverse students in NSW public schools. The Policymaker, 29/09/2025. Australian Public Policy Institute.

<https://thepolicymaker.appi.org.au>

Conference Proceedings

Ardakani, A., Ginigaddara, B., Egbelakin, T., Newaz, T., Amponsah, M. (2025). Integrating Women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds into Construction Workforce: A Review of Literature. In: Sutrisna, M., Jelodar, M.B., Potangaroa, R., Atapattu, C., Samarasinghe, D.A.S. (eds) *Creating Capacity and Capability: Embracing Advanced Technologies and Innovations for Sustainable Future in Building Education and Practice*. AUBEA 2023. Lecture Notes in Civil Engineering, vol 562. Springer, Singapore.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-1181-2_22

Mackenzie, E., Holmes, K., Berger, N. & Thompson, M. (2025). Mind the Gap: Investigating Misaligned Mathematics Study Intentions and Perceived Capabilities. In *Unlocking minds in mathematics education. Proceedings of the 47th annual conference of the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia* (pp. 285-292). The Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia Inc.

[MERGA47-Proceedings_27June2025.pdf](#)

So, H-J., **Tan, L.** & Beaumie, K. (2025). Global Approaches to AIED: Common Voices and Silences about the Sustainable Use of Generative AI in Education. In Rajala, A., Cortez, A., Hofmann, R., Jornet, A., Lotz-Sisitka, H., & Markauskaite, L. (Eds.). *19th International Conference of the Learning Sciences (ICLS) 2025* (pp. 3046-3048). Helsinki, Finland: International Society of the Learning Sciences.

WESTERNSYDNEY.EDU.AU/CER

SOE-Research@westernsydney.edu.au

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