



## Research Highlights

- **Through the looking glass: New framework gives language to representation in children's books**
- **ECU and Outdoors WA team up to bolster outdoor education**
- **Community music education a key youth wellbeing strategy**

## Feature Articles

- **ECU South West celebrates graduates across generations**
- **HAT@ECU: Partnering to shape the next generation of teachers**
- **Indonesia teaching placement program recognised by New Colombo Plan**

## From the Executive Dean

**Professor Caroline Mansfield**, Executive Dean, School of Education.

Welcome to our first edition of Updated for 2026!

At the heart of meaningful education lies connection, between people, ideas, and communities. In this issue, we celebrate the power of partnership and collaboration as essential drivers of innovation, growth, and wellbeing. A defining example is the partnership between the School of Education and Outdoors WA, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening high-quality professional learning, research, and engagement across the state. Together, we are creating opportunities that connect theory with practice and enrich learning for educators and students alike. This collaborative spirit also shapes our research as we respond to the evolving needs of learners. From exploring primary students' attitudes to handwriting and keyboarding, to examining how reading can foster empathy and understanding, our work highlights the importance of responsive, evidence-informed teaching. Partnerships extend into new frontiers, including the development of virtual reality training for electrical apprentices in remote communities, as well as into our enduring collaborations with schools through the HAT@ECU employment-based pathway program, which continues to play a vital role in preparing the next generation of teachers.

Wellbeing remains a central thread throughout this edition. We showcase the transformative role of music and the arts in building resilience, connection, and belonging through community programs and innovative drama education. We are also proud to introduce Professor Aaron Jarden, whose internationally recognised expertise in wellbeing science strengthens our focus on evidence-informed approaches to supporting flourishing individuals and communities. We hope these stories offer insight, inspiration, and a sense of the collective impact we are making across our communities.



### April - May

## Djeran in Motion: A Noongar Season of Change

'Djeran' is represented by the colour green as it is the time of the year where the cooler weather begins. Djeran season sees a break in the really hot weather. A key indicator of the change of season is the cool nights that bring a dewy presence in the early mornings. The winds will also change, especially in their intensity, with light breezes generally swinging from southerly directions.

Many flying ants can be seen cruising around in the light winds. Djeran is a time of red flowers, especially from the red flowering gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*), as well as the smaller and more petite flowers of the summer flame (*Beaufortia aestiva*).

[Read more on the ECU webpage.](#)



## Through the looking glass: New framework gives language to representation in children's books



Associate Professor Helen Adam, School of Education.

Education experts are encouraging teachers and parents to empower children to be critical readers by adopting a new, innovative framework that fosters empathy and understanding. An international group of literacy education experts are calling on teachers and parents to adopt a new framework for teaching critical consciousness in children through the way they learn to view the books they read. A new research paper authored by a team of international experts in children's literature and social justice, led by Associate Professor Helen Adam from the School of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU), draws on the researchers' collective experiences as scholars and educators to expand how children learn to use metaphorical concepts of mirrors and windows when reading and analysing a text.

Associate Professor Adam said while books may serve as both a mirror and window for children's diverse perspectives, the researchers' innovative framework empowers children to be critical readers by teaching them how to identify five different mirror types. "The nuanced framework we've presented provides educators with increased confidence and strategies for infusing the curriculum with diverse literature for children," Associate Professor Adam said. "We know that when books serve as windows, children can see the characters and experiences different from their own and, through this, can learn appreciation, respect, and empathy for those different from themselves.

"When books serve as windows and aren't limited to reflections of a child's own lived experience, it helps disrupt potential development of prejudice and misunderstanding of others. It fosters critical consciousness regarding social justice issues."

Conversely, children may feel excluded and unengaged in their classroom learning if they don't see themselves and their culture represented in the books they read. Associate Professor Adam explained most existing frameworks continue to treat the concept of mirrors as relatively uniform in their function without accounting for the different qualities of reflection that books might provide. "Our framework of differentiated mirrors recognises that mirrors themselves exist on a spectrum of reflective quality," Associate Professor Adam explained.

"Unlike previous frameworks that have treated mirrors and windows as largely separate functions, our approach acknowledges that books frequently serve as both simultaneously. "By focusing on different types of mirrors based on the physics of actual mirrors (plane, concave, convex), in addition to magic mirror and fairground mirror recognition, we provide a systematic and relevant framework that bridges the gap between theoretical understanding and practical implementation while remaining accessible to both educators and children."

### Types of mirrors

The foundation of the framework encourages children to build their understanding through connecting new and existing knowledge. Plane mirror: Books often read by children as something that is familiar to them. Concave mirror: These books magnify and focus attention on specific aspects of children's identities or experiences, bringing particular elements into sharp relief that may have been previously unnoticed or undervalued. Convex mirror: Some things in the book may be familiar, but other aspects are new to children's line of vision.

The book can likely be both a mirror and a window simultaneously, providing broader perspectives that contextualise familiar elements within wider contexts.

### Mirrors to consider carefully

While these can be used to teach critical literacy they should be used with caution.

- The magic mirror: The fictional magic mirror that lies to its viewer to reinforce a superior sense of self. This is often seen in monocultural book collections more broadly, rather than individual books.
- The fairground mirror: This type of mirror is evident in books that promote stereotypical or distorted reflections of diverse groups, often promoting an exotic or condescending portrayal.

### Practical application

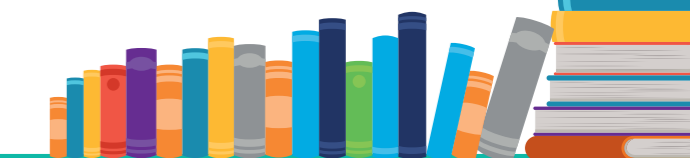
Associate Professor Adam recommended implementing the differentiated mirror framework with children through a three-pronged approach:

- Teaching the framework to children
- Identifying different mirror types in practice
- Building critical consciousness

The aim of the framework is to help children and educators move beyond passive consumption of literature toward active, critical engagement through emphasising critical consciousness and problem-posing education. "By distinguishing between different qualities of reflection, we can help prevent children from developing a distorted view of oneself and of the world, where white culture is often normalised and oversaturated," Associate Professor Adam said.

When children learn to identify different types of mirrors, they develop tools for questioning whose stories are told, and whose voices remain absent. As co-author and educator Madison Kozeny reflected in the research paper, children do not just passively consume stories—they interrogate them, question who is included and excluded, and make deeper connections to their own lives. "When children have language to discuss representation, they become more thoughtful readers.

Our goal is how this can positively impact and translate to the way future generations will see themselves, those around them, and the way they move through the world," Associate Professor Adam stated. "We hope to empower educators to create literacy environments where every child feels valued, visible, and connected to the broader human experience."



This article is republished from the [ECU Newsroom](#).  
Read the original article [here](#).

# ECU and Outdoors WA team up to bolster outdoor education

Professor Dawn Penney, Professor and Dr David Aldous, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.



L-R: Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean of Education at ECU and Katie Brown, CEO of Outdoors WA.

**Two major industry players in outdoor education have celebrated the launch of a new partnership. The collaboration will enhance capacity to grow and offer opportunities for outdoor learning across the State.**

The move aims to redefine, grow, and shape high-quality professional learning, research strategy, and engagement at the local, national, and international levels. Outdoors WA is the peak industry body for the outdoor sector in Western Australia, including recreation and education, and adventure tourism. Compatibly, Edith Cowan University (ECU) is a key higher education provider of health and physical education teachers in the State. Outdoors WA Chief Executive Officer Katie Brown said the joint signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ECU was a significant first step in together creating real-world impact for future generations.

"Outdoors WA exists to provide advocacy, leadership, and support to the outdoor industry in Western Australia. Our vision is to see every Western Australian spending two hours a week active outdoors, the globally recognised time for optimal health benefits," Ms Brown said. "Together with senior health and physical education researchers and educators from ECU, we aim to explore projects and activities aligned to our shared values and vision."

### Redefining outdoor learning

Project lead Dr David Aldous, Senior Lecturer in Health and Physical Education from the School of Education at ECU, said the collaboration would empower people to have opportunities to actively participate in outdoor learning across communities and in schools.

"Through this exciting new partnership with Outdoors WA, we will enhance capacity to grow and offer opportunities for outdoor learning that is lifelong, life-wide, and with a focus on communities," Dr Aldous said.

Since running forums to engage with and listen to industry, education and community stakeholders, Dr Aldous said it was clear that ECU could play a pivotal part in supporting Outdoors WA's vision for the State and beyond. "ECU is determined to play a leading role in driving professional learning and developing a future workforce that will enable growth in outdoor activities so people can participate at any age and any level," he said.

The scope of the collaboration will include the design, implementation, and evaluation of high-quality professional learning for pre-service, graduate, and experienced teachers of outdoor education and related industry professionals in WA. "Our goal is to support the development of lifelong educators in both regional and metropolitan communities," Dr Aldous expressed.

"In addition to identifying the needs of the sector, through this partnership we have established a working group of teachers, tertiary education and industry representatives to co-design professional learning activities, workshops, and knowledge enhancement to shape curriculum design, key policies, and future directions."

Dr Aldous said outdoor education in schools plays a major role, but it's not the end game: "We want to prepare teachers and future educators with the tools, knowledge, and vision to work with industry and community organisations to prepare young people for continuing outdoor activities once they've finished school."

### Bridging global connections with community

A key component of the partnership will see ECU develop a research strategy for Outdoors WA that will have a positive impact on industry, education, and community stakeholders. Combining professional learning and research, the alliance will strengthen joint engagement activities to disseminate research and other professional outcomes within and outside Australia. Co-lead Professor Dawn Penney, Vice Chancellor's Professorial Research Fellow in the School of Education at ECU, said the partnership recognises and reflects broader trends in sport and varied forms of physical activity participation in community.

"Outdoor learning occurs in many ways and places, and presents both challenges and opportunities for organisations, institutions and individuals across government, private, not for profit and commercial sectors to help facilitate that for the benefit of individuals and communities. In turn, outdoor learning has social, economic, physical and mental wellbeing benefits across the lifespan, both within and beyond formal institutions," Professor Penney stated.

She said the partnership provides a foundation where research underpins and is integral to teaching and engagement. "An aspiration moving forward is seeing more students pursue higher degree by research postgraduate opportunities in this area,

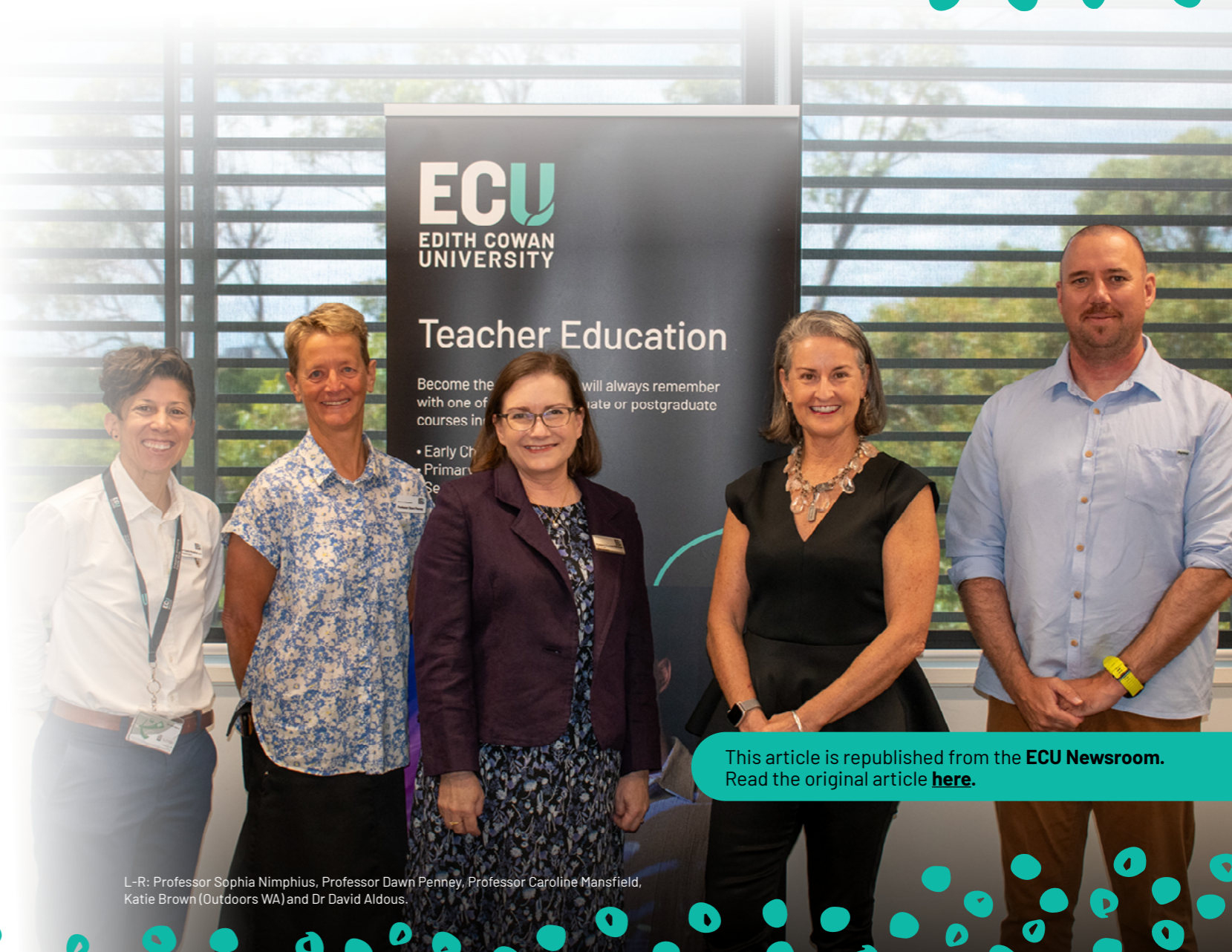
by co-creating research with communities and industry alongside the next generation of research educators," she said.

"In addition, national and international collaborations with Griffith University (Queensland), University College Cork (Ireland), Cardiff Metropolitan University/Prifysgol Metropolitan Caerdydd (Wales) and industry partners in Wales/Cymru (UK) are already underway, and ECU looks forward to disseminating our learnings and showcasing sustainable impact in practice on the global stage alongside Outdoors WA."

Dr Aldous, Ms Brown and partners will present the initial impact of the partnership and possibilities of outdoor learning in WA at the 23rd National Outdoor Education Conference convened by the Outdoor Educators Association of Queensland in September 2026 and at the AIESEP 2027 International Conference in Eindhoven, Netherlands in July next year.

### Want to get involved?

ECU and Outdoors WA welcome engagement from industry and community partners across both regional and metropolitan areas who share their values and vision to get in touch via email; [d.aldous@ecu.edu.au](mailto:d.aldous@ecu.edu.au).



L-R: Professor Sophia Nimphius, Professor Dawn Penney, Professor Caroline Mansfield, Katie Brown (Outdoors WA) and Dr David Aldous.

This article is republished from the [ECU Newsroom](#). Read the original article [here](#).

## The writing is on the wall – Are kids ditching pens for keyboards?



Dr Anabela Malpique, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.



Image credit: Lithiumphoto, Shutterstock.

A nation-wide study of more than 500 Australian primary school students in Year 2 has revealed whether beginner writers' attitude and motivation towards both handwriting and keyboarding can be a major predictor of the quality of their writing.

The research led by Dr Anabela Malpique, senior lecturer in literacy from the School of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU), in collaboration with colleagues from the Writing for All research group, examined students' specific attitudes toward writing on paper compared to writing using a computer.

The researchers also looked at how primary school-aged students feel about writing more generally. "In the digital age, it is critical to gain insights into how beginner writers feel about writing as they navigate the unique challenges of composing both paper and computer-based texts," Dr Malpique said.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether young children's general attitudes towards writing, and specific attitudes towards both paper and computer-based writing, could significantly predict children's writing outcomes. "Handwritten national exams have been discontinued in Australian primary schools. Students are required to complete online literacy and numeracy tests from Year 3—so it's important to understand the difference in their writing performance between paper-based and computer modalities."

### Handwriting vs keyboarding

"We found that children held very positive attitudes toward both writing formats, but only their handwriting attitudes significantly predicted the success of their paper-based work. Keyboarding attitudes did not show a similar link to computer-based writing performance."

Dr Malpique said. When children hold negative attitudes, lack interest and self-belief towards handwriting and their handwriting skills, their motivation to write and the quality of their handwritten texts are of a lower standard than children who hold positive attitudes toward handwriting.

"Contrastingly, specific attitudes towards writing computer-based texts did not make a unique or statistically significant contribution in predicting computer-based compositional quality and productivity," she said. The study highlighted that keyboarding automaticity is a more powerful predictor of digital writing success than student motivation. "We also interviewed children and learned that they value writing using paper and pencil as well as using computers. However, despite holding more positive attitudes towards using computers for writing, they felt more capable of writing texts using paper and pencil. Children associated handwriting with physical fatigue and digital writing with technical difficulties, such as struggling to locate keys," Dr Malpique explained.

### Children's comments offered additional insights:

- Negative attitudes related to the physical effort of writing using a pen or pencil ("hurts my hand" or "get tired doing it")
- Lack of knowledge of letter position on a keyboard and difficulties with typing and coordination (e.g., "harder to find letters" and "it will be harder because, um, instead of doing a word you have to look down")

Dr Malpique recommends a balanced approach to teaching writing in primary classrooms. "Teachers should focus on developing both psychomotor skills and positive motivational beliefs to support emerging writers in the digital age."

The study forms part of a research project investigating student and contextual-level factors contributing to the development of paper and computer-based writing in early primary education. Motivation to write in the digital age: examining early primary students' attitudes towards paper and computer-based text composing is included in the Writing for All: Handwriting and keyboarding skills in the Early Years project funded by The Ian Potter Foundation.

This article is republished from the [ECU Newsroom](#). Read the original article [here](#).

## Community music education a key youth wellbeing strategy



Dr Jason Goopy, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.

A new Edith Cowan University study has investigated the positive impact of community music education programs in regional Australia – providing non-medical, cost-effective, and community-based opportunities to reach out to young people who are struggling. Improving the wellbeing of young people is an international priority. The World Health Organization has reported that suicide is now the third leading cause of death for young people aged 15 to 29-years-old globally, and is strongly correlated to youth mental illness.

A new research study led by Dr Jason Goopy, Senior Lecturer in Music Education in the School of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU), has investigated the positive impact of community music education programs (CMEPs) in regional Australia. CMEPs provide non-medical, cost-effective, and community-based opportunities to reach out to young people who are struggling and to promote wellbeing and healthy living. "Community music education programs are increasingly recognised as an empowering environment for participants to learn healthy life strategies in addition to music," Dr Jason Goopy said. "Through the lens of self-determination theory (SDT), we investigated how these programs satisfied psychological needs and enhanced the wellbeing of adolescents and young adults experiencing challenging life circumstances."

The CMEP involved in the study offered free afternoon programs where learning music, particularly songwriting, was used as a transformative resource to engage youth in formal life education. Entry to the program was available to all young people, regardless of their previous music education experience. Researcher observation and participation in sessions and individual semi-structured interviews with young people and program facilitators were used to understand the impact of music education in this setting. "We found learning music in community settings guided by belonging, learning, and empowerment promoted young people's wellbeing," Dr Goopy explained.

A sense of belonging was achieved by a positive, family-like environment promoting no judgment, connection, and inclusion. Facilitator role models provided informal music and formal life learning activities. Young people were empowered to take control and were instilled with a sense of accomplishment and purpose. "What we found is that CMEPs can satisfy young people's relatedness, competency, and autonomy psychological needs, which are essential for human flourishing."

The innovative music learning model disrupts dominant approaches to school music education focused on musician career pathways. "By removing entry barriers and combining music and life learning, all youth can have opportunities to feel good and live well using music," Dr Goopy said. The program also emphasised the need for the co-construction of highly personalised music and life goals with the guidance of teacher-facilitator role models. "Learning music in community settings can be a powerful life-wide and lifelong wellbeing strategy to improve the collective futures of young Australians."

**Psychological needs and wellbeing in community music education for young people experiencing challenging life circumstances** is published in the journal *Research Studies in Music Education*.

A related study conducted by Dr Goopy published in *Music Education Research*, titled: **Young people healing and growing in trauma-informed positive music education**, investigated how young people use music to heal and grow in a CMEP informed by trauma-informed positive education (TIPE) – a recent approach that combines trauma-informed practices and strengths-based positive psychology. Stories, including drawing and music, were co-constructed with youth to reveal how they use music, particularly songwriting, to increase self-regulation, develop relational capabilities, and act as a psychological resource for wellbeing.



Image credit: Vasyi Dolmatov, iStock.

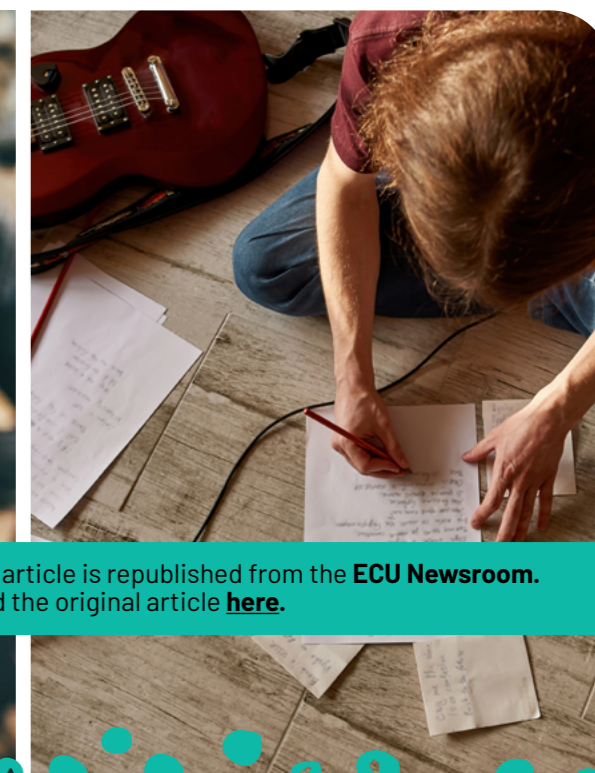


Image credit: Svitlana, Adobe Stock.

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# Open Access Research Articles in the School of Education



Associate Professor Melanie Brooks, Associate Dean (Research).



Written by School of Education academics, please find below a selection of recently published articles which are available to you without any subscriptions. Please select the links or scan the QR codes to view these journal articles which are all freely available. For more information about our research at ECU, visit our [website](#) or scan the QR Code.



## Enhancing summative assessment and pedagogy of senior secondary dance education through digital technologies



**Gamble, M. & Johnson, N. F. (2025).** Enhancing summative assessment and pedagogy of senior secondary dance education through digital technologies. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 1–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2025.2566726>

As digital technologies continue to evolve, this study explores how they can be harnessed to strengthen assessment and learning in senior secondary ATAR Dance. Drawing on interviews with experienced teachers, examiners and curriculum specialists, the findings identify

practical opportunities to enhance moderation processes, clarify shared standards and better align creative development with assessment outcomes. Participants highlighted the potential for digitally supported systems to improve consistency between school-based and examination results, strengthen reflective practice and foster professional dialogue across contexts. Rather than replacing existing structures, a thoughtfully designed digital architecture could build greater transparency, reliability and equity into dance assessment, supporting teachers and students in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

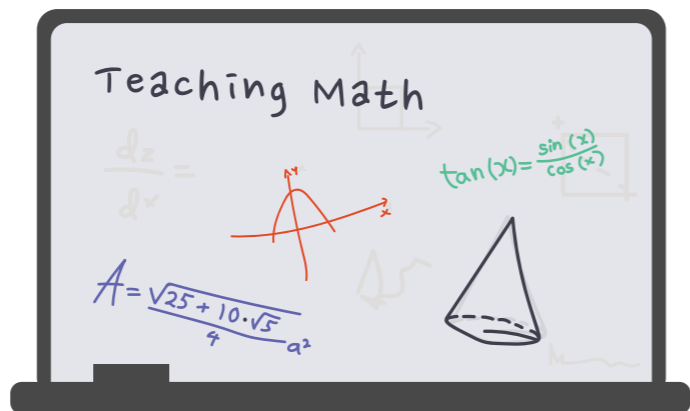
## New insights into the beliefs of secondary pre-service teachers about mathematics



**Hataru, V., Johnston, O., Collins, J., & Rott, B. (2025).** New insights into the beliefs of secondary pre-service teachers about mathematics. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 21(8), Article number em2675.

<https://doi.org/10.29333/ejmste/16656>

Teachers' beliefs about mathematics shape how they design lessons, choose tasks, and support students' learning. This study explored the beliefs of pre-service secondary mathematics teachers (PSMTs) about the nature and structure of mathematics, recognising that these beliefs are often formed long before teacher education begins. Eighteen PSMTs completed an open ended questionnaire, and their responses were analysed using four mathematical orientations: formalism related (rules, notation), scheme related (methods, routines), process related (reasoning, sense-making), and application related (contexts, use). The findings show that most PSMTs viewed mathematics primarily as a process of reasoning and sense making, or as a tool for real world application. However, some held multiple and sometimes inconsistent beliefs at the same time; for example, mathematics as a set of fixed rules and as a tool for solving real-world problems. For teacher educators and mentors, these findings highlight the importance of explicitly discussing what mathematics is, why we teach it, and how students learn it. Making beliefs visible through questioning and reflection can help future teachers develop more coherent and flexible approaches to mathematics teaching.



## Embodied tales of older women and their relationship with movement and their younger, present and future selves

**Varea, V., Garrett, R., García-Monge, A., & González-Calvo, G. (2026).** Embodied tales of older women and their relationship with movement and their younger, present and future selves. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1–13.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2026.2616252>

Do you often associate ageing with decline, illness or dependency? Does it always need to be like this? This paper explores the embodied experiences of older women and their relationship with movement. Inspired by Charles Dickens' novel *A Christmas Carol*, results are presented in three letters: 1. A letter to my younger self, 2. A letter to my present self, and 3. A letter to my future self.

Participants' stories showed variation in responses and patterns of learnt embodied movement indicative of how their bodies were keepers of memories stored deeply in the body. The participants articulated the energies, feelings, impressions and intensities that guided their actions and thoughts around movement throughout their embodied lives. The letters demonstrate how cognitive, physical, social and emotional dimensions of embodiment come together and assemble through a complex interplay of body, self and thought.

## Brilliant little things: drama-based mindfulness to support pre-service teacher wellbeing



**Gray, C., & O'Rourke, J. (2026).** Brilliant little things: drama-based mindfulness to support pre-service teacher wellbeing. *Reflective Practice*, 27(1), 1–15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2025.2608290>

Teacher wellbeing is a growing concern in initial teacher education, with many pre-service teachers reporting stress, emotional overload, and uncertainty about sustaining themselves in the profession. This study explores Brilliant Little Things, an arts-based wellbeing initiative embedded within a drama education program, designed to support reflection, connection, and mindful attention through creative



practice. Drawing on interviews, reflective journals, group chats, photographs, and artwork, the research shows how simple drama-based mindfulness activities can create spaces for pause, shared experience, and emotional insight. Findings highlight the value of relational, low-stakes creative practices in fostering a sense of community and supporting emerging resilience. For teachers, the study offers practical examples of how drama and arts-based approaches can complement wellbeing initiatives in accessible, ethical, and inclusive ways, affirming the role of everyday creative practices in sustaining teacher wellbeing.



## From comfort zone to growth zone: Experiential projects as catalysts for creativity in pre-service teachers

**Sevimli-Celik, S., & Guvelioglu, E. (2026).** From comfort zone to growth zone: Experiential projects as catalysts for creativity in pre-service teachers. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 59(101994), 1–12

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101994>

This article explores how experiential projects can encourage pre-service teachers to step outside their comfort zones and engage in meaningful professional growth. Through hands-on, collaborative projects, pre-service teachers participated in real-world problem-solving that required adaptability, creative thinking, and reflective practice. The study highlights the importance of embedding open-ended challenges, scaffolding reflection, and creating supportive environments where experimentation is encouraged. These approaches not only foster creativity in teacher preparation programs but can also be directly applied to school classrooms to cultivate student agency, innovation, and reflective learning. In school classrooms, such strategies empower students to take ownership of their learning, collaborate effectively with peers, and develop the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate complex, real-world challenges.





## Twilight Seminar – Rethinking Literacy: Beyond Instruction to Equity

### Transforming Reading Outcomes Through Equitable Literacy Learning Environments

While over 75% of Australian teachers report confidence in teaching reading, persistent achievement gaps remain. This session challenges a critical assumption: **if teacher skill isn't the issue – what is?**

Drawing on more than a decade of research across Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, this seminar introduces Associate Professor Helen Adam's **Model for Equitable Literacy Learning Environments (MELLE)** and explores the often-overlooked conditions shaping literacy success:

- Culturally responsive practice
- Equitable access to books and reading time
- Authentic representation of diverse identities in classroom texts

#### This seminar will explore:

- Why instructional excellence alone cannot close literacy achievement gaps
- How to audit your classroom for equity using the MELLE framework
- Practical, low-barrier strategies to strengthen student engagement and reading identity
- How to advocate for meaningful, system-level change in literacy education

Leave with practical strategies you can implement immediately to create more equitable, engaging, and effective literacy environments for all students.

**When**  
Wednesday 17 June 2026  
4.30pm – 5.30pm

**Where**  
ECU Joondalup Campus  
270 Joondalup Drive,  
Joondalup, WA 6027.

**Cost**  
\$10.00 (including light refreshments)

**Facilitator**  
Associate Professor  
Helen Adam



**Further Information**  
For more information and to register online,  
please scan the QR code above.



Register Here

## Indonesia teaching placement program recognised by New Colombo Plan

**A student-led international teaching initiative from ECU's School of Education has been recognised by the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan (NCP), with the project selected for national promotion as part of International Day of Education celebrations.**

In November last year, **Mr Will Turner**, Lecturer, ECU School of Education, led a cohort of 12 students from the School of Education on the **Indonesia Primary Teaching Placement and Language Immersion program**. The program provided students with hands-on teaching experience in Indonesian primary schools, alongside intensive language learning and cultural immersion designed to strengthen professional practice and intercultural understanding.

During the placement, students spent time embedded in school communities, observing classroom teaching, assisting with lesson delivery and engaging with local teachers and students. The experience allowed participants to compare education systems, teaching methodologies and classroom environments, while developing greater awareness of how culture, language and context shape learning. Students also participated in structured language activities and cultural briefings to support their engagement in schools and local communities.

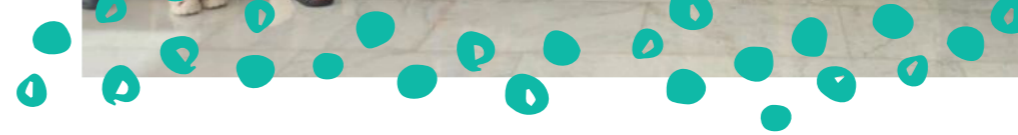
The project was recently selected by the New Colombo Plan Secretariat to be featured across its official social media platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. The national promotion highlights the program's contribution to strengthening educational links between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region and increasing awareness of international mobility opportunities available to education students.

The recognition coincided with International Day of Education, which celebrates the role of education in supporting peace, sustainable development and global cooperation worldwide.

The NCP-supported program enabled students to develop confidence and adaptability while gaining first-hand experience in an international classroom setting. Participants worked closely with Indonesian educators, building practical teaching skills, professional networks and cultural competence that will inform their future teaching careers in Australia and beyond. Exposure to diverse learning environments also helped students reflect on inclusive teaching practices and the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Mr Turner said the recognition reflects the value of immersive international experiences in teacher education, particularly in preparing graduates for increasingly diverse classrooms. "Opportunities like this allow students to engage deeply with different education systems, languages and cultures," he said. "They return with broader perspectives, stronger professional skills and a greater understanding of how to support learners from different backgrounds."

The New Colombo Plan supports Australian undergraduate students to study and undertake work placements in the Indo-Pacific, with a focus on building long-term people-to-people links and strengthening regional relationships. Programs such as this placement align closely with the plan's objectives by fostering collaboration, mutual understanding and educational exchange. The International Office has encouraged Schools to share the New Colombo Plan features through their own communication channels and noted opportunities to explore further promotional activity linked to the program, showcasing the impact of international learning experiences on student development and graduate outcomes.





## Twilight Seminar – Primary Media Arts in an AI World: Cultivating Critical Media Inquiry, Literacy and Agency from the Early Years

### Don't miss out on this Professional Learning opportunity!

In an era of AI-generated and algorithm-shaped media, children need simple, age-appropriate opportunities to explore how media technologies are used to construct meaning, to understand how media messages can influence audiences, and to investigate how representations shape understanding.

The purpose of Media Arts as a WA subject is to meet the needs of children living in a fast-paced online environment, by developing their critical media literacy skills. In addition to supporting ethical, safe and appropriate media engagement, Media Arts provides unique and valuable opportunities to develop children's creativity, critical thinking, and agency so they can flourish in the digital world. Media Arts is also positioned to offer cross curricular connection to a range of other WA subject areas.

In collaboration with the Australian Teachers of Media, WA (ATOM WA), this seminar will demonstrate ways that Media Arts can be taught in the primary school classroom through fun, purposeful, and manageable strategies using existing classroom technologies.

**When**

Wednesday 5 August 2026  
4.30pm - 5.30pm

**Where**

ECU Joondalup Campus  
270 Joondalup Drive,  
Joondalup, WA, 6027.

**Cost**

\$10.00 (including light refreshments)

**Facilitator**

Dr Rikki James



**Further Information**

For more information and to register online, please scan the QR code above.



Register Here

## Side-by-side to the finish line: mother and daughter duo graduate as teachers from ECU South West

Balancing family life, work and setbacks, the pair supported each other every step of the way and are now teaching in the community they call home. Penny and Elizabeth Gaskell have always shared a close bond, but studying Education together at Edith Cowan University's (ECU) South West campus deepened their connection in ways they never expected. "We were already close before our degrees," Elizabeth said. "But getting to work together as adults on similar but separate things has been amazing. We are a lot closer now because of this."

Penny and Elizabeth crossed the stage side-by-side at ECU's Bunbury campus this year, marking the end of a chapter six years in the making. They studied locally, supported each other through setbacks, and are now working as relief teachers in the region they call home. Originally from the Great Southern, with several years spent living in Wyndham in the State's north, they have called the South West home for the past decade and staying local mattered. Choosing ECU meant they didn't have to relocate to Perth; it meant face-to-face lectures and tutorials in Bunbury, and it meant remaining part of the community they value. "It was local. We didn't have to travel to Perth, and we both prefer face-to-face classes," Penny said.

**A second chance at university.**

For Penny, returning to university was layered with history. She was the first in her family to attend university, initially studying Soil Science and Plant Nutrition at the University of Western Australia. Life, however, had shifted dramatically. After her husband suffered a serious health scare, Penny needed to retrain quickly and secure a more stable future for her family. A Master of Teaching provided a practical pathway forward, building on her experience as an education assistant while she raised her five children, rather than requiring to start from scratch. "I needed to retrain quickly. And this time, I had a study buddy," Penny said. **That study buddy was Elizabeth.**



L-R Elizabeth and Penny Gaskell celebrating their graduation.

Together, they broke assignments into bite-sized chunks, they celebrated small wins, and they studied through COVID lockdowns at the kitchen table while others struggled with isolation. "Our relationship is supportive and positive, we celebrate every small win together," Penny said.

**A campus that knew their names.**

The campus environment at ECU Bunbury meant that staff knew them by name. The campus fostered genuine relationships with lecturers and educators such as Natalie Kidd, David Rhodes and Anne Coutts, who became consistent, trusted mentors throughout their degrees. At Edith Cowan University's Bunbury campus, they were known by name, and that made all the difference. The smaller campus environment fostered genuine relationships with lecturers, with educators such as Natalie Kidd, David Rhodes and Anne Coutts becoming consistent, trusted mentors throughout their degrees. "The staff at ECU Bunbury were a constant supportive presence," Penny said. "We had regular opportunities to check in and build relationships with our lecturers, which kept me going."

When challenges arose, including placement difficulties, they were able to speak to people who already understood their situation. Elizabeth believes that the connection made the difference. "When something went wrong, people knew us. We could talk to people we already had a relationship with to get help," Elizabeth said. Penny also credits ECU's Equity and Counselling services for helping her persist through a long, part-time degree that stretched over six years. "It took me six years to complete. It was hard watching other cohorts finish. But I had support this time," Penny said.

**Learning together, working together.**

Both Elizabeth and Penny balanced study with work. Elizabeth received an ECU scholarship after achieving an ATAR above 90, which meant she did not need to work for much of her degree. In her final two years, she worked as a relief education assistant at Australind Senior High School. Penny worked as a relief Education Assistant (EA) and later as a limited authority teacher at the same school, all while managing a household of seven. During Penny's final placement, Elizabeth paused her own study to keep the house running. Both are now successfully employed in the education sector, a testament to the strength of their studies and the pathway they chose.

Elizabeth works as a relief education assistant at Australind Senior High School and as a relief teacher at local primary schools. Penny is a relief teacher at Australind Senior High School and Bunbury Senior High School. Their classrooms are filled with the same qualities that drew them to teaching in the first place. For Elizabeth, it was creativity, improvisation, structure and the chance to work with children. "It's got a bit of everything I enjoy. Positive interaction with people, creativity, structure," Elizabeth said. For Penny, it was a purpose. A new direction at a critical time.

**More than a degree**

Asked if they would recommend studying teaching at ECU, both are quick to answer. "Yes," Elizabeth said. "Make friends in your course. They'll be your future colleagues. And at Bunbury, you really get to know your lecturers. That helps when you need support." For Penny, the difference was simple. "This time, I wasn't doing it alone."

This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom**. Read the original article [here](#).

# HAT@ECU: Partnering to shape the next generation of teachers



Associate Professor Matthew Byrne, Director, HAT (High Achieving Teachers) Program, School of Education.

The High Achieving Teachers program at Edith Cowan University (HAT@ECU) is an innovative, employment-based pathway into teaching, designed to respond to current and emerging workforce needs across Western Australia. HAT@ECU is delivered as part of the High Achieving Teachers (HAT) Program: Phase 2 Expansion Pilots with the support of the Australian Government Department of Education.

Developed in close collaboration with the Department of Education Western Australia (DoE WA), Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA), the program attracts high-achieving recent graduates and career changers and supports them to become confident, capable educators, ready to contribute meaningfully in classrooms from the start of the program.

### An employment-based pathway into teaching

At the centre of HAT@ECU is a strong partnership model. Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) complete an accelerated Master of Teaching (Early Childhood, Primary, or Secondary) while undertaking their training in schools, integrating theory and practice in real time.

Through a structured combination of coursework aligned with the four Western Australian school terms, professional experience, and paid employment, PSTs develop their teaching capability within authentic school contexts.

A defining feature of the program is its hub-based delivery model. Partnership schools work together within local networks to support PST learning, professional development, and wellbeing. These hubs bring together schools across sectors to provide mentoring, professional experience, and employment opportunities, while also fostering a collaborative professional community.

PSTs undertake at least 60 days of professional experience and may complete up to 160 days of paid employment during the program, with increasing responsibility across the two years. This allows PSTs to contribute to school life early, while building the skills and confidence required for full-time teaching.



**We extend our sincere thank you to all schools who have been part of this initiative to date!**

### Primary Schools

Alkimos Primary School	Kyilla Primary School
Atwell Primary School	Manning Primary School
Ballajura Primary School	Meadow Spring Primary School
Bannister Creek Primary School	Millen Primary School
Beldon Primary School	Mindarie Primary School
Burrendah Primary School	Nollamara Primary School
Butler Primary School	Noranda Primary School
Carramar Primary School	Orange Grove Primary School
Craigie Heights Primary School	Parkwood Primary School
Deanmore Primary School	Riverton Primary School
Dianella Primary College	South Bunbury Primary School
Dun Craig Primary School	Wanneroo Primary School
East Victoria Park Primary School	Yanchep Beach Primary School
Highgate Primary School	Yokine Primary School
Karrinyup Primary School	

### Secondary Schools

Applecross Senior High School	Dun Craig Senior High School
Aranmore Catholic College (CEWA)	Hampton Senior High School
Ashdale Secondary College	John Curtin College of the Arts
Baldivis Secondary College	John Forrest Secondary College
Bob Hawke College	Mercy College (CEWA)
Bunbury Senior High School	Mount Lawley Senior High School
Butler College	Ocean Reef Senior High School
Carine Senior High School	Shenton College
Como Secondary College	Wanneroo Secondary College
Dianella Secondary College	Willetton Senior High School

### Partnership in practice

Partnering hub schools play a central role in this process. Beyond hosting PSTs, schools help shape a model of initial teacher education that is practical, responsive, and closely aligned with the realities of the classroom. The program also provides schools with an opportunity to support and develop future teachers within their own context.

Since its launch, HAT@ECU has been strengthened by the commitment, expertise, and generosity of its partnering hub schools, along with the ongoing support of sector representatives from the DoEWA, CEWA, and AISWA. Their engagement has been central to the success of the program and to creating a supportive, practice-rich learning environment for PSTs.



### Be part of the final intake: Cohort 3



Looking ahead, HAT@ECU will have one final intake (2027 commencement) of PSTs and partnership schools. This represents an opportunity for schools to be involved in a program that strengthens teacher workforce pipelines and supports the development of high-quality graduates.

With recruitment and selection occurring in the second half of 2026, schools interested in participating in the next phase of HAT@ECU are encouraged to contact the team at [HAT@ecu.edu.au](mailto:HAT@ecu.edu.au) to learn more.

The program plays an important and unique role in attracting high-quality PSTs into the teaching profession who may not otherwise have pursued teaching. As the program moves into its final phase, HAT@ECU remains committed to working closely with schools and sectors to ensure it continues to deliver meaningful benefits for school communities across Western Australia.



Find out more about HAT@ECU via our [Website](https://www.ecu.edu.au/hat).



# \$1.4 million in Applied Research Grants to boost WA's clean energy training capability



Dr Julie Boston, Director, Partnerships and Engagement and Dr Rikki James, Lecturer, School of Education.

School of Education researchers, Dr Julie Boston and Dr Rikki James, are joining forces with South Metropolitan TAFE, MLEC Group and Magellan Power to create Virtual Reality (VR) training for electrical apprentices in remote communities.

Four Western Australian TAFE colleges are joining forces with industry to advance innovative clean energy training across the State, supported by \$1.4 million in Applied Research Grants through WA's Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence (CESNCE).

The Applied Research Grant Program is designed to strengthen collaboration between training providers and industry by supporting the development of scalable, future-focused training programs that respond to the State's emerging clean energy workforce needs.

As Australia's first National Centre of Excellence dedicated to clean energy skills, the CESNCE plays a key role in building the nation's clean energy training system, connecting partners, supporting innovation, and helping equip Western Australia's workforce for a low-carbon future.

The funded projects will explore solutions to some of the sector's biggest training challenges, including supporting electricians to transition into wind turbine installation, streamlining assessment pathways for tradespeople moving into clean energy roles, creating culturally appropriate training for Aboriginal people, and delivering Virtual Reality (VR) training to apprentices in remote communities. The State and Commonwealth Governments have jointly invested \$70.5 million under the National Skills Agreement to establish the CESNCE in Western Australia.

This article is republished from the **Government of Western Australia website**. Read the original article [here](#).



14 Photographed: HAT@ECU Pre-Service Teacher Jessica Rendall on Professional Experience

# ECU South West celebrates graduates across generations



**Professor Clare Pollock**, Vice-Chancellor and President, Edith Cowan University; **Professor Cobie Rudd**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Regional Futures) and President, Edith Cowan University; and **Professor Caroline Mansfield**, Executive Dean, School of Education.

## ECU South West celebrated both the University and the Children's University graduates from the region in its lively street parade on a day of community togetherness and academic achievement.

Cheers echoed through the streets of Bunbury as 112 of the 146 graduating students proudly took part in Edith Cowan University South West's Bunbury Campus parade, turning out in strong numbers to celebrate the culmination of their studies ahead of the formal graduation ceremony. Joined by children from the 2025 Children's University program, the procession wound its way through the streets of Bunbury, transforming the milestone into a vibrant community celebration before graduates crossed the stage to receive their awards.

The 2025 graduate cohort represented a broad cross-section of disciplines, with students from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the School of Arts and Humanities, the School of Education, the School of Business and Law, and the School of Medical and Health Sciences crossing the stage. The diversity of fields on display reflects the breadth of course offerings available at ECU's Bunbury Campus and underscores the University's vital role as a higher education hub for the South West, equipping graduates with the skills and knowledge to support and strengthen their regional communities.

In her presentation to graduates, ECU Vice-Chancellor Professor Clare Pollock celebrated the determination and resilience of students, while also honouring the families, friends, partners and mentors who supported the students through their studies.

"In the days ahead, you will stand in classrooms, in laboratories, and in communities. You will teach, you will heal, you will innovate, and you will lead. Often, you will change lives in ways you may never fully see or know," Professor Pollock said.

"Your degree gives you knowledge and skill, but it also gives you responsibility. Use it with integrity. Show respect. Lead with courage and humility. Question deeply. Strive for excellence, not for recognition, but because those whose lives you touch deserve nothing less."

### Young Graduates

The day also celebrated the achievement of 67 graduates from the 2025 Children's University program, after a year of voluntary learning beyond the classroom.

The graduating class, which was drawn from students across seven primary schools across the City of Bunbury, the Shire of Harvey and the Shire of Capel, was nearly double the size of the 2024 graduating class. Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean of ECU's School of Education, said the university is immensely proud of the young scholars who worked hard to meet their learning goals. "At ECU, we pride ourselves on nurturing students who are adaptable, curious and lifelong learners." Professor Mansfield said.

Professor Mansfield acknowledged the support from the University Department of Rural Health South West, situated at ECU's South West campus, for sponsoring the program's continued operation and expansion in the region. "This generous support keeps the pathway open for local families" Professor Mansfield said.

### ECU South West helping drive regional development and future growth

The South West Region boasts economic diversity, innovation and is witnessing significant growth and investment; ECU South West is a key contributor to that growth, and momentum is building. Earlier this month, future students and their families turned out in impressive numbers for the South West Bunbury Campus Orientation Day, with registrations doubling compared to last year, a clear signal of growing demand for local university study and projected enrolment growth in 2026.

The surge reflects rising confidence in regional education and a powerful shift towards studying close to home, ECU Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Regional Futures) Professor Cobie Rudd said. "We're seeing real confidence and investment in the South West, with more students and families recognising that they can access high-quality university education close to home," Professor Rudd said. "The growth in Orientation Day registrations reflects confidence in our campus, our courses and our people. It also shows that when a university and its community work together, we can create clear, supported pathways from early learning right through to postgraduate study, ensuring the talent of the South West continues to thrive right here in the region."

Explore opportunities for ECU South West Campus, [here](#).



This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom**. Read the original article [here](#).



# Teaching Writing in the Digital Age: Evidence-Based Practices for Primary Classrooms

## Writing is a critical life skill, yet teaching it effectively in today's digital classrooms presents increasing complexity.

Primary teachers are expected to support handwriting, introduce keyboarding, and develop high-quality text composition, often simultaneously and with limited guidance on what works best. This one-day professional learning course is designed to build teacher confidence and capability in delivering effective writing instruction across both paper-based and digital contexts. Drawing on current research and classroom-tested practices, participants will gain practical, evidence-based strategies they can apply immediately, along with a clear understanding of what high-quality writing instruction looks like in the primary years.

### Key Learning Outcomes

Join us for an interactive one-day short course that will deepen your understanding of how to:

- Critically analyse theories of writing instruction and evaluate their relevance to classroom practice
- Evaluate evidence-based approaches to teaching writing in the digital age
- Select, justify, and apply strategies to support handwriting and keyboarding development
- Design and implement effective approaches to support students' writing across paper-based and digital formats

**When**  
Wednesday 23 September 2026  
8.30am - 3.00pm

**Where**  
ECU Joondalup Campus  
270 Joondalup Drive,  
Joondalup, WA 6027.

**Cost**  
\$340.00 (incl GST) including morning tea, lunch, and all course materials.

**Facilitator**  
[Dr Anabela Malpique](#)



**Further Information**  
Register online by scanning the QR code above.



[Register Here](#)

**Secure your place in this one-day Professional Learning for Primary Educators!**

Our professional learning programs have been designed with teachers in mind. The programs are delivered by qualified and experienced ECU educators with high level content and pedagogical knowledge and reflect adult learning principles. These courses are embedded in evidence-based teaching practices and are responsive to the cultural backgrounds and contextual circumstances of the participating teachers. For more information and to register, view our current short courses [here](#) or scan the QR codes below.



Trauma-informed Practice | Short Course Suite

This suite of five short courses builds participant knowledge and understanding of children and young people impacted by trauma, with a focus on development, behaviour, learning and vulnerable children. Participants will learn about the impact of adversity, traumatic stress on development, the brain and learning.

An awareness of teacher responses to trauma-driven behaviour and evidenced-based strategies to assist the traumatised child or young person to self-regulate will be explored through case-studies. Being understanding of and responsive to the unique needs of these children is essential to providing support. Participants will learn the importance of providing trauma-responsive support within a context of relational safety. Finally, understanding the needs of children who have endured complex vulnerabilities, will be explored with the unique child, positive relationships, and a strengths-based approach at the heart of practice.



[Find out More](#)



Fully Online

**Trauma-informed Practice #1 - Understanding Childhood Trauma: An introduction for educators**

Trauma-affected children can be found in any classroom and any school. In fact, one in four children experience a traumatic event before they turn three years old (Child, J. 2017). Trauma impacts development, behaviour and learning. This short course is an ideal introduction to childhood trauma for all educators including parents, carers and youth workers. Providing effective support for children and young people affected by trauma begins with educators who are trauma-informed. By building your understanding and knowledge you have a better chance of making a positive difference.

**Cost**

- \$199.00 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



[Register Online](#)



Fully Online

**Trauma-informed Practice #2 - Trauma and Development: Understanding the impact for educators**

Children and adolescents who live in adverse circumstances where there is neglect, abuse, or violence live in a state of hypervigilance and with toxic stress from experiencing ongoing, traumatic events. Toxic stress sabotages development and wellbeing – the brain and the body struggle to function effectively, the consequences of which can be far reaching. This short course looks at the impact of adversity and toxic stress on development, focussing on the brain. Educators will build their knowledge and understanding of children and adolescents whose development has been interrupted by toxic stress and trauma.

**Cost**

- \$199.00 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



[Register Online](#)



Fully Online

**Trauma-informed Practice #3 - Trauma and Behaviour: Reflecting and responding for educators**

Behaviour is communication. Behaviour for the child or young person living with trauma is often an expression of their struggle to cope. This may include struggling to cope with managing big emotions, struggling to cope with learning and struggling with being with others. Trauma means days are full of struggles and feelings of fear. This short course aims to build your understanding of children and young people's trauma-driven behaviour and your knowledge of evidence-based strategies so you can more confidently and effectively, guide and support their development of self-regulation and behaviour competencies.

**Cost**

- \$199.00 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



[Register Online](#)



Fully Online

**Trauma-informed Practice #4 - Trauma and Learning: Meeting complex support needs for educators**

Early childhood learning environments and school environments can be a struggle for the child or young person living with trauma. Struggling to think, pay attention, remember, play with others, trust and form friendships with peers and adults, every day can be exhausting and overwhelming for these children who often struggle to cope. In this short course you will explore trauma-responsive pedagogy to promote positive interactions and assist children and young people affected by trauma to achieve better learning outcomes. Teaching troubled children and young people is difficult and can take its toll therefore attention to educator wellbeing and self-care is introduced.

**Cost**

- \$199.00 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



[Register Online](#)



Fully Online

**Trauma-informed Practice #5 - Trauma and Vulnerable Children: Helping them heal for educators**

In this short course you will be introduced to children and young people living with family violence, refugee and asylum seeker experiences, children in out of home care, children living in poverty, and children impacted by the collective trauma histories of their families and communities. By the very nature of these specific experiences, it can be argued that these children and young people are vulnerable and are highly likely to be living with trauma. You will gain insight into the needs of these children and young people who have endured complex vulnerabilities, with the unique child, positive relationships, and a strengths-based approach at the heart of practice.

**Cost**

- \$199.00 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



[Register Online](#)

**School of Education LinkedIn Showcase Page**

We are delighted to officially launch our new LinkedIn Showcase Page, dedicated to celebrating our academics, partnerships, research, professional learning, and the impact of the Edith Cowan University School of Education.

Here, you'll find:

- Highlights from our academics across teaching, learning, and research
- Stories from our exceptional Pre-Service Teachers, alumni, and educators
- Research insights driving innovation in education
- Opportunities to connect, collaborate, and make a difference
- Updates on professional learning, achievements, and key activities across our School

Whether you're a current or aspiring teacher, a valued partner in the education sector, or a proud alum, we invite you to follow along and be part of our vibrant community.



[Follow our page](#) to stay connected and help us shape the future of education, together!



# School of Education Research Showcase



## Professor Aaron Jarden

Associate Dean (Postgraduate Studies)

### Tell us about yourself

I am a New Zealander by origin and have lived in Australia for 10 years, initially in Adelaide for two years, and the last eight in Melbourne. I am happily married for 17 years to Associate Professor Rebecca Jarden (ECU, School of Nursing and Midwifery), and we have a daughter, Sophia, who is in Year 9, and a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel dog named 'Danger'. Professionally, I serve as a Full Professor and Associate Dean Postgraduate in the School of Education.

### Background

Though I liked school socially, I struggled academically and nearly failed completely. However, I excelled in sports like basketball, volleyball, and soccer; essentially anything involving a round ball. I was even invited to join the New Zealand Lawn Bowls team at one point.

When school ended in 1995, university felt like a more accessible (and to be honest, enjoyable) path than immediate employment, as tuition was nearly free in New Zealand then. I began by studying education, psychology, and philosophy. Over the next fifteen years, my academic journey became increasingly interdisciplinary, covering computing, business, clinical psychology, and ethics. I eventually ended up with a collection of various qualifications, and I earned a PhD in psychology, focusing on the relationship between values, mood, and wellbeing. Currently, I am also completing a Master of Business Administration (MBA).

During this period, I gained diverse experiences, including training as a clinical psychologist and serving as vice-president of a large student union. I have always been driven by the scientists-practitioner feedback loop, focusing on how research can make a tangible, real-world difference. This philosophy led me to diverse roles: wellbeing consultant, social entrepreneur (founding and selling two companies), and co-founder/co-editor of the International Journal of Wellbeing. I also founded the New Zealand Association of Positive Psychology and served as lead investigator for the International Wellbeing Study amongst others. My work has extended to policy and practical tools, such as the "Work on Wellbeing" online assessment used by many large organisations.

### What are your research aims and focus?

My research agenda is straightforward: understanding what human wellbeing is, why it exists as it does, and how it can be improved. My philosophy training taught me to return to foundational questions, with my current focus including:

1. What is wellbeing?
2. Who is responsible for wellbeing?
3. What are the best ways to improve wellbeing?
4. What is bigger than wellbeing? (My answer is "Wholebeing" – which is my current research focus)
5. What are the systemic influences on wellbeing?

I am eager to investigate these topics with adventurous, likeminded collaborators. Specifically, I am interested in how wellbeing is enabled within systems like schools and universities, and in exploring untested pathways to wellbeing, such as the role of simplicity. My goal is to make research findings tangible for practitioners, laypeople, and influencers (i.e., policy analyst).

### What research are you most proud of?

It may sound cliché, but I am most proud of the people I have worked with and helped to achieve more than they thought possible. While I could point to high-profile publications, such as our recent 2026 study in Nature regarding positive mental health, I am prouder of the journey behind it. The lead author started as my research assistant without a single publication; eight years later, he has a PhD, research career, and is published in one of the world's top journals. Similarly, I am incredibly proud of former students, like Dr Lucy Hone, whose latest book ("How will I ever get through this?") is currently an international #1 bestseller.



Find out more about ECU's School of Education research activity by visiting our [website](#).



# Future Research & Career Pathway



## Mrs Kylie Vutilolo

Master of Education, School of Education.

### Can you introduce yourself and tell us about your background and academic journey?

I am an Early Childhood Teacher (Birth to Five) currently working as a Service Manager at a 113-place long day care centre on the Gold Coast, Queensland. I have five children aged between 18 and 33, and three grandchildren aged between 3 and 7. I have been working in early childhood education for over 15 years and have engaged in continuous study throughout this time. I am a strong advocate for providing high-quality early learning environments for the children and families who attend my service. I believe that all children deserve the best possible start to their education, and I am committed to supporting my team's knowledge and pedagogical practices.

I hold a Master of Education (Coursework), majoring in Early Childhood, and I am currently undertaking a Master of Education (Research). If someone had told me at the age of 39 that I would begin university studies, I would not have believed them. Now, at 53 years of age, I am completing my third degree and aspire to continue my studies towards a PhD. As a mature-aged student, I believe I bring both life experience and a strong motivation to achieve. While balancing full-time work and study is challenging, I value the way my studies continue to extend my thinking and support my ongoing development as an early childhood professional.

### Why did you choose ECU to do your PhD degree?

I chose ECU for my Masters degree as I had previously completed my first Masters with the university. I was delighted when one of my former lecturers agreed to supervise me throughout my research degree. While studying online can at times feel isolating, I am confident that support is readily available whenever I reach out.

### What have you enjoyed the most?

I have greatly valued the opportunity to learn from two exceptional supervisors. I feel privileged to work alongside such experienced professionals who have supported, guided, and mentored me throughout my research journey. Their ongoing encouragement, professional guidance, and positive reinforcement have been instrumental in maintaining my motivation, and I am deeply grateful for their support.

### What is the focus of your thesis?

My thesis, Trauma-Informed Practice in Early Childhood Education: Educational Leaders' Knowledge, explores the extent of Australian Educational Leaders' knowledge of early childhood trauma and the implementation of trauma-informed practices within early childhood settings. The study is grounded in the belief that Educational Leaders require greater support to effectively mentor and guide their teams, ensuring that trauma-affected children receive appropriate and responsive support. Given the prevalence of early childhood trauma within early childhood education contexts, strengthening leaders' knowledge and capacity is critical to improving outcomes for young children.

### What will you do after your PhD? And why?

Upon completion of my Masters degree, I intend to take a short break from my studies to recharge before pursuing a PhD, with the aim of continuing my focus on supporting young children affected by trauma. I aspire to mentor and guide educators in developing their understanding of early childhood trauma, ensuring that our youngest learners receive the highest level of support possible.



Explore our Teacher Education Postgraduate courses [here](#).



## ECU Education Alumni Spotlight:

# Mr Chris Lambe

Minister's Teacher of the Year, WA Education Awards 2025

Bachelor of Education (Kindergarten through Primary) 2002



### What turns a good teacher into a great one?

When the kids step into 2025 Teacher of the Year and proud science 'nerd at heart', Chris Lambe's Sci-Tech-inspired primary school classroom, they don't just see a teacher and his full-sized puppet-skeleton, Steve, encouraging them to explore the world around them; they see an educator who truly cares about them and their future. "[As a teacher] you understand kids, you understand their behaviour, and you understand their needs. I think every single one of us, when we get into the job, we're there [because] we care about the future of these kids."

From the tender age of eight, Chris always wanted to be a teacher. Inspired by his mum, an experienced and dedicated education assistant; the Year 3 teacher, who allowed him to take over her class and put his first teaching plan into action; and by his favourite teacher, Mr Della, whose inspirational, innovative, hands-on teaching style had a lasting impact on him. Along with the quote he had above his board, 'knowledge is power', which still influences Chris Lambe's teaching to this day.

“If real estate is about location, location, location, then teaching is about relationships, relationships, relationships.”

“What better job in the world is there? As a teacher in your classroom, you get to choose the way you're going to do it, and you get to be creative. I'm not sitting behind a desk all day. I could be dancing, playing with puppets, building things, drawing, or doing amazing investigations.”

As part of ECU's first cohort to study our comprehensive primary program spanning Kindy to Year 7, Chris learnt how to adapt his teaching style to each child, regardless of age, engaging them in a love of hands-on, play-based learning. A philosophy that still stands the test of time today because it encourages children of all ages to learn in creative and curious ways. "We forget play and disengage kids the older they get because we lose a lot of the things early childhood does really well. Learning [in] early childhood has to be hands-on. Pre-primary kids love playing with Play-Doh. Year sixes love playing with Play-Doh."

When reflecting on his 23-year career and recent award, Chris believes that caring is fundamental. It's that simple. It's care that makes the teaching profession so incredibly important, and it's this care-factor that motivates him, his colleagues, and fellow nominees for Teacher of the Year. "I think the beauty of [the Teacher of the Year] award is it elevates and showcases just how many different types of roles in teaching there are and what people are doing to make it special... There were 171 nominations for this year's awards, so I was one of the final four in the finalist category. So, there's 171 stories out there of great teachers doing amazing things. I want to know what those people are doing."

Chris is convinced that there are hundreds of teachers in WA doing amazing work that largely goes unrecognised. He views it quite simply that caring is what sets these quiet achievers and great teachers apart, and it's this attribute that will allow the profession to withstand the AI revolution:

According to Chris, it's through empathy, care and seeing the world anew that teachers nurture ever-curious, engaged kids. He emphasises how important it is to remember the 'ordinary can be extraordinary' when it's experienced for the first time by a child. Chris adds that something as simple as reading to kids every day can instil a lifelong love of learning.

This care-first has a profound impact, as Chris reflects: "Some of the kids who've had the biggest impact on me, [have been] kids who often have the biggest behaviour problems. They would tell me stories about why they weren't succeeding [because they weren't being read to everyday]. It's the little things that you do in the role of a teacher, and you don't realise how much impact it has. We often discount teachers and their importance."

This philosophy is evident in Chris' teaching practice. As the Science Specialist at Grandis Primary School, he has transformed his classroom into a scientific extravaganza. From the moment students enter, they are surrounded by immersive, engaging experiences, including the iconic puppet skeleton named Steve, a space-time simulator, and a Van de Graaff generator. Equipment rarely seen in schools, let alone in a primary school. "I want the kids to feel like real scientists, so they put on the lab coat, use real equipment, do real investigations around the questions that they've got. Because I feel like this is a natural thing for kids. All kids have got curiosity, so it's not hard for them to get engaged. It's a place for play. And all of those questions will have answers, you've just got to give them the opportunity [to find them]."

Chris takes immense pride in keeping kids' love of learning and curiosity alive. For him, it's not the accolades or personal recognition; it's the proof that caring for his students and sparking their curiosity is what matters most. In a world increasingly dominated by technology, he is living proof that being a caring, engaging human being is irreplaceable.



Explore our Teacher Education Postgraduate courses [here](#).



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## Student

# SHOWCASE

A selection of recent creative works by Pre-Service Teachers in the fields of Technologies and Art Education.



HEE2113: Food Knowledge & Appreciation – Dr Sandy Smith  
Bachelor of Education Secondary Students, Butter and Ricotta Pancakes.



AED6205: Teaching the Arts (Visual Arts Module) – Ms Vanessa Wintoneak  
Master and Graduate Diploma of Education Student, Ceramic Monsters.

Photographs taken by Mrs Persefone Maietta, School of Education.



### Send us your Feedback

We are keen to understand your interaction with UpdatED, its connection with your role, and how it might be improved in the future.





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ECU acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognises the continuing association of the traditional custodians with the land upon which its campuses are situated and pays respects to the Whadjuk and Wardandi people of the Noongar nation.


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
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