EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

School of Education

UpdatED



Edition 2 2026

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From the Executive Dean

Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean, School of Education.

Welcome to the second edition of UpdatED for 2026. As I reflected on the stories featured in this edition, I was reminded that education is fundamentally a profession of service. Whether we are teaching, researching, leading, mentoring, or partnering with others, our work is ultimately about contributing to the wellbeing, learning and success of individuals and communities. This edition highlights the many ways our staff, students and partners are making that contribution through education. Across the School of Education, our staff contribute their expertise in ways that extend far beyond our campuses. They work alongside schools, communities, industry and government to address real-world challenges, create opportunities for learners and support positive change through education.

The stories in this edition demonstrate the breadth of that contribution. You will read about research exploring how Noongar culture and arts can strengthen children's wellbeing and sense of belonging, initiatives that encourage future teachers to consider careers in rural and remote communities, and partnerships that are creating new opportunities for dance education, workforce development and community engagement. You will also discover international collaborations that continue to strengthen educational leadership, innovative learning environments that are preparing graduates for contemporary practice, and professional learning opportunities that support educators throughout their careers. Our researchers are contributing to important conversations about equity, inclusion, wellbeing and effective teaching, helping to inform educational practice, policy and public debate. Together, these stories reflect our commitment to ensuring that knowledge is not only created, but shared, applied and used to make a positive difference.

I am proud of the generosity, expertise and commitment our staff demonstrate in their service to others. Through research, teaching, professional engagement and community contribution, they continue to create opportunities for learners, support educators and strengthen communities. I hope this edition provides both insight and inspiration as we celebrate the difference education can make when knowledge, purpose and service come together.



August - September

The Spirit of Djilba

The Noongar Season 'Djilba' is represented by the colour pink, symbolising the growth of wildflowers and plants. As Djilba nears its end, the South West comes alive with colour, with acacias in bloom and signs of the warmer Kambarang season beginning to emerge. This time of transition brings a mix of cool, rainy and sunny days, while many native birds remain busy nesting and caring for their young, reflecting the changing landscape around us.

Read more on the ECU webpage.

Noongar culture and arts grow wellbeing literacy in early childhood education





Professor Narelle Lemon, Vice Chancellor's Professoriate Research Fellow, **Dr Libby Jackson-Barrett**, Senior Lecturer and Associate Dean (Academic) in Kurongkurl Katitjin, and **Dr Jason Goopy**, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.




Koby is a young child whose drawing (left) overflows with warm feelings of love hearts inside his tummy from participating and Sharna (drawing on right) is a young child who uses Noongar language and stories of the Wagyl (Rainbow Snake) learned in the Deadly Arts Early Years program for and as wellbeing.

New research from Edith Cowan University (ECU) and the University of Melbourne has found that Noongar culture and arts can play a powerful role in helping young children understand, express and communicate their wellbeing. The study examined The Song Room's Deadly Arts Early Years program, delivered in two Perth primary schools. Children aged three to seven participated in immersive learning experiences incorporating Noongar language, dance, storytelling and visual arts, led by Indigenous and non-Indigenous teaching artists.

Rather than relying on traditional surveys or interviews, researchers invited children and teaching artists to draw their experiences and share the stories behind their artwork. According to ECU VC Professoriate Research Fellow Professor Narelle Lemon, this approach enabled children to express emotions and ideas in ways that felt natural and meaningful. The process also aligned with Indigenous traditions where knowledge, identity and feelings are communicated through creativity, storytelling and connection to Country.

Led by ECU Senior Lecturer Dr Jason Goopy, the research identified four key ways Noongar culture and arts support wellbeing. The study found that song, dance, storytelling and visual arts act as living carriers of cultural knowledge, while participation in Noongar language learning strengthened children's connection to Country. Intergenerational storytelling was also recognised as an important cultural responsibility, with teaching artists sharing knowledge and supporting children to see themselves as future custodians of these stories.

A strong sense of sharing emerged throughout the program, helping children build connections with one another, their communities and Country. For Indigenous teaching artists, participation also supported healing and cultural revitalisation while fostering meaningful relationships between artists, children and schools.

Researchers observed significant growth in children's wellbeing literacy through creative engagement with Noongar culture. Through shared artistic experiences, children explored ideas about seasons, animals, identity and belonging while developing new ways to communicate their thoughts, emotions and experiences. The report recommends greater recognition of Indigenous cultural knowledge within schools and highlights the role Indigenous teaching artists play as educators and knowledge holders.

Associate Dean of Kurongkurl Katitjin, Dr Libby Jackson-Barrett, emphasised the need for Indigenous teaching artists to be recognised as permanent contributors to education rather than occasional guest presenters, with funding and remuneration that reflects their impact on children's learning and wellbeing.

The research also calls for broader recognition of drawing, dance, song and spoken word as legitimate ways for young children to communicate knowledge and wellbeing. Researchers found some of the strongest responses from participants emerged through embodied, sensory and creative experiences. One memorable moment involved a young child who drew his tummy "full of love hearts" to explain how the program made him feel.

The findings suggest that engagement with Noongar language, stories and artistic practices helps children develop stronger understandings of identity, belonging and relationships. Researchers observed expressions of joy, pride, connection and care for Country, reinforcing the idea that culture is a central part of children's wellbeing. The Song Room CEO Alice Gerlach said the study highlights the value of First Nations artists leading learning experiences that help children discover new ways to express who they are and where they belong.

Read the full article via the **ECU Newsroom** and the full open access report can be found via the **ECU Research Repository**.

Should we 'stream' school students based on ability? New research suggests yes – but we need to be cautious



Dr Olivia Johnston, Research Fellow and Senior Lecturer, School of Education.



Image Credit: Pixel-Shot/Adobe.com

Educators have long debated whether students should be "streamed", or placed into classes based on academic performance. Is it better to learn alongside students of similar ability, or in mixed groups? Most Australian high schools use streaming, particularly for mathematics. New UK research suggests streaming may benefit some students, but the findings require careful interpretation.

Concerns about streaming

Education researchers have raised concerns about streaming for decades. Seemingly objective measures of ability can favour privileged students, while students from disadvantaged or minority backgrounds are more likely to enter lower streams. Research also suggests academic success may depend as much on students' backgrounds, motivation and approaches to learning as their perceived ability.

What happens in the lower streams?

Students in lower streams often receive less challenging work and fewer opportunities to develop advanced skills. Although easier work may protect students from repeated failure, it can create a cycle of low achievement. Students receive fewer opportunities to extend themselves, achieve weaker results and continue to receive less challenging work. Streaming can also affect confidence, school enjoyment and students' sense of belonging. These concerns have prompted de-streaming movements in New Zealand and Ontario, Canada. Some Australian schools have also stopped streaming, although it remains common.

A new UK study

A UK study involving 97 schools compared Year 7 and 8 mathematics results and students' self-belief. Of these schools, 28 used mixed-ability classes and 69 used streaming. Higher-achieving students in streamed classes made three months' more progress than those in mixed-ability classes. Streaming did not negatively affect the results or self-belief of disadvantaged students. Overall, students in mixed classes made only one month less progress after two years. Disadvantaged students and those with lower prior achievement made similar progress regardless of grouping. While streaming benefited higher-achieving students, it also widened the achievement gap between higher and lower achievers.

What are the lessons for Australia?

Australian educators should interpret these findings cautiously. Mixed-ability classes in the study often provided limited extension and resembled lower-stream teaching. Effective mixed-ability mathematics teaching should give all students access to challenging tasks. Across the observed classes, teaching generally involved teacher instruction, individual practice and brief feedback. Researchers saw little small-group work or differentiated teaching, both of which can help teachers address different learning needs. Australia also has a different educational context. Many UK schools in the study were large, while smaller rural and remote Australian schools may not have enough students to stream classes. The research also focused only on mathematics, so the findings may not apply to other subjects.

What now?

Schools and policymakers should continue to approach streaming cautiously. Both streamed and mixed-ability classes can succeed or fail. The quality of teaching matters most, along with regular evaluation of how well each approach meets the needs of all students.

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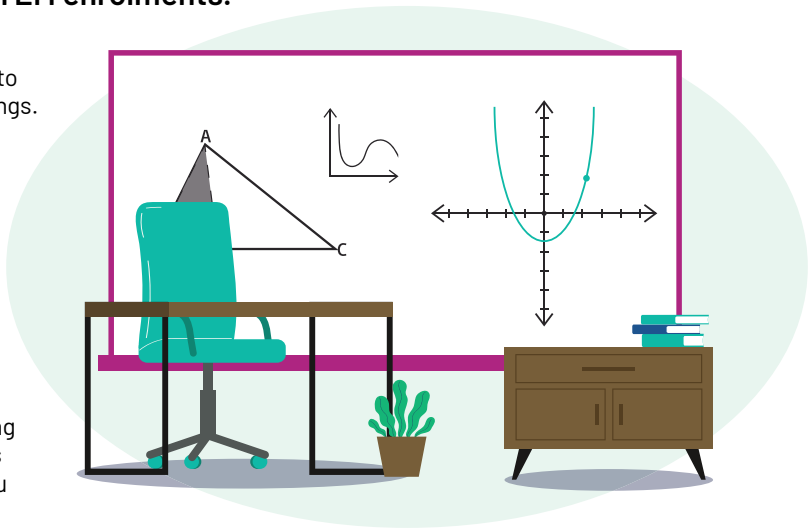
Want to know if your research has made an impact?



Dr Vesife Hatisaru, Lecturer, School of Education.

Key Takeaway: 'Partnerships between academics and practitioners offer a pathway to understand and disrupt the current downward trend in STEM enrolments.'

The impact your research has in the real world is of vital importance to researchers, to those who fund research and to those across the globe who benefit from your research findings. Research impact is defined in Australia as 'the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research'. Here, we present an impact evaluation of research and share some takeaways that can help you to measure the impact of your research (Hatisaru et al., 2023).



Research teaching us the impact of perceptions

Hatisaru knew that it could be difficult to figure out why certain students weren't progressing as well as others, especially in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). To better understand some of the factors stopping students from reaching their full potential, Hatisaru (2022) used drawing to explore students' perceptions of mathematics and mathematicians. She conducted three related studies in Türkiye and Australia: Draw-A-Mathematician (DAMT), Draw-A-Mathematics-Classroom (DAMC), and Draw-A-STEM-Learning-Environment (D-STEM).

STEM graduates are in high demand, with skills considered critical to economic prosperity and productivity, but enrolments in high school mathematics classes are declining, for example, in Australia and Türkiye. Misconceptions, biases and stereotypes can all contribute to poor engagement and performance in STEM, including mathematics. The DAMT and DAMC research looked at drawings to help understand school students' perceptions of mathematics, mathematicians and mathematics classrooms, and to investigate how those perceptions influence their learning outcomes. The D-STEM research sought to better understand STEM educators' perceptions of STEM learning environments. The DAMT research found that students' perceptions of mathematics were influenced by how they view their mathematics teachers. Classroom practices represented in the DAMC drawings were often not in line with current research on best practice (Hatisaru, 2020). They showed that teacher-centred instructional practices were commonly employed, despite having been demonstrated to negatively impact students' attitudes (Hatisaru & Murphy, 2019). Meanwhile the D-STEM research found that STEM learning environments, in participants' drawings, were represented as student-centred and included classroom teachers as facilitators. These environments, however, did not consider linkages with the community or industry in their representations.

Outcomes and impact

The impact of the DAMT, DAMC and D-STEM studies was investigated under the Research Impact Evidence Scheme (Hatisaru et al., 2023). This investigation was informed by the Australian government's national framework and used quantitative and qualitative approaches to demonstrating engagement, outcomes and impact. In addition to publishing the research's findings widely, Hatisaru targeted professionals who would benefit from utilising her research through presentations, workshops and seminars in Australia, the UK, Germany, Finland, Italy, Sweden, Türkiye and Prague. The D-STEM tool was made available for use by more than 1,000 Australian schools, through the Australian Science Teachers Association.

The DAMC and DAMT tools were introduced to schoolteachers through departments of education and teacher association magazines. Semi-structured interviews with the research end-users have identified that some teachers incorporated the DAMC, DAMT or D-STEM exercises into their classroom practices as reflective tools (Hatisaru et al., 2023).

A primary school teacher noted:

As a reflection on a chaotic day – it (the DAMC) is used to refocus the kids. When I am teaching, I lose my focus, and the drawing activities help to reconnect, increase talking and communication and reflection. Easy – not like a test. Additionally, tertiary educators have incorporated these exercises into Pre-Service Teacher training, equipping them with tools for reflective practice. The research clearly has elevated awareness of stereotypes associated with mathematics and is helping Pre-Service Teachers to resolve fears of teaching mathematics and personal attitude shifts.

A university lecturer stated:

It is interesting to gain an insight into the image of mathematics teaching among Pre-Service Teachers. Above all, it also becomes clear how many Pre-Service Teachers have had bad experiences in mathematics teaching during their time at school and have developed mathematics fears as a result. The impact evaluation prompted some important considerations for researchers, teachers, funders and governing bodies. First, evaluating the impact of research requires additional investment in your research budget, which is often hard to secure. Second, research impact takes time to emerge, which could be a design consideration for researchers, as well as a prioritisation consideration for funders. And third, education systems broadly should also be cognisant of the importance of measuring impact when designing and implementing interventions. In targeting the challenges facing STEM students, teachers and school leaders, partnerships between academics and practitioners offer a pathway to understand and disrupt the current downward trend in STEM enrolments.

This article is republished from **BERA** (The British Educational Research Associaton). Read the original article **here.**

Why good teaching isn't good enough



Associate Professor Helen Adam, School of Education.



Image Credit: Monkey Business Images/shutterstock.com



Image Credit: Mdisk/shutterstock.com

Author Helen Adam explores how the design of the Australian Teaching and Learning Commission could determine which students succeed and which continue to be left behind. The Australian Teaching and Learning Commission represents a rare opportunity to reshape literacy education. By bringing together ACARA, AITSL, AERO and Education Services Australia, alongside teacher standards reviews and national lesson plan banks, it could transform teaching across Australia.The key question is whether equity will be embedded throughout its work.

Indigenous students continue to experience disproportionately high suspension and exclusion rates. Indigenous students and those from Culturally and Racially Minoritised backgrounds are also underrepresented in gifted and talented programs, while being overrepresented in intervention and special education. This pattern points to systems that often fail to recognise diverse strengths, knowledge systems and ways of demonstrating capability.

The risks of standardised lesson plans

Lesson plan banks could provide valuable support, particularly for early career teachers. However, poorly designed resources may reinforce monocultural and monolingual assumptions. Less than one per cent of books in many Australian classrooms authentically represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. If model lesson plans prescribe particular texts, whose stories will they centre? Resources may also assume access to books, English-speaking family support and middle-class literacy practices. This can marginalise oral storytelling, multilingual households and cultural knowledge sharing. Teachers need time and professional autonomy to adapt resources for their students. If lesson plans become scripts that prioritise consistency over responsiveness, they may reduce teacher expertise while reinforcing existing cultural biases.

Embedding cultural responsiveness

The review of teacher standards offers an important opportunity for change. A recent AITSL addendum includes cultural responsiveness as core content for initial teacher education. However, it appears after content covering the brain and learning, effective pedagogy and classroom management. This sequencing risks presenting cultural responsiveness as an optional addition rather than a capability that should shape all teaching.

Revised standards could require teachers to:

- Build on students' cultural and linguistic strengths
- Use culturally valid assessment methods
- Understand how culture influences classroom engagement
- Avoid deficit-based interpretations of behaviour and achievement

Initial teacher education and professional learning should embed these capabilities across pedagogy, assessment, planning and classroom practice.

Recognising capability

Assessment must also recognise that students demonstrate learning differently across cultural contexts. Research found that culturally contextualising NAPLAN questions, without changing their difficulty, improved scores by 0.24 to 0.30 standard deviations. This can represent the difference between meeting and exceeding national standards (Dobrescu et al., 2022). Students also reported greater recognition and relevance when assessments reflected their identities and communities. This suggests standardised results can reflect cultural bias in test design, rather than student capability alone.

Broadening the evidence base

Randomised controlled trials provide important evidence about effective reading instruction. However, the commission should not rely on one research method alone. Quality evidence also includes Indigenous research methodologies, qualitative studies, community knowledge and practitioner inquiry. Together, these approaches provide a fuller understanding of how children learn and how teachers can support diverse students. The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and the Mparntwe Education Declaration both commit to improving equity and helping every young Australian reach their potential. The new commission provides the structure to turn these commitments into practice. Its success will depend on whether it combines quality instruction with equitable opportunity, authentic representation and culturally responsive teaching.

This article is republished from **Education Matters.** Read the original article in full **here.**



Technology, Society and Pedagogical Futures Research Community

Bringing the Future of Learning to Life

The Technology, Society and Pedagogical Futures Research Community in the School of Education brings together researchers, educators and technology specialists who share a common interest in exploring how emerging technologies can transform learning, teaching and professional practice.

Our work sits at the intersection of education, digital technology, artificial intelligence, immersive environments, simulation and learning design. We are particularly interested in moving beyond technology for technology's sake, asking instead how these tools can create more authentic, engaging and effective learning experiences.

Introducing the STELLAR Studio

A major focus for the research community in 2026 is the launch of the **STELLAR Studio: Simulation Technologies for Effective Lifelong Learning and Reflection**. Opening in September 2026, STELLAR will provide a dedicated space for designing, developing and testing immersive learning and simulation experiences. The Studio will bring together technologies including virtual reality, artificial intelligence, digital environments, avatars and game-based design to explore new approaches to education and professional learning.

A key focus will be the development of simulation-based training experiences for Pre-Service Teachers, providing opportunities to practise responding to realistic classroom and professional scenarios in a safe, supported environment. Through simulation, learners can experience complex situations, make decisions, receive feedback and reflect on their practice before encountering those situations in the real world.

This work builds on the School's growing portfolio of immersive technology research and proof-of-concept projects, including our work using AI-driven virtual characters and VR to support the development of communication, decision-making and de-escalation skills. STELLAR is also intended to be a collaborative space.

We see enormous potential in bringing together education researchers, teachers, students, designers, technologists and industry partners to co-design and test new learning experiences.

From concept to experience

One of the exciting possibilities of STELLAR is the ability to move rapidly from an educational idea to a working simulation prototype. This enables us to ask not simply "What could this technology do?" but, more importantly, "What kind of learning experience do we want to create, and how can technology make it possible?"

As the Studio develops, we will continue to explore how simulation and emerging technologies can support authentic practice, confidence, reflection, lifelong learning and professional capability across education and beyond.

We look forward to sharing more of the STELLAR journey with schools, early learning and learning centres, universities and TAFEs, professional and industry bodies, government and education agencies, technology and simulation developers, health and human services organisations, and our industry and community partners.

Interested in experiencing our proof-of-concept simulations?

If you would like to see what we are developing or experience some of our current prototypes, please get in touch directly with **Dr Julie Boston** via email; julie.boston@ecu.edu.au.

Explore more about this Research Community via the School of Education **Research Website**.

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.



A systematic review of engineering practice in K-12 STEM studies

Kidd, N., Tang, K. S., & Lin, K. Y. (2025). A systematic review of engineering practice in K-12 STEM studies. Research in Science & Technological Education, 1–25.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02635143.2025.2561994

Engineering is increasingly recognised as a powerful way to engage students in authentic STEM learning through designing, creating, and solving real-world problems. This systematic review of 38 international K–12 STEM studies found that engineering-focused STEM activities commonly involved hands-on design challenges guided by the Engineering Design Process, with strong links to science but limited integration of mathematics.

Prototyping, model building, and visual representations were frequently used to support learning, while reflective thinking, collaboration, and sustainability were less evident. The findings highlight opportunities for teachers to strengthen STEM learning by embedding mathematical reasoning, sustainability, teamwork, and reflective practices within engineering tasks. These approaches can support deeper problem-solving, interdisciplinary thinking, and authentic engagement with STEM disciplines in primary and secondary classrooms.

Induction and the early career substitute teacher workforce: problems, confusion and possible solutions

Sullivan, A., Grist, E., Simons, M., Tippett, N., **Woodcock, S.**, White, S., Zheng, C., Reupert, A. (2026). Induction and the early career substitute teacher workforce: problems, confusion and possible solutions. Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 2026, 21 pages.

https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2026.2630395



Substitute teachers make up over a quarter of the Australian teaching workforce, yet most receive little more than a basic school orientation when they start. This study examined national induction policy guidelines and found they are designed primarily with permanently employed teachers in mind. As a result, casually employed teachers miss out on mentoring, professional learning, and meaningful career support — leaving many feeling invisible and undervalued, and more likely to leave the profession altogether. The authors propose a practical framework built around three key elements: onboarding, socialisation, and professional learning. The message for schools and systems is clear: supporting substitute teachers is not an optional extra — it is essential for building and sustaining a strong teaching profession for all.

Is a whole school approach to inclusion really meeting the needs of all learners? Home-schooling parents' perceptions



Forlin, C., **Chambers, D.** (2026). Is a whole school approach to inclusion really meeting the needs of all learners? Home-schooling parents' perceptions. Education Sciences, 13(6), 571 – 583.

https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13060571

This study examines why some Australian parents choose home-schooling for their child, despite policies promoting inclusive education. Surveying 99 parents, the authors found that reactive factors linked to school experiences—such as dissatisfaction with teaching quality, inflexibility, limited support, and poor collaboration—were the strongest drivers of withdrawal. Parents also reported their children's needs, particularly for tailored pacing, one-on-one support, and wellbeing, were often unmet. For teachers, the findings highlight that inclusion requires more than policy: effective differentiation, positive staff attitudes, and genuine partnerships with families are critical. Strengthening communication, responsiveness to individual needs, and fostering belonging for both students and parents can improve inclusive practice and reduce disengagement from schooling.



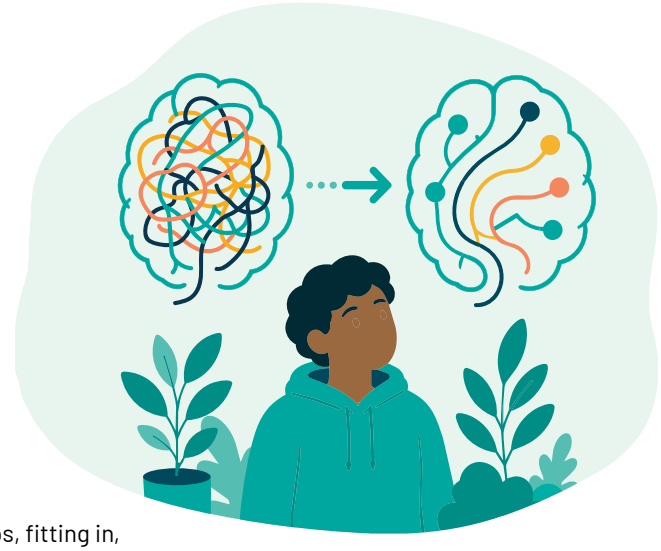
Teachers' Understanding of the Major Sources of Self efficacy in Early Childhood

Franks, D., **Barblett, L.**, & **Kirk, G.** (2025). Teachers' Understanding of the Major Sources of Self efficacy in Early Childhood. Early Childhood Education Journal, 53(1), 87-97.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-023-01566-9

This study explored early childhood teachers' understanding of how self-efficacy develops in children from Kindergarten to Year 2 in Western Australia. Using surveys and interviews with K-2 teachers, the research found that teachers viewed children's physiological and emotional states as particularly important in developing self-efficacy, differing from traditional research that emphasises task mastery. The findings suggest that young children build confidence and willingness to engage in learning when they feel emotionally safe, supported, and socially connected. For classroom teachers, this highlights the importance of age-appropriate pedagogy that prioritises emotional wellbeing, collaborative learning, open-ended tasks, and supportive classroom environments. The study emphasises the need for teacher education, school leadership, and curriculum design to better equip educators with practical strategies to foster self-efficacy in the early years of schooling.

Worry and depressive symptoms in adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders.



Stewart, S., Houghton, SJ., Glasgow, K., McQueen, L. (2025). Worry and depressive symptoms in adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 22(2), 185.

https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22020185

This research highlights worry as an important factor in adolescent mental health, particularly for students with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) such as ADHD, Autism, and Specific Learning Disorders. The findings show that adolescents with NDDs worry about many of the same issues as their neurotypical peers, including academic success, friendships, fitting in, and the future. The study suggests that these students may be more vulnerable to persistent worry due to cognitive biases and social-emotional challenges. Excessive worry was linked to depression, school disengagement, absenteeism, and poorer academic outcomes. The research identifies the Perth Adolescent Worry Scale (PAWS) as an evidence-based screening tool that may support early identification and intervention in schools. The findings reinforce the importance of inclusive, supportive, and emotionally safe learning environments and may help educators better understand and support students with NDDs through whole-school wellbeing approaches and school-based mental health support.

Getting the kids out the door for school drives me bananas. How can we make mornings calmer?



Associate Professor Fiona Boylan, Associate Dean (Early Childhood Studies), School of Education.

Getting the kids out the door for school can feel like herding cats in the rain. Just when one child is ready, another can't find a shoe, someone remembers homework, and someone else starts crying because they want more breakfast. The more you rush, the more it unravels – leaving you totally frazzled before 9am. Is there a calmer way to get through the mornings with young children?

Why mornings can feel so hard

Research tells us the move from home to school is a significant transition in a child's day. This is because it combines developmental, relational and practical demands. For example, a child may struggle to switch from sleep to awake, or another might struggle with leaving or finding belongings (such as wanting to keep playing with their toys and finding it difficult to locate their water bottle). At the same time, adults are juggling a lot mentally. They need to keep an eye on the time, coordinate tasks, anticipate what might go wrong, and manage the overall mood of the household. This can quickly turn into a sense of urgency where even small disruptions can escalate and everyone needs to be at school and work on time.

I'm asking, why aren't they doing?

You have now asked your child to put their socks on nine times. And it still hasn't happened. But what can look like "resistance" or even "disobedience" may instead reflect their developing executive function skills such as planning, attention and organisation. For example, your child hears you ask them to put their socks on, but is distracted by the Lego on the bedroom floor. When you say "put on your socks", your child has to listen to you, stay focused, hold the instruction in their mind, figure out the steps and locate their belongings. They need to shift from play to putting on their socks and manage any frustration they might feel. Executive function skills develop gradually across childhood and into adolescence. So it's normal for children to struggle with these skills.

Don't chase the chaos

Calmer mornings are less about correcting behaviour and more about creating the right conditions for kids to do what they need to do. You can do this through structure, support and responsive interactions. One way to reframe it is the adult's role is not to "chase the chaos" (or react to everything happening), but to reduce both the cognitive and emotional load within it.



Preparing what you can the night before – laying out clothes, packing bags and checking what's needed – reduces decision-making in the morning. This then helps you to be calm and responsive in the moment. Predictable routines support this further. When mornings follow a familiar sequence, children are better able to anticipate what comes next and move more smoothly between tasks, while also benefiting from the sense of security routines provide.

Staying calm

Equally important is how adults respond when things do not go to plan. Co-regulation research highlights how children learn to manage their emotions through warm, responsive interactions with adults who can share their calm during moments of stress. Keeping a cool head, lowering your tone and simplifying expectations can help de-escalate situations. Emotions can be contagious within families, and the adult's ability to regulate themselves is central to supporting children to regain composure and continue with the task at hand.

So instead of yelling "Finn, if you don't put your socks on in five seconds, I will ban TV for a week!", try getting down to your child's level, using a calm tone and giving a clear, simple direction. For example, "Finn, I can see you're busy. It's time to put your socks on. Let's do it together." Or offer gentle guidance and structure: "Socks on first, then we'll go get your shoes and head to the car."

Giving kids a say

Within this, there is an opportunity to help children take some initiative and responsibility. This can include packing their bag, packing a simple part of their lunch (such as their fruit), and checking a simple list the night before. For example – have I got my hat, water bottle and jumper?

Research suggests if parents support their child's autonomy, it can strengthen both self-regulation and motivation. In other words, it encourages children to engage more willingly in everyday tasks because they have some say in the process. These moments also allow children to experience a sense of pride and achievement.

'Big hugs for a happy day, buddy'

Alongside structure, small moments of connection matter. Simple rituals like a special breakfast or shared phrase as you go out the door can strengthen family bonds, and soften the morning rush. Research shows routines with these touches boost wellbeing because they are personal and connect you to one another. Even small moments of joy can ease time pressure and create a calmer mood.

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ECU alum recognised in 2026 Western Australian of the Year Awards

ECU alum have been recognised for their work in helping to shape Western Australia.



Image credit: Jackson Flindell, The West Australian

Two Edith Cowan University (ECU) alum have been recognised at the 2026 Western Australian of the Year Awards, honouring remarkable individuals that help to shape Western Australia. Professor Colleen Hayward AM, who completed a Diploma of Teaching (Primary) from ECU in 1974, was awarded the 2026 Wesfarmers Aboriginal Award.

Professor Hayward is a distinguished educator, policy leader, and proud Noongar woman whose career spans more than 35 years of exceptional service to education, public policy, and the Indigenous community. Widely recognised as one of Western Australia's most influential voices in Indigenous affairs, she has demonstrated sustained leadership across academia, government, and the corporate sector.



Learn more about our School of Education winner via the **ECU Alumni and Supporters Website**.

Also recognised is Mark Glasson, who completed a Graduate Diploma of Arts (Media Studies) in 1996. Mr Glasson, who is the CEO of Anglicare WA and a leading voice in Western Australia's social services sector, was awarded the 2026 Alcoa of Australia Community Award.

Mr Glasson has more than 25 years of senior executive experience across community services, justice, local government and social policy. He is also President of WACOSS, former Chair of Shelter WA, Co-convenor of the Home Stretch WA campaign, and a Leadership WA Honorary Fellow in 2023.

The Western Australian of the Year Awards recognised 21 finalists across seven categories. Two other finalists are part of the ECU community, highlighting the depth and diversity of our alum.

Dr Carolyn Chard AM and Dr Tania Chambers OAM, who were both recognised as finalists for the Crown Arts Culture Award, reflecting their outstanding contributions to Western Australia's cultural landscape.

Dr Chard completed a Bachelor of Arts (Arts Management) at Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) in 1993, while Ms Chambers is an Honorary Doctorate recipient (Doctor of Performing Arts - 2022), former WAAPA Board member and former Western Australian Society of Arts Advisory Committee member.

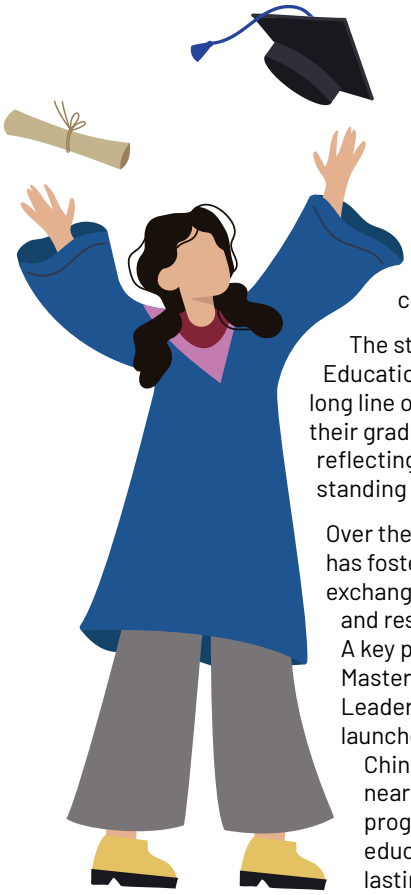
ECU congratulates all finalists and award recipients on this well-deserved recognition. Their achievements demonstrate the significant impact of ECU alumni and community members, whose talent, leadership and dedication continue to help shape a stronger Western Australia.

This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom.** Read the original article **here.**

ZJNU students celebrated at ECU



Professor Dianne Chambers, Director, International, School of Education.



Thirteen students from ZJNU travelled to ECU to celebrate the completion of their degree.

Edith Cowan University (ECU) welcomed 13 students from the Zhejiang Normal University (ZJNU) to celebrate the completion of their degree.

The students, graduating Master of Education (Educational Leadership), join a long line of alumni who have commemorated their graduation celebration at ECU, reflecting one of the University's longest-standing international partnerships.

Over the years, this enduring collaboration has fostered meaningful academic exchange, welcoming students, staff and researchers from both institutions. A key pillar of the partnership is the Master of Education (Educational Leadership) program, a joint initiative launched in 2000 and approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education. With nearly 1,400 graduates to date, the program continues to strengthen educational leadership and build lasting cross-cultural connections.

Following a tour of ECU's Joondalup Campus, graduates and their families attended a celebratory event hosted by the School of Education and the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International). The event, attended by executives and staff from the School of Education as well as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) and Vice-President Jake Garman, provided graduates with the opportunity to collect their testamurs and reflect on their academic journey.

The event was also attended by Consul-General of the People's Republic of China in Perth, Ms Fu Lihua, Consul for the People's Republic of China in Perth, Ms Guannan Liu, and Member for Bibra Lake, Ms Sook Yee Lai MLA. Their visit to Perth concluded with professional development activities and visits to local schools, coordinated by the School of Education, further enhancing their skills and knowledge as they prepare for the next stage of their careers.

Explore the Educational Leadership Specialisation **here**.

This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom.** Read the original article **here.**



Graduates and their families attended a celebratory event hosted by the School of Education and the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International).

ECU and Ausdance WA formalises new partnership





Professor Dawn Penney, Vice Chancellor's Professorial Research Fellow, **Dr David Aldous**, Senior Lecturer, and **Dr Maria Gamble**, Lecturer, School of Education.

Edith Cowan University (ECU) and Ausdance WA have formalised a new partnership with a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening dance education, participation and workforce development across Western Australia. The agreement reflects a shared commitment between ECU's School of Education and Ausdance WA to foster collaboration in research, professional learning, sector engagement and knowledge exchange, while creating new pathways to support the future dance workforce in WA.

The partnership builds on a strong foundation of research, advocacy and sector engagement led by ECU's Dr Maria Gamble, in collaboration with Ausdance WA President (and Chair of the Board) Gary Hodge and Executive Director Amy Wiseman. Together, they have been exploring key issues shaping the future of dance in the State, including participation, career pathways, workforce sustainability, lifelong engagement and the broader social and community impact of dance. "Dance plays a vital role not only as an art form, but as a powerful contributor to health, wellbeing and social connection," Dr Gamble said. "This partnership with Ausdance WA creates exciting opportunities to strengthen dance education and research, support the sustainability of the sector, and ensure more Western Australians can experience the lifelong benefits of dance."

The MoU also builds on recent cross-sector engagement activities convened in partnership with Ausdance WA, bringing together educators, artists, researchers, industry representatives, and community stakeholders to discuss the future of dance participation and career sustainability in WA. These conversations and collaborations have helped shape an emerging research trajectory around dance, health, participation, pathways, and lifelong engagement, led by Dr Maria Gamble with support and collaboration from colleagues including Dr David Aldous and Professor Dawn Penney.

"This partnership is a significant milestone for Ausdance WA. Nationally, Ausdance will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year in 2027, marking half a century of dedication to advocacy, research, education and capacity building for the dance sector. In Western Australia, Ausdance WA is thrilled to formalise this collaboration with ECU to increase capacity and impact for dance," said Ausdance WA Executive Director, Amy Wiseman.

Through the collaboration, ECU and Ausdance WA will develop research-informed initiatives that respond to current industry needs and emerging areas of practice, including the growing intersection between dance, health and wellbeing. "The ECU–Ausdance WA partnership creates an unprecedented opportunity to contribute to Western Australian and national cultural policy at a far more strategic and influential level," said Ausdance WA President and Chair, Gary Hodge.

"The arts, culture and creative industries are already recognised by the Western Australian Government as major drivers of innovation, creativity, skills development and engagement with global markets. Through this partnership, we look forward to drawing on the distinguished research capability of ECU to build a robust evidence base that demonstrates the full value of dance and the arts, not only as powerful forms of artistic expression, but also as contributors to public health, education, social cohesion, workforce capability, economic productivity and international competitiveness."

It is envisaged that the MoU will be in place for three years. Dr Gamble said that the partnership with Ausdance WA reflected ECU's ongoing commitment to industry collaboration, research and delivering meaningful impact within the community.

Image below (L-R): Dr Min Zhu, Amy Wiseman, Gary Hodge, Professor Caroline Mansfield and Dr Maria Gamble.



This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom.** Read the original article **here.**

Pre-Service Teachers hit the road to experience the heart of rural education





Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean, and **Mrs Marnie Harris**, Professional Experience Coordinator and Lecturer, School of Education.

Ten Edith Cowan University (ECU) Pre-Service Teachers gained first-hand experience of rural and remote education in Western Australia's Kimberley region during the 2026 On Country Study Tour. The group included students from early childhood, primary and secondary education, who explored the strengths, opportunities and complexities of teaching and living in regional communities.

The nine-day trip included visits to Derby District High School, Kimberley School of the Air, Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School and One Tree Children's Services, along with community organisations and local cultural and historical sites. ECU School of Education Executive Dean Professor Caroline Mansfield said the experience fostered professional growth, cultural understanding and community connection. "It gave the Pre-Service Teachers a deeper appreciation of place-based education, while encouraging future educators to consider careers in rural and remote contexts," she said.

ECU Primary Professional Experience Coordinator and Study Lead Marnie Harris said students were encouraged to reflect on their experiences, challenge assumptions and consider how their learning would shape their future practice. "The generosity of the schools, educators and community members who share their knowledge, experience and stories is what makes this tour so impactful," she said.

The vital role of teachers in a rural and remote community

Teacher workforce shortages remain an issue across rural and remote Australia. Research shows Pre-Service Teachers who experience these education settings during their training are more likely to return after graduating. The tour allowed students to engage with teachers, students and community members, gaining insight into the critical role educators play within and beyond the classroom. Activities at local youth and recreation centres also strengthened their understanding of the connections between schools, families and communities.

A career changing opportunity

Secondary Pre-Service Teachers Tessa Smith said the Study Tour changed the trajectory of her career and life. "I now can't imagine starting my career anywhere else," she said. Fellow secondary Pre-Service Teacher Aaliyah Blackford said she gained more from the experience than expected, both professionally and personally.

"My time in Derby and the schools gave me invaluable experiences that have shaped the way I think about teaching, learning and building relationships with students," she said. Ms Harris said the connections students made during the tour could create strong career opportunities. One principal had asked about a student from the previous year's tour and expressed interest in offering them a position. "It highlights the importance of building relationships beyond the classroom, in the community, and networking," she said.

Making it possible

The tour was supported by INPEX, Catholic Education Western Australia, Derby District High School, the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley and Broome International Airport. ECU Development and Alumni Relations Director Susan Schofield said the funding helped cover travel, accommodation and cultural engagement activities.

"ECU is proud to work with partners like INPEX on this initiative. Their support gives students an invaluable opportunity to experience culture, community and connection, and understand the important role they can play in improving education for young people in the Kimberley and other regional areas across WA and beyond," she said.

This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom.** Read the original article **here.**



Pre-Service Teachers Olivia Gerritise and Aaliyah Blackford outside Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School.



The Pre-Service Teachers, Kelsi Popplewell, Charlotte Russell, Tessa Smith, Olivia Gerritise, Aaliyah Blackford, Kayla Nain, Jasmine Walter, Hannah Iemma, Mollie Burnett, Sandra Smith, at the Kimberley School of the Air.

Enhancing Practice: New Teaching and Learning Spaces for Semester Two

Semester Two marks a major milestone for the School of Education, with the completion of **new and upgraded teaching and learning spaces** designed to better connect theory with practice and prepare graduates for contemporary classrooms. New facilities include science laboratories, an on-campus food technologies kitchen, specialised art studios, music education spaces, a refurbished theatre, and a display gallery, providing students with hands-on experiences across a range of teaching disciplines.

A standout addition is the introduction of simulated primary and early childhood learning environments that replicate real classroom settings, helping students develop confidence and teaching skills before professional placements. The redevelopment also includes a media studies room and the **STELLAR Studio**, an immersive virtual reality space supporting podcasting and simulation development, reflecting the growing role of digital capability and innovation in education.



Concept designs for new teaching and learning spaces for the School of Education, with Building 8 reopening in Semester 2 2026.

This article is republished from the **School of Education Website.** Read the original article **here.**

Walking, Listening and Learning: CPPP Hosts First 2026 Katitjin Bidi



Dr Karen Nociti, Lecturer, School of Education.

The Centre for People, Place and Planet (CPPP) hosted their first 2026 Katitjin Bidi in June, with participants attending from across disciplines and communities. It was co-led by School of Education lecturer and CPPP researcher, Dr Karen Nociti, with Dr Vahri Mckenzie, WAAPA, and drew inspiration from Dr Libby Jackson-Barrett's Moto Bidi.

The place-based research walking event explored locations throughout Yagan Square and ECU City Campus and showcased a selection of the CPPP's research projects in relation to ECU's Cultural Narrative Framework. Kalamaia Kaprun Elders and Elder Advisory group members, Maxine Dimer and Dianne Logan, came down from Kalgoorlie to celebrate and share the work they have been doing with the School of Education's Professor Mindy Blaise and Millennium Kids Co-Director and Adjunct Lecturer, Cat Aniere OAM, as part of the Wake up the Snake research project.

It also made space for HDR students, like Ali Blackwell from the School of Education, to share their research with Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Paulo de Souza. The Katitjin Bidi was a creative walking event that allowed participants to listen, see, sense, and experience the possibilities of place-based research at ECU.



Find out more about the **Centre for People, Place and Planet** on their website **here.**

From Reclaimed Materials to Refined Design generations



Mr Marco Tolomei, Unit Coordinator and Lecturer in Design and Technology, School of Education.

Students in Materials Design and Technology have showcased creativity, craftsmanship and problem-solving through a diverse collection of first and second-year design projects.

Across both cohorts, students explored how materials, tools and design thinking can transform an idea into a finished product. Their work reflects a strong commitment to prototyping, technical refinement and practical problem-solving, with many students dedicating substantial time outside scheduled workshop classes and during the study break to complete their projects to a high standard. Second-year students in DTM2105 Materials Design and Technology extended the design themes developed in their earlier mirror frame projects into fully realised furniture pieces. While maintaining a clear aesthetic direction, students responded to new functional, structural and manufacturing challenges through an iterative design process.

Prototypes and test pieces played an important role throughout the semester. Students refined proportions, tested joinery solutions, improved drawer fitment and resolved construction issues before committing to final production. The completed works demonstrate a strong understanding of material behaviour, construction methods and design intent. A highlight of this year's DTM2105 projects was the thoughtful sourcing and use of materials. Students took responsibility for locating and preparing their own timber, resulting in furniture pieces made from locally sourced Marri slabs, recycled Jarrah salvaged from old structures and treasured timber generously supplied by supportive families. These materials gave the finished works both personal and practical significance.

First-year students in DTM1104 Materials Design and Technology were introduced to product design and manufacture using metal as the primary material. This semester, students were challenged to design and fabricate a custom BBQ grill from 1.6 mm hot rolled steel. Each grill needed to include a hinged lid, custom ventilation system, grill grate and handle, while accommodating a standard aluminium cooking tray.

While students were provided with a scaffolded example to demonstrate core fabrication techniques and project expectations, many pushed well beyond the initial brief. Some adapted and repurposed existing items, including stainless steel kegs, gas cylinders and other reclaimed materials. Others developed customised fabricated solutions featuring complex ventilation systems, bespoke hinges, integrated storage, adjustable grills and distinctive aesthetic details.

Across both year groups, artificial intelligence emerged as a useful tool in the early stages of the design process. Students used AI platforms to support research, explore design possibilities, generate concepts, investigate construction methods and visualise potential solutions. Rather than replacing student decision-making, AI helped students test ideas quickly before refining them through sketching, CAD modelling, technical drawings, prototyping and hands-on fabrication. The final projects demonstrate more than technical skill. They show persistence, resourcefulness and an ability to move from concept to completion. Students worked through design constraints, material limitations and construction challenges to produce outcomes that were functional, visually considered and professionally crafted.

Special thanks are extended to Paul Keenan and Josh Raven for their technical support, guidance and assistance throughout the semester. Their willingness to support students during additional workshop hours contributed significantly to the quality of the final outcomes and to the overall student experience. Together, the DTM1104 and DTM2105 projects celebrate the value of practical design education. They show what students can achieve when creativity, reclaimed materials, emerging technologies and skilled craftsmanship come together in the workshop.

Explore our Teacher Education Postgraduate courses **here**.



A custom BBQ grill designed and manufactured by a DTM1104 student, showcasing metal fabrication and design skills.



A bespoke furniture piece designed and crafted by a DTM2105 student, evolving from an earlier mirror frame project.



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.

Register Here

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.

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

Professional Learning

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

Follow the School of Education LinkedIn Page! Stay connected with the latest news, research, partnerships, professional learning opportunities, and achievements from across our School.

Here, you'll find:

- Research insights shaping the future of education
- Stories and achievements from our academics, alumni, and Pre-Service Teachers
- Professional learning opportunities for educators and education professionals
- Partnerships and collaborative projects making an impact in schools and communities
- News, events, publications, and key activities from across the School

Whether you're a current or aspiring teacher, education leader, researcher, industry partner, or proud alum, we invite you to follow our page and join the conversation as we work together to create positive change through education.

Follow our page to stay connected and help us shape the future of education, together!



School of Education Research Showcase



Dr Suzanne Stewart

Lecturer

Changing the Lens



Today, I view classrooms through a very different lens.

I no longer see rows of students in matching uniforms working towards the same assessments and expected to demonstrate learning, behaviour and success in identical ways. Instead, I see individuals, each bringing unique strengths, challenges and ways of understanding the world. I see creativity disguised as distraction, resilience hidden beneath anxiety, and intelligence that does not always fit neatly within the expectations of our education system.

It wasn't always this way.

My journey began much like that of many educators: four years of university study, a position at a secondary school in East London, a steep learning curve, and countless hours spent planning, teaching and reflecting. Like many beginning teachers, I believed my role was to help every student reach the same destination.

More than three decades later, after teaching across early childhood, primary, secondary, further and higher education, I have come to realise that perhaps the destination was never the problem. It was the journey we expected every student to take to get there. Every classroom, leadership role and student challenged my assumptions about learning, success and belonging. Those experiences shaped not only the educator I became, but also the researcher I continue to become. They inspired the questions that still guide my work: How do young people experience school? Why do some flourish whilst others simply endure? And what if, instead of expecting students to fit education, we designed education to fit our students?



Find out more about ECU's School of Education research activity by visiting our website.

Throughout my career, I was drawn to the students who found school the hardest not because they lacked ability, but because they experienced school differently. Long before neurodiversity became part of everyday educational language, I recognised their creativity, curiosity and potential. Yet I also saw how often these strengths were overshadowed by anxiety, misunderstanding and the expectation that they should simply "try harder". Looking back, I realise the most influential teachers in my career were not my colleagues or professors. They were the students who challenged everything I thought I knew about learning. They taught me to question assumptions, look beyond behaviour and see difference not as a deficit, but as another way of experiencing the world. Ultimately, they shaped the questions that became my doctoral research.

My PhD explored the mental health and wellbeing of adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ADHD, autism and specific learning disorders. Rather than focusing on diagnosis or behaviour, I wanted to understand what remained largely unseen. What worried these young people? When did they feel lonely? How did they make sense of the uncertainty that is part of everyday school life? Most importantly, could we intervene before these experiences began to shape their mental health?

Through four interconnected studies, I worked alongside adolescents in mainstream schools, listening to their experiences and learning from them. What I found challenged many of my own assumptions. Like every other adolescent, these young people worried about friendships, belonging, academic success and the future. The difference lay not in what they worried about, but in how they interpreted ambiguous situations. Those interpretations could become repetitive cycles of negative thinking, contributing to worry, loneliness and poorer mental health. The research became the first to confirm Hirsch and Matthews' Cognitive Model of Pathological Worry in adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders, while highlighting practical opportunities for schools to better support young people's mental health.

The final stage of my research evaluated Minds Online, an innovative three-dimensional serious game that embedded Cognitive Bias Modification for Interpretation (CBM-I). For me, its value extended beyond technology. It represented the possibility that research could move beyond describing problems and begin creating practical, evidence-informed solutions for schools.

Completing my PhD did not answer all my questions; it inspired many more. Today, my research continues to explore how education systems can become more responsive, inclusive and preventative. My current interests include strengthening teacher capability, developing inclusive practice and investigating how responsive systems of support can ensure fewer students fall through the gaps between universal and targeted intervention.

Teaching has always been my passion, but research has become another way of teaching. It has given me the opportunity to share what my students have taught me and to advocate for learning environments where every young person feels understood, valued and able to flourish. Today, I still view classrooms through a different lens. The students have not changed; I have. Perhaps that is the challenge for all of us. As educators, school leaders and teacher educators, are we preparing the next generation of teachers to manage behaviour, or to understand the child behind the behaviour? What if the greatest barrier to inclusion is not our students' differences, but the lens through which we choose to see them?

Future Research & Career Pathway

> Transformative change begins with courageous, respectful dialogue that disrupts dominant narratives, amplifies marginalised voices, and reimagines schools as places where diverse educators are supported to belong and thrive.



Mr Michael Monrose
PhD Candidate, School of Education.

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

I am a former educator with a Master's degree in special education and applied Behaviour Analysis. I am currently pursuing a PhD exploring the lived experiences of minoritised educators who have worked in Australia's K–12 education sector, to understand how systemic inequities, workplace cultures, and experiences of inclusion and exclusion shape educators' decisions to leave the profession, while also examining the factors that foster resilience, belonging, and professional sustainability during their careers.

I am passionate about equity and justice centred work and as part of this PhD seek to draw on intergenerational counter-narratives to challenge the enduring influence of coloniality and white supremacy in Australian education. My belief that transformative change begins with courageous, respectful dialogue that disrupts dominant narratives, amplifies marginalised voices, and reimagine schools as places where diverse educators are supported to belong, thrive, fuels my passion in this space.

Why did you choose ECU to do your PhD degree?

I chose Edith Cowan University because of its strong reputation in education research and its commitment to equity, inclusion, and improving educational outcomes. I believe ECU provides an environment where my current research can make a meaningful contribution through rigorous scholarship and collaboration with experienced education researchers. The university's focus on addressing real-world educational challenges aligns with my goal of producing research that informs policies and practices to better support and retain educators from minoritised backgrounds. Studying at ECU will also allow me to develop the research skills needed to contribute to educational equity both in Australia and internationally.

What have you enjoyed the most?

What I have enjoyed the most is the opportunity to ask meaningful questions and search for evidence-based answers. I enjoy learning, but I especially enjoy research that has the potential to make a practical difference. That is one of the reasons I am interested in exploring why minoritised educators leave the profession, because I hope the findings can contribute to improving their retention and create more supportive workplaces across Australia's K-12 education sector.

What is the focus of your thesis?

My thesis focuses on understanding why minoritised educators leave the profession. While there has been considerable research on educator attrition in general, the experiences of racially minoritised educators are underrepresented within an Australian context. I want to explore the personal, professional, and institutional factors that influence their decisions to leave, including workplace culture, experiences of discrimination, career progression, workload, leadership support, and overall job satisfaction. By identifying these factors, I hope my research will contribute to strategies and policies that improve minoritised educator retention, promote a more diverse educator workforce in Australia, and create more inclusive and supportive school environments.

What will you do after your PhD? And why?

I do not currently have a fixed plan; however, I would like to use my research to contribute to improving Australia's education sector and will seek out opportunities where I can apply evidence-based research to support educators and inform educational practice or policy. I expect that this PhD will help me identify the path that best aligns with my skills and interests.

Explore our Teacher Education Postgraduate courses **here**.

Student

SHOWCASE

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











DTM1104: Materials Design and Technology 1 and DTM2105: Materials Design and Technology 4
Design and Technology Education Student projects.

Photographs taken by Marco Tolomei, School of Education.



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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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Information contained in this magazine was correct at the time of printing and may be subject to change.

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