



**2022**  
**NEW**  
**VOICE**  
PERSPECTIVES

**SUPPORTING EMERGING VOICES IN  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP**



# NEW VOICE PERSPECTIVES

## Supporting emerging voices in educational leadership

The Australian Council for Educational Leaders is proud to present the 2022 New Voice Perspectives, celebrating eight leaders recognised in the fields of school leadership, educational leadership research, and early childhood and care.

Every year, recipients are welcomed into the ACEL network contributing to and supporting the dissemination of new learning and thought. New Voice Scholarships are awarded to educators recognised as forward-thinking, contextually relevant and responsive leaders by peers and the wider education community. Over 100 talented educators have been awarded these scholarships since the program was initiated in 2014.

The New Voice Perspectives provide an opportunity to explore and uncover new and diverse points of view. This year, recipients were asked to respond to one of four questions that considered how leaders inspire hope and create the future; the three main global challenges facing educational leaders; what it means to be an educational leader in 2022; and in an age of AI, how leaders can ensure that leadership remains human focused. As to be expected, the eight recipients highlighted many thoughtful and relevant views including the centrality of students and staff learning together both within and beyond the classroom; placing student voice at the heart of all teaching; the necessity for educators to work collectively to create systemic solutions to perennial issues facing schools; support for the wellbeing of both teachers and students; and the uniqueness of teacher-student relationships that cannot be replicated or replaced by AI.

As the 2022 New Voice scholars share their voice and rich perspectives throughout these pages, we envisage it will stimulate further prompts for reflection, planning, and action as we consider an educational environment in which anything is possible. Indeed, we have seen in the past 12 months that anything is possible. Those pivotal moments in time have illuminated the opportunity and importance of thinking without constraint. We are very proud to showcase each of our eight New Voice Scholars who have inspired us with their clarity of purpose in the pursuit of universal access and engagement for all students to achieve in schooling and beyond.

**Dr Barbara Watterston**  
Acting ACEL CEO



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# Maxine Galante

Deputy Principal,  
Challis Community Primary School



## New Voice in School Leadership 2022 Recipient

Maxine Galante is a Deputy Principal at Challis Community Primary School. The school is widely known for its mission centred around addressing inequity in education through community partnership and high-impact practice. Maxine has worked across Victoria, Western Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory in primary schools, embracing the challenges that are embedded within socio-economic disadvantage. Maxine is a fierce advocate for educational reform and works collaboratively with colleagues to create school-based structures and processes that embody a human-centred pedagogy.

We need to empower and trust our learners and place their voice at the centre

Alongside the industrial revolution came an industrialised schooling model. This is a model that still exists today and one where learners are required to conform, consume, and regurgitate to achieve “success.” However, this current notion of success, one that is held by general society, informed by standardised testing and enmeshed within a political agenda, creates a false binary of those who can and those who can’t. As a result, we have a system where certain groups of learners are predisposed to fail before they even walk through our school gates.

As school leaders, therefore, many of us bear a weight; a weight that cannot be shaken as we continue to see children “fail.” Irrespective of how hard we try, we cannot escape the inequity that exists. For many, we already know who “can’t” before they leave primary school. We *can* predict the future ... Our system is broken.

As leaders, it is our responsibility to advocate for and enact the necessary change required to address inequities within our schools. We can no longer wait for permission. We need to foster co-constructive cultures in schools where risk-taking and innovation are valued (Brown & Cameron, 2018). Only then can we bring about meaningful change. We also need to identify and tackle challenges that hinder reform. I see that there are three global challenges facing educational leaders and each of them is discussed here.

### Global challenge 1: Mental health

The National Health Survey in 2017-18 indicated that 26% of young people aged 15-24 reported having long-term mental or behavioural conditions (ABS, 2018). Following a global pandemic, one could anticipate that there will be further increases in this percentage as we experience a surge of mental health complexities in schools.

We can no longer create organisational structures that simply serve curriculum delivery. In addition, school-wide punitive approaches to behaviour management that result in “time out” rather than “time in” need to be eradicated wherever possible. Schools are delicate ecosystems, and we must redefine the purpose of schooling to ensure it reflects the needs of our emerging society. We should develop and promote a human-centred pedagogy that entwines wellbeing and learning, so we see our students as people first.

Schools must implement pro-active wellbeing programs that include social and emotional learning. Moreover, organisational structures and processes must reflect the need to respond to and support students in crisis. Although our learners may not remember every lesson we teach, they will remember how we acted towards them and how we made them feel (Couros & Novak, 2020).

### Global challenge 2: Teacher shortages

On World Teachers Day in 2022, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) revealed the projected need for an additional 24.4 million primary teachers and 44.4 million secondary teachers across the world to provide a basic universal education by 2030 (Azoulay, 2022). Unsurprisingly, working conditions such as increased workloads, and a lack of teacher training and teacher pay standards, are exacerbating the shortage with fewer people choosing to enter the profession.

Incentivising teaching positions is a band-aid solution to a systemic issue. I believe the key is detaching the political agenda from schools. By seeing education as a human endeavour, we could professionalise the work of school leaders and teachers by establishing interdisciplinary policy across sectors such as health, social welfare, and education. If interdisciplinary policy can shape successful communities, then interdisciplinary policy is

what's needed to shape schools. Although we don't have that magic wand just yet, we could look to education systems that have professionalised the role of the teacher while investing in sophisticated, long-term teacher development as a first step.

At a school level, it might also be worth asking if there is enough autonomy in employment processes and budget design to promote interdisciplinary practice. Is it possible to meet the diverse needs of all communities through a one-size fits all approach to school-based funding? Are principals armed with the necessary skills and knowledge to maximise every dollar? Although most of us don't enter teaching with a hope of crunching the numbers, we cannot escape the impact resource allocation has on learner outcomes.

### Global challenge 3: Technology

Technology – there is no escaping it. It has seeped into our schools both intentionally and invisibly. For some, it strikes fear. For others, it is the gateway to innovative teaching where learners have freedom to explore, learn, and create. For many, we are faced with the social implications of an interconnected world where a person's safety can be compromised at the click of a button. We can also no longer deny that not all children have access to technology. This was underscored during the pandemic when limited access to technology impeded some children's opportunity to learn. We need to bring technology into our schools as hiding it from our students does not reflect the world outside. The challenge is trying to harness its potential.

Considering these challenges, how can we inspire hope and create the future? We need to empower and trust our learners and place their voice at the centre. A human-centred core creates the space for agency. Our learners are our future, and so we need to give them the opportunity to make decisions and learn authentically about the world around them.

We must ensure our children become successfully literate and numerate, but we also need to let their identities flourish through interdisciplinary learning where interests are pursued, curiosity is sparked, and values underpin our curriculum. Let curriculum become the vessel, so we can foster the essential skills required in an ever-globalising, interconnected world. If we fill our students with hope, we fill the world.

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We must push upwards to empower and amplify the voice of those most impacted by the global monoculture ...

# Michael Murphy

*International Baccalaureate Diploma Program Leader and Head of Mathematics, Norwood International High School and Part-time Lecturer, University of Adelaide*



## New Voice in School Leadership 2022 Recipient

Michael is a father, a friend, a learner, and a leader, who lives, learns, and works on Kurna Land, in South Australia. He hopes to inspire, motivate and support people to live well in a world worth living in. Following a Master's degree in Gifted Education, Michael undertook leadership roles before becoming a Leading Learning Consultant at Catholic Education South Australia. Seizing the opportunity in 2020 of online learning environments, Michael studied a Graduate Certificate of Educational Leadership at Sydney University. Having worked across sectors, Michael returned to school-based leadership at Norwood International High School to lead the development of the Mathematics Learning Area and implement the IB (International Baccalaureate) Diploma Program. Committed to the ongoing development of the profession, Michael is also a part time teaching lecturer at the University of Adelaide, where he delivers engaging sessions on curriculum and pedagogy to post-graduate students in mathematics.

In the 14 years since the implementation of NAPLAN, from what began as an assessment program aimed at equity and excellence (Thompson, 2013), leaders and schools have operated within a dynamic system where conceptions of student achievement have narrowed, and the intended purpose of NAPLAN has become clouded with political overtones (Heffernan, 2018; Ragusa & Bousfield, 2017; Savage, 2020). Similarly, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests have led to international league tables and policy impacts beyond their intent (Baird et al., 2011; Owens, 2013; Savage, 2020). My perspective is one of optimism and antifragility (Taleb, 2012). As a leader in Australia who operates within the global education ecosystem, I see that the value and purpose of education across the world is dominated by the narrative of standardised assessments that are increasingly distanced from sophisticated and nuanced measures of educational purpose and student achievement. Our responses to this narrative are key if we are going to thrive in our lives and work. It is my perspective that the three global challenges facing educational leaders are:

- a *global monoculture*, where we see a socio-political climate that imposes sameness and linearity upon the most complex and dynamic fields of human education.
- the *purpose of school-based education* that is squeezed between global, national, and local policy decisions from above, and the actions of school leadership.
- *time*, not of being time-poor, but the compression of time as it is experienced by the organisms in the education ecosystems.

Each of these challenges is now discussed.

## Global monoculture

The Australian education revolution began with the bold goal of reaching the top five in PISA. This aspiration, and the raft of policy and structural changes that accompanied it, prescribed a linearity that placed Australia within the global monoculture and sought to use a national system, influenced by global education trends, to enact change in the classrooms of every student in the country (Savage, 2020). That this expectation of consistency, standardisation, and focus towards global goals will lead to excellence and equity in Australian schooling, weighs directly or indirectly on every decision made by leaders within our education ecosystem.

What is most stifled in these monocultures is that of collaboration and innovation in both action and evaluation. If PISA is the measure of success of an education system, then moving towards sameness is inevitable as countries seek to gain ground on themselves and others against the same measure. This top-down linearity ultimately manifests in schools. Diversity is the key to thriving ecosystems, and the education system is no different. We must maintain the health and vitality of all schools to embrace contrasting views, opinions, and actions, so that we can truly evaluate fit-for-purpose education.

## The purpose of school-based education

At a national level, the purpose of school-based education is espoused by interpreting the Mparntwe Declaration and associated policy documents. It can be inferred that the purpose of Australian schooling is to "promote equity and excellence," and for "all young Australians [to] become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners and



active and informed citizens” (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019, p. 4). The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) envisages “education playing a critical role in contributing to a democratic, equitable and just society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse” (ACARA, 2017, para 2). There is a critical issue with our evaluation methods as they align to these purposes. The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) Measurement Framework, and Australian Teacher Workforce Data do not align with the espoused purposes of school-based education, leaving school leaders between a rock and a hard place (Kidson & Wilson, 2021). My research shines a light on purpose statements and has identified that most leaders aspire to variations of excellence and well-rounded learners, yet they still operationalise a national evaluation framework that does not align with their goals.

## Time

Time, as a phenomenon, is experienced dynamically by those throughout the education ecosystem. Imagine a student embarking on what to them feels like a lifetime of study, their teacher has 12 months with them, a middle leader has a five-year contract but may take a promotion after two, their Principal is expected to answer a phone call yesterday, deliver a stirring speech tomorrow, and improve results today. In Australia, that student is likely to have more than five federal and state education ministers throughout their schooling. There is such an intensity and compression of time that the purpose of school-based education loses tangible structure. Our challenge is to thrive in our experience of a volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous world (Brown & Duignan, 2021).

## Solutions beneath our feet, growing solutions from your country

When faced with these challenges, we have the solutions beneath our feet, growing out of the space and context in which we live and work. Our experiences are rich, we have our own expectations, and our own opportunity. We must push upwards to empower and amplify the voice of those most impacted by the global monoculture, by the problematically defined purpose of school-based education, and the compression of time. I conclude by asking: *How might global education leaders rise above the*

*three main challenges facing them?* Education leaders across the globe will increase in capability when they proudly disrupt the global monoculture, create systems of planning for a world that is worth living in, and evaluate what really matters to their context and celebrate it. It is through this that we will ultimately amplify the immense capacity of our own ecosystems to impact education across the globe.

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# Jessica Chesterfield

Arts Specialist,  
South Rock State School



## New Voice in School Leadership 2022 Recipient

An Arts Specialist, Lead Teacher, 2021 Commonwealth Bank and SchoolsPlus Teaching Award Fellow, 2022 ACEL New Voice in School Leadership recipient, and an enthusiastic (if untalented) singer, Jess Chesterfield has had the privilege of teaching students from their first days of Prep to their last days of Year 12 in State, Catholic, and Independent schools. She has been acknowledged nationally for her innovative teaching programs and their outcomes for students and the wider educational community. Jess's ability to inspire and lead change across subject areas, year levels, teaching teams, and educational institutions is borne out of the notion "it takes a village to raise a child" in which collaboration, community, and connection are key to empowerment and joy in learning.

The best and worst part of teaching is our love for "our kids."

It was our second week as the founding staff of a new school, yet we were not delayed with questions or concerns but stories. Despite the valiant efforts of our senior leadership team to disperse our furore for our own good, we would not be deterred. We detailed pride in a student who learned to apologise, of a hug no one expected to receive, of our names mispronounced with affection, of so many achievements already made – without yet teaching a single lesson of curriculum. We spoke in the love-language of teachers and shared the moments that made our entire week worthwhile far past when we should have been heading home to rest.

The best and worst part of teaching is our love for "our kids." They are the reason we became teachers, the reason we dig deep, and the reason many of us stay in a profession that is in crisis. We stay when we should go home. We work when we should rest. We feel guilty when we are sick. We confuse our free time with an opportunity to tackle tasks that can never be entirely vanquished. We accept this as the norm of our profession. But why?

Our education system is sustained by gaslighting our teachers and leaders into accepting and perpetuating the pervasive martyrdom culture that demands we sacrifice our health and wellbeing for the critically important work of schooling. Dedication to our students is operationalised as a weapon against self-advocacy and desperately needed systemic change. Instead of utilising the collective passion, dedication and, dare I say it, expertise of those on the ground in a pandemic which redefined contemporary teaching and learning, there is dissonance between states and systems that enables an internalised narrative in which all success (or failure) lies in the individual school, leader or teacher whilst denying the impact of such a burden upon those held responsible (David in David & Brown, 2021). The result is a teacher shortage experienced by every

Australian state, territory, and sector over the past decade (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2020; Australian Government Department of Education, 2022; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2022; Gohl, 2022; Mondo, 2022; Shine, 2015; Sutchter et al., 2019). The teaching vocation is "publicly scorned" and teacher wellbeing is being impacted by "unmanageable," "unrealistic," and "unsustainable" workload, burnout, stress, change fatigue, and low levels of autonomy due to increasing micromanagement and standardisation creating high levels of attrition (Bahr, 2018; Longmuir et al., 2022; Willis et al., 2021). Public conversation and policy perpetuate a perception of individual teacher responsibility for educational failings rather than conversations on the collective capacity to improve teaching, work conditions, and inadequate and inequitable funding (Longmuir et al., 2022; Mockler, 2022; Pauwels et al., 2022).

Teachers and school leaders must stop waiting to be "gifted a voice" and "granted the agency" to drive the narrative and decisions of education because in our patient silence we become complicit. We already inspire, lead, advocate, and innovate change every day, one student at a time. We all have a "teacher voice" that is compassionate and fair. We have agency. But we must give ourselves permission to use it without guilt. It is time to raise our sights beyond our classroom, school, sector, and state in collective action to instigate the systemic solutions and organisational-level intervention necessary on behalf of, and in collaboration with, our Generation Alpha students.

The Australian education system was not made for those it now educates. Schools are populated by global citizens with an unprecedented access to information and technology; students born to environmental crisis and raised in a pandemic. Yet the



abiding organisational and system structures of education in Australia remain largely immutable even as the consequences of that stagnation become increasingly apparent. That is not to say that unique “unicorn” schools do not exist; that leaders are not creating collaborative communities, or that teachers are not innovating every day. Instead, I merely assert that our world has been changed forever and that despite the devastations caused to many, the pandemic created an opportunity for reimagining and redefining Australian schooling on a national level. The unprecedented impacts, decisions, and mandated social and economic restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic have reverberated throughout the entrenched systems of education, driving innovation from a leadership goal to a necessity (Álvarez-Arregui et al., 2021; Kaden, 2020). It has challenged educational institutions with uncertain and complex situations that were unheard of until this technologically innovative century, testing the commitment and cooperative environment of the whole educative community (Álvarez-Arregui et al., 2021, p. 3).

Crisis and change management have become essential skills of school leaders as inflexible systems and cultures based in hierarchy and bureaucracy cannot meet the current, and future, demands of the pandemic and of our students (Harris & Jones, 2020, p. 256). It is a time for courageous leaders with the adaptive capacity to disrupt longstanding patterns of behaviour, to redefine organisational responsibilities and to alter or eliminate inefficient legacy practice (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). It is a time for our leaders and educators to do what they do best: inspire change and growth in the hope of a better future.

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# Cathryn Stephens

Professional Learning Communities Manager,  
Department of Education (Victoria)



## New Voice in School Leadership 2022 Recipient

Cat Stephens is an instructional leader and coach currently working as part of the Department of Education's school improvement workforce in the South-Eastern Victoria Region. Previously she worked as a teacher, consultant, and coach in secondary and primary settings. She holds a Master of Instructional Leadership from the University of Melbourne and is passionate about improving literacy for all students. She feels privileged to work in public education.

It is well-known that the most effective professional learning happens closest to the classroom and yet so few models of observation have been shown to improve student learning outcomes.

If children come to us from strong, healthy, functioning families, it makes our job easier. If they do not come to us from strong, healthy, functioning families, it makes our job more important. (Coloroso, 1994)

In recent years, education systems have had a strong focus on both excellence in teaching and learning, and equity across the socioeconomic spectrum. One of the key levers we have in this work is that of instructional leadership which has been found to be the most impactful form of leadership in the quest to improve student learning outcomes (Robinson, 2007). The recent review of the *National School Reform Agreement* (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2022) was difficult to read, however, because it revealed the extent of student inequity across the country. Our most disadvantaged and vulnerable students are still losing ground across a range of measures. Inequity persists in our systems and structures, despite the efforts of teachers, school leaders, and policymakers across the nation. We have some excellent tools at our disposal to harness the potential of instructional leadership and help address the decline by providing practical, evidence-informed support to teachers in their pursuit of greater gains for all students. Here are two ideas to consider which could assist us in thinking about how to address the equity challenge:

### 1. Systems should work towards broad understanding and application of the *Science of Learning*, particularly in relation to *Cognitive Load Theory* (Sweller, 2011)

More explicit discourse and capability-building are needed for those strategies that can help teachers maximise their impact and narrow the gap between non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged students. Teachers and school leaders would be greatly assisted by professional learning focussed on how the brain processes and retains new knowledge and how best to ensure transfer of this new learning to long-term memory. The so-called

"reading wars" for example, should have ended long ago based on the evidence in relation to how we learn to read. When ideological battles in education persist, children can become the "instructional casualties" (Lyon cited in Reading Connections, 2021, para 1). It is encouraging to see tiered, pro-active, and preventative frameworks such as *Multitiered System of Supports* (MTSS) (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016) becoming more prevalent as a way of developing learning and wellbeing interventions at different levels of dosage and intensity.

When teams of leaders and teachers have a shared language and an evidence-based approach such as MTSS in operation, professional discussions become more structured and purposeful. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) looking at student learning gains between the pre and post assessment can cross check those with low or no growth against attendance data. Is the teaching not pitched correctly or is the student simply not there? And if the student is disengaged what might the reason be? We sometimes mistake disengagement for a cause when it may be an effect of, for example, low literacy and an inability to engage with the curriculum at level. How many students have "switched off" because they can't comprehend what has been said or written? Yet this explanation can be overlooked if structures and processes do not cultivate deeper questioning or if they create artificial silos of wellbeing and learning. Our cognitive space is limited and precious. *Cognitive Load Theory*, and the *Science of Learning* more broadly, should be the prism through which leaders view all teaching and learning endeavours.

### 2. The use of instructional coaching to develop and codify high impact teaching strategies

Dylan Wiliam's quote is now well known: "if we create a culture where every teacher believes they need to improve, not because they are not good enough but because they can be even better, there is no limit to what we can achieve" (Wiliam, 2019, final para).

Highly effective leaders look for opportunities to create these cultures by freeing up teachers to hone their craft through instructional coaching. It is well-known that the most effective professional learning happens closest to the classroom and yet so few models of observation have been shown to improve student learning outcomes. Expert instructional coaching can help teachers to deepen their content knowledge whilst developing responsive teaching and assessment practices in-situ. As a pedagogical coach, I was fortunate enough to see how effective the combination of high levels of self-awareness and a desire to evaluate teaching strategies could be. In one classroom, I observed a year four maths lesson where the teacher was looking at the specific feedback she was providing and whether it was spread across the group or tended towards a few students. Through this process we looked at the relative effects of praise versus task-focused feedback and identified what she was doing well (combining feedback around the use of key vocabulary with reinforcement of positive learning behaviours) and would like to work on (minimising general praise).

More research is needed on the most impactful coaching models both in terms of teacher learning and observable practice change. Greater consideration of how coaching can be used to help codify effective teaching practices is certainly needed in many schools and systems. Like everything else in education we must continually seek to understand what works, to what extent and why – without fear or favour. Evidence literacy must also be developed so that school leaders and teachers are better able to filter out myths and misconceptions and apply a critical eye to assertions made by academics, consultants, and publishing companies.

We know that instructional leadership requires evaluative thinking and a willingness to do more of what works best and dispense with what doesn't. In my role working across many schools, I have been fortunate enough to see examples of such informed, courageous leadership. Attention is paid to the lessons that can be learned and what practices might need to be reinforced or challenged - all in the service of improving learning for students.

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Repositioning teachers as expert participants contributes to the democratisation of education where the goal is learning, not school rankings or test scores.

## Dr Matthew Hill

Director,  
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New Voice in School Leadership  
2022 Recipient



Dr Matthew Hill is the Director of Barker Institute ([www.barker.institute](http://www.barker.institute)) with a focus on professional learning, research, and innovation in the school, along with hosting and presenting events for the local community on relevant academic and wellbeing issues for schooling in the 21st Century. He teaches physics and science extension which introduces students to scientific academic research. Matthew's doctorate reflects his passion for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education focussing on representational fluency amongst physics students at school and university. He has published in leadership, education, and science journals, and been involved in course development and teaching at the University of Sydney and the University of Western Sydney. He has also completed a Graduate Diploma in Divinity at Ridley College in Melbourne.

In previous generations, many considered that it was knowledge that set apart expert teachers in both schools and universities. Students (and parents) sought to sit at the feet of these knowledge holders seeking to attain knowledge for themselves. This historical view was partly correct but has become untenable today.

We are now in a world with unlimited access to information. The best communicators have already explained every concept through a YouTube channel or TED Talk. In 2023 you can ask specific questions, seek clarification, and dialogue with artificial intelligence (AI) programs on any topic imaginable. Some believe a teacher's utility has diminished. Is this the end of the locally-based, human teacher?

Improved AI capabilities will disrupt traditional schooling (Gocen & Aydemir, 2020). However, rather than undermining the teaching profession, this technology-rich moment is an opportunity for teachers' "expertise to be better deployed, leveraged and augmented" (Luckin et al., 2016, p. 11). I am invested in the idea and pursuit of training, promoting, incentivising, and celebrating teachers at all levels to be experts through their ability to model disciplinary thinking and practice and, as such, be genuine learners, participants in, and contributors to their field.

Amongst those with whom I work, I dream to change the adage of "those who can't do, teach" into the declaration "I teach, *because* I do."

Our parents love when their child's sports coach plays that sport for themselves. Music teachers who join students as participants in bands or choirs model a growing disciplinary expertise. Our teachers of science, through their own academic pursuits or citizen science projects, demonstrate what it is to *be* a

scientist. Perhaps the most memorable and influential economics lessons might just be when a teacher brings in the Monday morning paper each week to collectively interpret and apply Mr Gittins' latest article.

The future of education lies not in distinguishing the teacher from the student but from blurring the lines between the two. Taking a lesson from universities, it is not only the students who are learning, but schools must be whole institutions of learning where teachers also continue to learn, grow, and develop. Students are invited into this learning community as full participants alongside their teachers who are simply more experienced learners.

Then it is together that teachers and students can enjoy online or in-person talks from activists, analysts, artists, and actuaries, distilling the information as sociological, economic, musical, or mathematical thinkers. My own doctoral research affirmed that a necessary condition for students participating in a discipline is that teachers guide students to see the rich stories the world has to offer through that disciplinary lens (Hill, 2015).

In my current role, I run a school-based close-to-practice education research institute in a co-educational PreK-12 school in Sydney. The first value of my Institute is that we are a community of *learning*. I constantly invite teachers to be thinkers, researchers, writers, and publishers in their field through mentoring, training, and publishing opportunities that my institute provides. Teachers are supported to make evidenced-informed decisions where their own learning, data collection, and analysis precede the outcome. They, their students, and the community then see them as practising experts, not only pedagogy-trained intellectuals. All of this must increase.



I am convinced that expert curiosity is contagious (Dubey et al., 2021; Spektor-Levy et al., 2013) and that curiosity and learning go hand in hand (Liquin, 2021). While AI chatbots can “learn,” it is very different from the human emotion of curiosity. This week, as I write, I participated in a research conference where 19 high-school students I work with presented academic posters on their own first-hand scientific research. They covered topics of interest to them (and the world) including synthesis of pharmaceuticals targeting malaria, mycetoma or SARS-CoV-2, microbial response to ocean acidification, the impact of glyphosate on rumination in livestock, and designing and testing pseudo direct-drive gearboxes. From the outside, it was a formal assessment task for the State’s Higher School Certificate, but in the room the mood was intellectual curiosity. My questions (to which their responses were technically contributing to their final school grade) were not to trick, stump, or test the students but to edify, collaborate with, and learn from them. Modelling uncertainty, awe, and a desire to learn is one of the greatest gifts we can give our students (Chen, 2022; Jirout & Matthews, 2022; Lamnina & Chase, 2019; Richesin & Baldwin, 2023). We are there to be curious together.

Repositioning teachers as expert participants contributes to the democratisation of education where the goal is learning, not school rankings or test scores. True academics learn from counterparts regardless of the institution or nation they represent. They are pleased to share their learnings with audiences of any age or background which is a demonstration of fair-mindedness (Dow, 2013, pp. 46–54). In the information technology age, schools must respond by following this global model where both teachers’ and students’ learning extends beyond the walls of the classroom. Teachers should be bringing knowledge in and disseminating it far and wide. Best practices and quality thinking are to be shared, if learning is the goal (Dow, 2013, pp. 50–51). It is the practice and love of learning that determines who is eligible for, and who will succeed in, the school of tomorrow.

Some of the moments that bring me greatest joy and hope for the future of education include when our institute hosts public events. Whether it is the external knowledge-holder who is invited to speak, or one of my learned colleagues, it is not the speaker who most excites me. My joy is that I can welcome the whole community to become learners together. By sitting alongside students, teachers, parents, friends, and those from other schools too, it allows my colleagues and me to re-position ourselves as expert participants, and expert learners, in that discipline. This is the future of teacher expertise.

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# Tanya Appleby

Principal,  
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## New Voice In Educational Leadership Research 2022 Recipient

Tanya Appleby is a passionate, progressive, and insightful educational leader. Currently she is Principal at St Ursula's College, Toowoomba, and her school has been recognised as one of the most innovative schools in Queensland. Tanya maintains that being in the classroom keeps her grounded and connected to the needs of students and teachers. She is a confident public speaker and presenter at conferences. Most recently Tanya co-presented at the ACEL National Inclusion and Disability Conference, and she looks forward to completing her PhD.

The domain of learning designer must always reside with teachers because they intimately know their students.

Recently I received a call from a friend about ChatGPT, who taunted me with, "now, teachers will really have their work cut out for them. Teachers will become fossils, relics of the past ..." After the conversation, I sent her a copy of the short story *The fun they had*, by Isaac Asimov published in 1954 and set in the year 2155. It was a tangible sign of my indignant rebuttal.

Asimov's narrative explores perceptions of school, learning and teachers through the lens of children in the future, after the discovery of a "real" book in an attic. I highlighted this part of the story, to ensure that my point hit its desired mark:

Margie went into the schoolroom. It was right next to her bedroom, and the mechanical teacher was on and waiting for her. It was always on at the same time every day except Saturday and Sunday, because her mother said little girls learned better if they learned at regular hours.

The screen was lit up, and it said: "Today's arithmetic lesson is on the addition of proper fractions. Please insert yesterday's homework in the proper slot."

Margie did so with a sigh. She was thinking about the old schools they had when her grandfather's grandfather was a little boy. All the kids from the whole neighbourhood came, laughing and shouting in the schoolyard, sitting together in the schoolroom, going home together at the end of the day. They learned the same things, so they could help one another on the homework and talk about it.

And the teachers were people ...

The mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen: "When we add the fractions  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{4}$  ..."

(Asimov, *The fun they had*, 1954, in <https://xpressenglish.com/fun-they-had>)

There is no doubt that we are living in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and that we have normalised its passive intrusion in our contemporary lives. I could not imagine my life without the reliance that I have on the GPS in the car. I enjoy the efficiency of ordering online and have no qualms about engaging with service Chat Bots at my own convenience 24/7. Kolchenko (2018) affirms this sentiment by claiming that this reliance on AI is an inevitable part of life because it provides greater efficiencies and adaptability to our needs (p. 249). Yet, despite this, I cannot help but wonder about the implications of this co-existence and I feel my hackles rise when I consider the possible erosion of education as a human enterprise.

For the purpose of this article, artificial intelligence refers to what Murphy (2019) describes as "the applications of software algorithms and techniques that allow computers and machines to stimulate human perceptions and decision making processes to successfully complete tasks" (p. 2). He also suggests that there is a place for co-existence as long as AI applications are used within the contexts in which they were designed to operate (Murphy, 2019, p. 3). This presupposes that adaptive AI technologies can offer an accurate and reliable means of supporting the needs of learners. Curiously, I feel at ease about co-existing with artificial intelligence in my teaching world.

As a teacher, I think of the many benefits of adaptive technologies, particularly for neurologically diverse learners. I also consider the greater time efficiencies I might gain and the array of multimodal feedback tools that I may utilise. But, for at least, at this time, I do not believe that the power of human interaction can be replaced by AI. Primarily, it is because I believe that education according to Selwyn, (2019) "... is something best guided by expert human teachers in socially rich settings" (p. 1). Yet, irrespective of my agility

as an educator, I cannot deny that there is a growing body of literature that claims that AI will offer more personalised systems of learning and improved learning outcomes; sometimes more efficiently than a teacher (du Boulay, 2016; Kulik & Fletcher, 2016; Ma et al., 2014; VanLehn, 2011; Steenbergen-Hu & Cooper, 2013, 2014). But I am left wondering can we forgo the human experience for better efficiency?

Despite these advancements, I believe that it is more important than ever that education remains a human enterprise because of the critical role played by educators in understanding the complexities of the whole individual, not to mention the inextricable relationships between teachers and students that promote trust and understanding. How can those soft skills or the human touch ever be replicated? Ours is a vocation that extends beyond the transfer of knowledge to *knowing* our students deeply. The role of the teacher in the age of AI requires a distinctiveness that supports customised learning pathways and progressive data that are accessible to the learner, parent, and teacher, along with a human presence.

I believe that our craft lies in enabling our students to access knowledge and apply it into new ways of thinking and learning. We can only achieve this when we truly know our learners and better understand their human complexities. The AI world offers educators more practical ways of knowing our learners, and surely this is a positive thing. "Knowing" in this context is defined as "(building) relationships that we continually negotiate and re-negotiate with in our world, including other objects, organisms, ecosystems, people and professional and social norms" (McMurtry, 2020, p. 198). Educating for the AI age, therefore, requires human thought and actions and, thus, ensures that the social, emotional and psychological needs of individuals are met in varied social contexts that extend beyond the classroom itself (Cope et al., 2020).

I recognise that advancements in AI technology will inevitably disrupt and challenge current pedagogy and I do not perceive this as a negative. Perhaps, ChatGPT is the jolt that we all need as educators to find new ways of assessing students that better reflect the times in which we are living. I believe that educational leaders will need to strongly consider how AI can support our pedagogy and that we need to prepare for this educational shake-up. What will remain critical at this time is recognising the limitations of AI and remembering that AI is not the designer of learning. The domain of learning designer must always reside with teachers because they intimately know their students. Wang (2016) sums this up so

eloquently by saying that "the human brain is a computing machine connected to a spirit" (p. 193). As educators, we see, feel, touch, and connect to that spirit in our schools every day. Artificial Intelligence cannot, as yet, replicate or mimic the authentic interchange of human spirit between student and teacher. I am assured that education will remain a human enterprise as long as we keep connecting to that spirit in the age of artificial intelligence.

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# Jade Leak

Early Childhood Practice Lead,  
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## New Voice in Early Education and Care 2022 Recipient

Jade Leak has worked and studied in education for over 20 years, with most of this time spent in the early childhood sector. As a teacher, key worker, kindergarten improvement advisor, and LOOKOUT early childhood learning advisor, Jade has been given many opportunities to influence practice in educational systems and settings. Passionate about inclusion, her current role involves lifting educational outcomes for children in statutory care. In addition, Jade volunteers in various communities of practice, including LGBTIQ+ rights in education, and Aboriginal inclusion. One of her career highlights involved working on a pilot partnership between the University of Melbourne and Chulalongkorn University to model inclusive education practices to primary school teachers in Thailand.

Investment in, and access to, quality early childhood education for vulnerable children is one of the most successful proactive factors in breaking the cycle of disadvantage (Ramey, 2021).

Victoria is experiencing some of the biggest reforms in the early childhood sector in history. Recent years have seen the introduction of funded three year old kindergarten, school readiness funding, and the rollout of two years of 15 hours of funded kindergarten. Now, the *Best Start Best Life* (Department of Education, 2022) initiative will ensure all Victorian children will have access to free funded three and four year old kindergarten. Moreover, in their year before school, four year olds will participate in a 30 hour a week, play-based pre-prep early years program. These evidence-based reforms will cost the State 15 billion dollars over the next decade. Yet, with these exciting changes, comes challenge. Three key challenges facing the early childhood education sector are workforce shortages, participation in high quality early education, and the complexities inherent in children and their families. Each of these is now discussed.

### Workforce shortages

Workforce shortages are not unique to the early childhood sector. The number of occupations experiencing skills shortages in Australia almost doubled in 2022, with early childhood teachers and educators identified in the National Skills Commission (2022) report as one of the country's five most in-demand professions. In Victoria, the workforce shortage is compounded by sector reforms. Victorian Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep, Ingrid Stitt, has indicated that over the next decade, the State will require 5,000 additional teachers to fulfil the commitment to funded three year old kindergarten, and a further 5,000 to 6,000 teachers for the pre-prep program (Carey, 2022)

In light of this, the State is offering free TAFE courses, with over 5,000 aspiring educators taking up the offer last year (Carey, 2022). Incentives of up to \$9,000 are also available to study a Bachelor or Masters in Early Childhood Education, which is required to teach in a three or four year old funded program. With a 39% national decline in early childhood bachelor enrolments between 2016 and 2020, these incentives are essential to meet workforce demands of the *Best Start, Best Life* commitment (Department of Education, 2022).

Retention, on par with attraction, has been problematic in the early years sector for many years, with early childhood educator retention rates among

some of the poorest in professional occupations. In remote and disadvantaged areas, staff shortages can be chronic, and exemptions to run a funded program without a qualified teacher may need to be sought. Over ten percent of funded long day-care services across the country currently have an approved waiver (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA], 2022). There are a host of factors influencing staff retention, including quality management and leadership, realistic workload, fair wages, career progression and professional learning opportunities, service quality, and resources (McDonald et al., 2018). Most early childhood teachers are qualified to work in primary schools, which are known for their superior remuneration, better funding, and professional support.

### Participation in high-quality early education

Staff retention is less problematic in high-quality services. It is no surprise that teachers and educators who are encouraged to improve their skills in a supportive environment are more likely to stay in the profession. High-quality service provision does not just benefit employees; rather the community receives more than child minding in a quality, funded service. In such high-quality services, families, as well as their children, learn and may be given parenting education, referrals to other services, and emotional support. According to Tseng et al. (2019), kindergarten attendance is one of the biggest protective factors for vulnerable families.

At last year's ACEL national conference, a prominent academic and keynote speaker claimed that any benefit of attendance in a pre-school program dissipated by grade two, and encouraged early years teachers to "get over this obsession with play." Whilst some research *does* indicate a year of preschool attendance has only short-term educational benefits, multiple longitudinal studies show that attendance for at least two years in a *high-quality* early years' service, taught by a qualified teacher, has various lifelong social and economic advantages for both the child and the whole family. For children from vulnerable backgrounds, these protective factors are intensified, and include lower rates of incarceration, better health, better-paying employment and lower rates of divorce (Ramey, 2021).

According to the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) (2022), the vast majority of Victorian

children (i.e., over 92%) enrol in kindergarten. In the past, however, attendance data have not been collected on a state-wide level. Reports from services suggest vulnerable families are much more likely to disengage, or not enrol their children in kindergarten in the first instance, when compared to families with lower levels of vulnerability.

Many factors influence quality in early education, but research shows the most impactful is a teacher's ability to combine explicit teaching in warm, play-based interactions (Torri et al., 2017).

The quality of early years programs and their delivery are keys to breaking cycles of disadvantage. Despite advertising of "the kinder tick" and the ratings and assessments of early years services being published on *Starting Blocks*, most families and many professionals are unable to identify high-quality services. In many areas, choice is limited due to a lack of services or limited vacancies. This is particularly problematic in rural and low socio-economic areas, where quality and choice are vital in ensuring vulnerable children enter school developmentally equal to their peers (Tseng et al., 2019).

### Complexities in children and their families

The *Best Start, Best Life* 15 billion dollar commitment by the Victorian Department of Education is a wise investment. For disadvantaged children, every dollar spent on early years education yields a return of more than \$17 by the time the child turns 40 (Karoly, 2016).

Family complexities across Australia continue to increase. Families presenting with complex and multiple difficulties have become the leading client group of modern support services (Bromefield et al., 2010). Forty-three percent of Australian children live in complex households (Baxter, 2016). A significant number of Australian children are exposed to domestic violence (Davidson et al., 2022), 22% of children are developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain according to the AEDC (2022), and one in six Australian children live in poverty (Nicholson et al., 2002).

Numbers of children in out-of-home care have increased by 14% over the last four years, while the number of foster carers in the State has decreased. Whilst it is critical to acknowledge the selfless work of our foster care community, the decrease in carer numbers means more and younger children are residing in residential care, or in suboptimal foster care placements (Kirkham, 2022).

For many vulnerable children and their families, protective services are the first point of contact for intervention (Higgins & Katz, 2008). A proactive system that supports families before reaching crisis point would not only keep families together whilst protecting children, but also reduce the need for more acute and costly services (Campo, 2015).

Investment in, and access to, quality early childhood education for vulnerable children is one of the most successful proactive factors in breaking the cycle of disadvantage (Ramey, 2021).

### A Call to action

Two free years of kindergarten or pre-prep will be a huge step in ensuring all Victorian children, regardless of their background, start school confident, ready, and capable. To ensure no child misses out on these benefits, compulsory kindergarten, continued investment to lift the quality of early years services, and earlier and more robust supports for vulnerable families, are essential.

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... early childhood education and care curriculum should adapt to the changing world and hence so should teaching.

# Teagan Robertson

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Department of Education



## New Voice in Early Education and Care 2022 Recipient

Teagan is a Wollongong based early childhood teacher with nine years' experience in long day care, and seven years' experience as a nominated supervisor and educational leader. Teagan began her career in early childhood at the age of seventeen, fulfilling her dreams of providing children with quality education and care. Alongside her undergraduate degree, Teagan has a Masters in Education specialising in educational leadership. She is currently two years into her second Masters with a focus on educational leaders around Australia. Teagan has now moved into the public sector, where she is working with the Department of Education in the Early Childhood Outcomes Division. She is also teaching in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and Care degree program with TAFE New South Wales. Teagan is motivated and passionate to support the growth of early childhood education and care in New South Wales.

Children are the future. The children of today will be the adults of tomorrow. The children of today will grow up to work in different jobs from what is available today. The children of today are going to be the ones who care for us when we are old. The children of today and the future generations of children will be the ones to care for our planet and keep it alive. As I contemplated how to answer the question, *How do those engaged in teaching and leading inspire hope and create the future?*, I thought of all of these reasons. Inspiring hope and creating the future is about thinking about the future and teaching for the future.

When you think about the future, what do you think about? I bet it is something hopeful, because we naturally hope for great things to happen in the future. This is what we want to instil in our early childhood teachers not only for themselves but also for the children in their care. The future is never going to be certain; change is always going to happen, and evolution will never stop. So, although we cannot know exactly what children will need to equip them in their future lives (Roffe, 2019), we can still inspire hope, passion, and independence, and prepare children to be resilient in regard to whatever life might throw them. As Cahill (2017, p. 10) tells us, we must "educate the child of today for tomorrow."

Early childhood education and care is a key enabler in the promotion of positive life-long outcomes (Bassok et al., 2016) and, therefore, early childhood education and care is already contributing to children's future. However, how can we use it to promote hope for the future? One way is that the early childhood education and care curriculum should adapt to the changing world and hence so should teaching. This means that in preparation for

the future, educational practices should be less focused on transferring knowledge, and more on the ability of children being able to learn themselves (Doran & Lewis, 2019). Early childhood teachers play a role in inspiring hope in children's futures, and they need to support children in becoming "original thinkers," providing them with stimulating learning which sparks their imagination, fostering discovery-based thinking, and helping them to synthesise information conceptually (Cahill, 2017, p.11). To achieve all of these learning goals will require teachers to think outside of the box and get creative in their own pedagogy.

A commended practice familiar in early education is co-constructed learning, where the teacher and the child learn together. When early childhood teachers apply this practice as part of their everyday interactions with children, they are able to share the many imaginations of the future with children. This type of co-constructed collaborative discussion can help prepare children for the uncertainties of their future as well as inspiring them to strive towards their dreams.

Early childhood leaders have an impactful role to play in inspiring hope for the future, and in their work with early childhood teachers. It is important that teachers are supported in their emerging mindset of what the future could hold for the littlest learners. Teachers who are supported by leaders as well as peers are more likely to be able to adapt to ongoing changes in education that require hopeful thinking for the future. For some early childhood teachers, moving from traditional methods of teaching to more contemporary, creative methods might present a challenge. Perhaps a way forward is for them to aim for a balance between the old and the new, the now and the future. Leaders

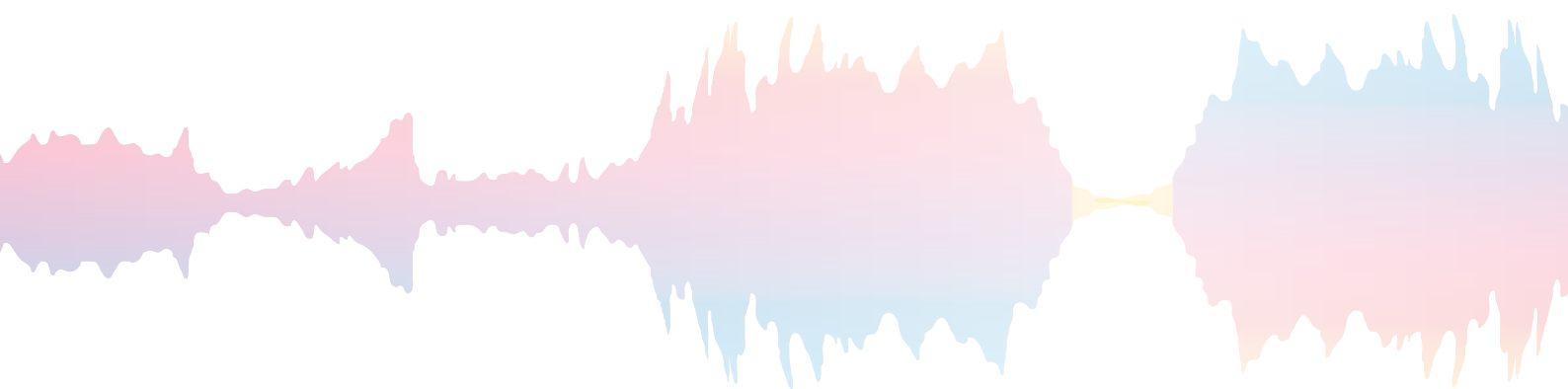


can provide teachers with mentorship, learning opportunities, and various forms of support to help them achieve a balance and to foster a future mindset. While doing so may not be an easy task, it is an essential one. It involves more than telling teachers to start thinking about the future. Inspiring a teacher to hope for the future, inspires their teaching practices and, in turn, will inspire children to hope for their future too.

A report produced by the World Economic Forum (2017) revealed “65% of the children who entered primary school in 2017 will have jobs that do not yet exist and for which their education will fail to prepare them” (p. 1). So, what are we doing about it? How are we preparing children to start thinking creatively and innovatively about their future? I believe a way forward is for early childhood teachers to step outside of their comfort zone, challenge their perceptions of traditional education, and adopt a creative forward-thinking approach. If early childhood teachers are provided with the guidance and support needed to cast their minds to what children will need for the future, their future, then children will also be inspired to think creatively and hope for the many things their future holds.

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Australian Council for  
Educational Leaders

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