Volume 22 - Number 2 - November 2022

Australian Journal of Middle Schooling

Start Reading ›
(click here)

Australian Journal of Middle Years of Schooling

adolescent success

Editorial

Discussing the November edition.

What inspires you to be a middle years' teacher?

We're inviting readers to share your reflections on this question in our next edition of the Australian Journal of Middle Schooling. As a new editorial team, we thought we'd get the ball rolling by attempting to answer this question for ourselves. Why did we choose to specialise in middle years' education? What is it about the formative years, the messy, wonderful, roller coaster ride of adolescence that, even now, several years into our own teaching careers, fills us with hope? Broadly, we can narrow it down to three things:

1 ***The middle years offer a window of opportunity.***

These are the years of rapid physical, emotional and cognitive development, which means that the needs of adolescents are constantly evolving. What they respond to one day may not work the next. Faced with the challenge of teaching a sometimes-inflexible curriculum to young people whose needs and interests fluctuate on an almost daily basis, the middle years teacher is the bridge between the two. There is an opportunity here—the foundational years are a springboard to lifelong learning.

2 ***Teenagers keep us feeling young.***

Middle years' learners are characterised by growth spurts, burgeoning independence, the power of the peer group, and rapid brain development. In short, they are growing up. They are starting to ask big questions: Who am I and where do I fit in? They are learning to shape their personal identity, shift their moral compass, and stand on their own two feet. And although they may not admit it, they look to their teachers to guide them. Every moment in a middle years' classroom is a teaching opportunity.

3 ***Young people are filled with hope for the future.***

Adolescents are hungry to find their place in the world and leave their mark on it. They often become outspoken in the face of injustice and are keen to initiate change. Their energy is underpinned by the firm belief that they can make a difference. Whilst their teachers have to work hard to keep up sometimes, it is impossible not to be carried along by their contagious optimism.

We can't wait to read your stories about being a middle years' teacher, and what you believe makes this phase of education so important.

In this edition of the *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling*, we're excited to bring readers a broad range of interesting topics. In our non-refereed articles section, Tamarin Turner talks about how to help students overcome nerves when speaking in public, in her article *Just CHILL*. In our Focus on Schools, we spotlight the work of Endeavour College in creating powerful collaborative approaches to learning by creating *Teams with Superpowers*, and Cameron Paterson, Director of Learning at Wesley College points out the importance of 'reprioritising the work of teachers so that their focus is on actual teaching', in his opinion piece, *Who's Going to Teach the Kids?* Debra Evans, President of Adolescent Success provides an overview of the 2022 International Conference held on the Gold Coast, Humans Matter, and we are also advertising two fantastic study tours (Brisbane and Darwin) in 2023.

We hope you'll find the journal full of articles and information that is relevant for you- middle school educators. Thanks to those of you who have already submitted content for the May 2023 edition. If you haven't, we encourage you to put pen to paper and let us know about the amazing work that is going on in schools. Finally, a special thank you to Dr. Tony Dowden for working as a guest editor on this edition. We will look forward to working with Tony when he joins the editing team in 2023.

Sue and Rebecca
Journal Editors
Adolescent Success

Contact:

Adolescent Success - PO Box 140, Buderim QLD 4556 Australia
Ph: +61 452 475 184
Journal@adolescentsuccess.org.au

Acknowledgement of Images

Endeavour College,
Gianni Visentin, Grace Crow
Hillcrest Christian College
Pembroke School
San Sisto College

CONTENTS

President's Report 2021-2022

Debra Evans – President of Adolescent Success

Since our last AGM, our strategic focus has been twofold, with the key priorities being to (1) enhance the experience for our members and (2) improve and increase communication opportunities.

Our ENewsletter is now a monthly publication and engagement with this has been excellent. Our journal continues to be important, with research and practitioner reports and articles being integral to this. Our website is constantly being revised, and now provides detail about our new products and services, as well as our ongoing events and activities.

One of those services, The Adolescent Success Middle Years Schools of Excellence was launched at the beginning of 2022. It is an endorsement program for schools, aligned to our Position Paper, which acknowledges member schools that have well established middle years' practices, programs, and strategies which are ongoing. Following detailed applications, this year we have endorsed six schools at this status,

L to R: Darren Rackermann, Debra Evans, Professor Donna Pendergast and Angela White at the 2022 International Conference, Humans Matter.

and we congratulate them and look forward to their continued engagement. Congratulations to Burgmann Anglican School (ACT), Redlands College (Qld), Kristin School (Auckland), St Margaret's College (Christchurch), Cornerstone College (SA), and St Francis Catholic College (NSW).

Our Diagnostic and School Improvement Tool was also developed and is now available for member schools who wish to gauge the effectiveness of their middle years' practices, recognise areas of strength and target areas for improvement. Upon completion of the audit, the tool enables school teams to acknowledge key areas requiring action; create an action plan; and review and reflect upon progress of that action.

A key focus of our communication strategy has been to expand our reach on social media, with a particular focus on using LinkedIn. Our reach has expanded to 788 followers and 525 connections. We continue to interact through Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

Our second priority, which is an ongoing focus, continues to be around managing our financial position and ensuring that our association is a continuing and strong entity.

Our conference is key to this, and thanks to the expertise of the Executive Officer, and our Executive and Management Committee, we hosted our 2022 Conference at Hillcrest College on the Gold Coast this year, rather than a convention centre. For us, we see this move as having multiple benefits. Firstly, it can showcase one of our member schools. It also brings educators together in an environment that is open and inviting and achieves significant reduction in expenses. We sincerely thank the Hillcrest College Leadership Team for working with us to bring our international conference – Humans Matter - to fruition for 2022. The feedback we received following the success of this conference indicated that we should make this an annual event moving forward. As such, we have made the decision to host another conference in 2023. The launch of conference theme and naming of the host school will occur in the ensuing weeks once all expressions of interest are considered.

With a specific focus on teacher wellbeing and responding to the needs of teachers during these last years of COVID, lockdowns and disruption, we engaged Daniela Falecki as a keynote speaker at both our online conference in August of 2021, and as a face-to-face keynote this year. We will continue to provide opportunities and activities relevant to teacher wellbeing moving forward.

Some important connections and reconnections for our association have occurred during this past year. We continue our highly valued partnership with Furnware and encourage our members to consider them when purchasing furniture and redesigning their own middle years learning environments.

We welcomed CYC Burleigh back as valued partners in 2022 and we thank them sincerely for their ongoing support. The outdoor education programs they provide

are challenging and relevant to adolescents. They can also be tailored to meet the specific needs of schools and students involved. Our aim is to support them in the development a program for 2023.

We have also, through our Executive Officer – Angela White, reconnected with the Northern Territory Department of Education, Independent Schools NT, and Catholic Education NT: working closely with them in the development of our Darwin Study Tour scheduled for May 2023.

We have connected with Murdoch University and the Childhood to Adolescence Transition Study and will be working more closely with Dr Lisa Mundy and her team in 2023.

We have established a connection with the University of Queensland and the Learning Lab and are looking forward to being able to share with our members the work they are doing in the coming months. We thank Dr Stephanie Macmahon and Dr Timothy Smith.

We continue to maintain our connection with Griffith University who were Silver Sponsors at our conference this year, and we thank Professor Donna Pendergast and Associate Professor Katherine Main for their continued expertise and their support of our association.

Our calendar for the remainder of the year and 2023 is in the pipeline, with several key events already available for registration. Three study tours within Australia are scheduled, those being: Brisbane – 23rd-24th March; Darwin – 16th – 19th May; and Melbourne – dates to be confirmed.

Being part of the Adolescent Success Management Committee is on a purely volunteer basis, and takes much time, dedication, and commitment. I express my sincere gratitude for that expertise and ongoing support.

Management Committee Resignations:

We have had some resignations from our Management Committee this year. We farewelled Dr. Emily Ross earlier in the year (Sunshine Coast University). Emily had held positions on the committee at various times throughout the years, with her most recent positions being Treasurer, then Journal Editor. We thank Emily for her expertise and her long commitment and service to the association and wish her all the best moving forward.

Our Treasurer, Darren Rackermann (Hillcrest College) has stepped down from the committee and we sincerely thank him for his contributions and management of our finances for this past year, and for his tireless work and support of our 2022 conference as host school.

Due to work commitments, Anne Coffey, our WA representative has decided to step down. Anne has been on the committee for many years, and we know will continue to support Adolescent Success.

Our current Social Media Manager, Rachel Koulyras-Quinn is stepping down from this role, but remaining on our committee as a New South Wales General Member. We thank Rachel for her work in this area, and are pleased that she continues to be a valued part of our team.

We also thank Timothy Hadfield (General Member) from Riverside Christian College for his time on the committee.

Management committee appointments:

We welcomed our new Journal Editor Dr. Rebecca Seward-Linger, who is also our Tasmanian Representative. Assisting her with the journal, we also welcomed, as a Management Committee supporter, Sue Webb. We know that the journal is in very capable hands.

Gerard Alford, who has been a supporter of Adolescent Success and MYSA for many years is new to our Management Committee and is taking on the position of Treasurer. He is a long-time educator and now the Director of ICT Publications. We thank Gerard for taking on this important role.

We also welcome to our Management Committee, our new Western Australian representative – Paul Green – Head of Transition at All Saints College; our Victorian representative – Chris Ryan - Head of Middle School at Beaconhills College; our new Social Media Manager – Jacqueline Simpson – Middle Years Curriculum (Years 5-8) Sydney Catholic Schools.

Finally, I thank all members for your ongoing engagement with Adolescent Success. We trust that you will continue to allow us to support you in meeting the needs of your young adolescents.

Debra Evans
President

Back together again at the Adolescent Success Conference in 2022 - Humans Matter

By Debra Evans – President of Adolescent Success

After a three-year hiatus, it was inspiring and exciting to engage in learning, thinking, networking and collaboration with so many dedicated middle years educators at Hillcrest Christian College on the Gold Coast at the Adolescent Success International Conference in August this year. The theme, Humans Matter, ensured an intentional focus on the development, wellbeing, education, and growth of young adolescents, as well as their teachers and caregivers. The three days provided delegates with a myriad of practical strategies, insights, and considerations to take away, opportunities for reflection upon current practices within their own contexts, and possibilities moving forward.

Day 1 Pre-Conference Events

As always, it began with guided school visits and pre-conference masterclasses which allowed delegates a fabulous platform to commence their learning. Congratulations to Hillcrest Christian College, Trinity Lutheran College, A B Paterson College, St Andrews Lutheran College, and All Saints Anglican College for hosting these important school visits. Feedback from delegates who attended these schools was glowing, all agreeing that witnessing aspects of middle schooling firsthand, enables clearer understanding and vision. Following these visits, the three masterclasses were well attended, allowing participants to focus on areas most relevant to them, individually or at a school level.

Dr Katherine Main's workshop, "Social and emotional skills: Academic enablers", led its participants to identify, discuss,

question and role play specific enablers of motivation, study skills, engagement, and social skills, and consider how to promote the development of these skills. As an introduction to Cognitive Acceleration, Dr Timothy Smith shared his expertise and provided participants with hands on activities and sample resources from Thinking Science and Thinking Maths as well as other Let's Think programs for the middle years. Lastly, in my own masterclass, "Of course we focus on middle years!", using the Adolescent Success Position Paper, participants were guided to begin their own hands on, collaborative process of discernment of the middle years' structures, processes, and practices they currently have in place, to consider strengths, and identify weaknesses and gaps moving forward.

All of these pre-conference events set the scene for a highly successful professional learning experience.

Day 2 Openings, Keynotes and Research Round Table

Donna Pendergast's opening presentation "Now more than ever. Middle years education in Australia" was pertinent and significant. She presented a wide range of both global and national research that must certainly shape the way we work with our young adolescents moving forward. One particular focus was on the global learning losses of young people, where she presented some sobering statistics: 59 weeks of partial or full school closure; 8.2 months average learning delay; and 1.8 trillion years of in-class learning lost. With a focus on the future, she added that when students were asked "How does learning remotely compare to learning in the classroom?" 77% believed that it was worse!

Madonna King and Rebecca Sparrow chat about testing and performance in schools.

Donna further explained that, "There is no precedent for global learning delays at this scale...there remains a need for mental health programs designed to address the continuing student and staff wellbeing and mental health issues now commonly referred to as the shadow pandemic ...The experience of innovative disruption and the potential to shape the future is here, now" (Pendergast, 2022).

Whilst these figures and statistics may appear alarming, Donna challenged us to consider how we can approach the future by tackling this innovative disruption head on suggesting that we could:

Do the same things a bit better or; do new things, and, going further, make things that make the old things obsolete.

Dr Peter Ellerton's Opening Keynote outlined how "Teaching for Thinking" is integral to successful student learning and to improving how our young people will be able to engage with the world around them. He expertly set the scene to provoke our own thinking about how we work with our students in the classroom.

Peter posed three key questions that should be considered by all of us:

- How do you know students are thinking in your classroom?
- How do you plan for thinking to occur?
- How do you give students feedback on the quality of their thinking?

He explored with (and for) us "cognitive relationships" and introduced the Cognitive Web Model which focuses on seven key cognitions, that highlight four key cognitions, which he calls "The Golden Tetrad".

Ewan McIntosh joined us via ZOOM from Glasgow. He expertly engaged with the audience, and as the sun was rising in Glasgow, he stated, "We are all under the one sun", highlighting the fact that

globally, we are all in it together, and are working to do the very best not just for our young adolescents, but importantly for our teachers too.

His global program, "Leading from the Middle" has a focus on working with Middle Leaders in schools, who have the power to make significant impact. He specifically focused on that impact, and provided us with many take-aways, one being "Six things that GREAT middle leaders do".

He challenged us to consider how they sit with you as a middle leader, or as a leader in a school, how might you consider these moving forward?

- **Clear the Decks** - Highly effective individuals that make it happen.
- **Know what Matters** - they've worked out their vision, their team's vision and the school's; they know the challenging discussions they're prepared to have.
- **Build relationships** - Less Team building, more relationships, less technical superiority, more trust and credibility.
- **Know Strategy** - They know what everyone else is aiming for and their team's role in it.
- **Tell Impact Stories** - Persuading, cajoling, inspiring and celebrating achievements that pack a punch.
- **Develop Prototyping Culture** - Ready, fire, aim; no time; few resources; try as many ideas as possible before doing.

Research Round Table

Research in the middle years is an area of importance. Facilitated by Associate Professor Katherine Main, the Conference Research Round Table brought together five academics and PhD students to share and discuss their specific and diverse areas of research relating to young adolescents and their learning (see Table 1). Comprised of two sessions, the purpose of the Roundtable was for researchers to share ideas and ask questions, seek input, and/or answer questions from others. The sessions were informal, collaborative, and supportive, providing an excellent forum to build upon the work that is being undertaken. We look forward to publishing some of this research in the future.

Table 1 Research Round Table Participants and Areas of Research

Researcher	Title of Research
Laura Teresa Dascoli	Critical Educational Transitions for Students Twice Exceptional
Tracee Nix	Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) and Sense of Belonging at School
Jason Hassard	Establishing a Sense of Belonging at school [SOBAS] during Primary – High School transition
Dr Marian Shakhovskoy	Enhancing parent engagement in secondary school: An investigation of agency, dialogic learning, and intersubjectivity using Bronfenbrenner and Bakhtin frameworks
Dr Louise Puslednik and Professor Patrick Brennan	Authentic research mentor programs transform secondary students 21st century learning.

Day 3 Keynotes and Closings

On Saturday, Associate Professor Jenny Poskitt also joined us via zoom from New Zealand, presenting her recent research – "Diving, Surviving or Thriving". She highlighted how students in one New Zealand School had predominantly "dived, thrived or survived" during the pandemic. Jenny's paper outlining this research was published in our May 2022 journal.

Daniela Falecki's final "face-to-face" keynote was timely, engaging, funny, fun, and inspiring. She most definitely reached all delegates, providing insights, knowledge, laughter and strategies that teachers could take away to ensure that their own wellbeing was at the forefront for them moving forward. Daniela also outlined how, as leaders we should and can be more cognisant and focused on "really" supporting teacher wellbeing in our schools.

As we know a strategic approach is needed, and Daniela's approach to a strategic teacher wellbeing plan is as follows:

1. Positive psychology
2. Social and emotional competence
3. Mental toughness
4. Coaching psychology

The conference wrapped up with an informal conversation with Madonna King and Rebecca Sparrow around the focus on "Testing and Performance" in so many of our secondary schools, particularly during the senior years. Questions around how we as middle years' educators could be the catalyst for change in this area, and the challenges posed by this came to my mind. The impact

that high stakes testing is (or isn't) having on approaches in the middle years most certainly requires further investigation and consideration.

Concurrent Sessions

Whilst the keynotes and invited speakers brought us all together around key issues and themes, the high calibre of the concurrent sessions presented during the two days provided delegates opportunities to focus on their own needs and areas of interest. These sessions and workshops were by far the most popular part of our conference, bringing grassroots practice to the forefront of the conference. With practitioners from all states in Australia and New Zealand, the sessions covered themes and topics relating to all facets of the development, education, and wellbeing of young adolescents and afforded new connections, inspired new ideas, were affirmational or challenging, but in all cases they were catalysts for much conversation and collaboration between the delegates in attendance. Presentations and workshops included teacher research, pastoral programs relating to wellbeing in the middle years, best practice curriculum approaches for tweens and teens, philosophy and thinking skills programs, the importance of student voice, peer to peer feedback for young adolescents, positive teacher-student relationships, and pedagogies, as well as several student presentations.

But a conference is comprised of more than keynotes, invited speakers and concurrent workshops and papers; time to gather, mingle, network and chat over coffee and cake, and during a longer lunch (than most teachers ever get at school) enhanced this conference experience. Being back together, face-to-face, meant there was a 'buzz' in the air, and there were smiles and laughs as colleagues, both old and new gathered to share, compare, build new partnerships and alliances, and consider future possibilities, all with an intentional focus on the middle years of schooling.

Just CHILL: How to Overcome Nerves When Speaking in Public

Tamarin Turner MEPrac
BA(Psych) B.Bus(HRM) LTCL ATCL
Communication Specialist

Glossophobia is the fancy word for public speaking anxiety. It derives from the Greek word 'glōssa', meaning tongue, and 'phobos', meaning fear. The National Institute of Mental Health reports glossophobia, affects about 73% of the population. Anecdotally the fear of public speaking is the most common phobia ahead of heights, spiders and even death. In simple terms, public speaking anxiety is a social anxiety disorder. We humans fear negative evaluation by others. Evolution psychologists believe there are prehistoric roots to this fear. As our ancestors were vulnerable to extreme conditions, living in a tribe was a necessary survival skill. Ostracization from the group could lead to death. Speaking to an audience makes us vulnerable to the same kind of rejection.

So, what about middle schoolers? Not only is it a period of intense change and dips in self-esteem, but it is also the time that sensitivity to social evaluation increases. It is no surprise then that anxiety around speaking in front of others peaks in the middle school years.

As a communication specialist with a background in psychology, I have been working with young people to develop their voice and combat nerves for over twenty years. Theoretical insights, from both educational and psychological journals, paired with my work in the classroom, has led me to develop a simple concept that can be used to help students work through the anxiety around public speaking. These techniques can be used for more than fear around presenting. They can be used to encourage more engagement in question-and-answer sessions, ease test anxiety and promote general conversation in the classroom.

So, what is it? I hear you cry. When someone with glossophobia approaches me – I administer a straightforward treatment. I simply tell them to "CHILL". Yes, just "CHILL". CHILL is an acronym I developed to simplify and explain techniques we can use to combat nerves and overcome our fear of speaking in public:

C	Concentrate on the breath
H	Have a positive mindset
I	It's about the message
L	Lead with confidence
L	Lots of practice

Before we delve a little more into this idea it is important to understand why speech anxiety is so prevalent in the middle school years. Keşaplı and Çifci (2017) aptly classify speech anxiety as the anxiety that causes physical symptoms in the obligation of public speaking or avoiding speaking with other people. We all know that adolescence is a period of dramatic change that often sets the stage for losses in positive feelings of self-worth. Psychologists assert that the identity struggles and egocentrism of adolescence contributes to heightened emotions, and a greater emphasis on peer relations. This ignites our middle schoolers' concerns about their own social skills and others' sincerity. A study found that these changes are particularly difficult for young adolescents, who are often coping simultaneously with the onset of puberty and the transition to an unfamiliar and possibly stressful middle school setting (Seidman et al., 1994). Adolescence is also a period of increased stress sensitivity (Dahl, 2004; Sumter et al., 2010). Studies support the idea that biological stress sensitivity increases during adolescence, especially in response to a social-evaluative situation (Sumter et al., 2010). It is because of all these factors that the anxiety around speaking around others spikes in the middle school years.

Now back to our acronym. How can this help combat nerves and relieve this stress around speaking in public?

C – Concentrate on the breath

Speak to any actor, yogi, sportsperson or life coach and they will proport the importance of breathing for relaxation and effective performance. When facing a stressful situation our breathing tends to become shallow, restricting the amount of air we take in and triggering the sympathetic nerve system or our "flight or fight" response (Ma et. al., 2017). If we can learn to harness our breath and practise deep breathing, we can calm this nervous system, thus reducing stress. Deep breathing or its technical term, intercostal diaphragmatic breathing, is a technique that can be learned and practised. Diaphragmatic breathing has also been found to improve attention span and emotional regulation (Goldin & Gross, 2010), which we can all agree would be useful for adolescents in any setting. A great way to allow students to find deep breathing is floor breathing. Finding a spot on the floor they lie with their feet flat on the ground and knees up. The teacher instructs the students to try and relax different muscles of their body, moving from the toes to the head. Students place hands on the abdomen and try to send their breath deep into the stomach, they should be able to feel the stomach rise as they breath in, and the fall as they breath out. If space is an issue, try the above standing up or for something a little more fun try "smell for breath". Imagine you are smelling something you really like - a favourite meal or scent. Students take a moment to imagine it is in front of them and inhale with one long, deep breath, encouraging diaphragmatic breathing. Breath counting (breathing in and out for the same number of counts) is also a handy tool, particularly before a test, class presentation period or even after lunchtime to settle the class. Anecdotally the "4-7-8 Breath" is a champion for relaxation; simply breath in for four, hold for seven and breath out for eight. If a teacher isn't comfortable leading these exercises many free apps exist such as "Breath Ball", "iBreathe" and "Breathe3Relax" to name a few. If we can start to harness our breathing to calm our nervous system, we can train our body to relax and alleviate some of the anxiety we feel when presenting.

H– Have a positive mindset

'Negativity bias' is the tendency for humans to pay attention to negative rather than positive information or the propensity to attend to and learn from negative information more than positive information (Vaish et al., 2013). It is thought to be another hand-me-down from our ancestors. Back then, alertness to danger, was a matter of life and death. Negative emotions rouse the amygdala, or, as psychologist Rick Hansen calls, "the alarm bell of your brain." The amygdala uses about two-thirds of its neurons to look for bad news (Jarwoski, 2010). Once the alarm sounds negative experiences are quickly stored in memory. For teenagers, negativity bias can have a huge effect on their self-esteem. Their thoughts surrounding public speaking events are usually not rational and tend to focus on and exaggerate the possible negative outcomes. Examples of typical thoughts include, 'Everyone will think I'm stupid', 'I'll forget what I'm going to say' and 'No one will like my talk and then no one will want to hang out with me'.

The first step to combat this

negativity bias with our students is to help them understand the concept and impact of negativity bias. The next step is giving the tools to counteract it. Reframing or cognitive restructuring can be used. Have the students write down on a piece of paper a statement that comes to mind when they think about speaking in public, generally these will be negative. Gather the responses and place in a hat; this alleviates any embarrassment and

Student: *"I will turn red!"*

Teacher: "*You might turn a different shade due to a physiological response but that won't stop you from doing a great job."*

Student: *"My speech will be bad, and everyone will hate me."*

Teacher: *"Even if a speech is bad, will that really make everyone hate you? People care about your actions, not a few words in a school assignment."*

also normalises the fact that the majority of people have a negative mindset when it comes to speaking in public. Then, one by one read out the responses and have students formulate a statement to refute it. For example:

As we know, a strengths-based approach is useful for all activities in the classroom. It is important to celebrate students' successes and encourage them to acknowledge their strengths creating meaningful positive self-talk that they can apply in all aspects of their life.

I – It's about the message

Taking the 'human' out of the equation can also combat anxiety around speaking. That is, encouraging students to think about a speaking task as a 'job' they need to complete or in other words focusing on the message not the medium. A simple activity that I have found effective is to have students state (before they speak or present) what their purpose is. For example: to convince people to care for the environment or to inform people about an endangered species. When we focus on taking ourselves out of the situation, the task and execution of it becomes more rational and less emotional.

L – Lead with confidence

Much like training our body to relax through breath, we can train our body to appear and feel more confident. In terms of speech anxiety, it is important to help students understand how important it is to lead with confidence. First introduced by Amy Cuddy (Cuddy et al., 2012), the concept of power posing can be used to encourage elevations in self-esteem. Before a presentation, students adopt a power pose i.e., standing with strong body language, feet apart, shoulders square and even raising hands in the air then holding this pose for an extended period of time. If students aren't quite ready to do this in public, an exercise to encourage students to begin a speech with more confidence is a simple five-point formula; Pause, Breathe, Eye Contact, Smile, Speak. I often get the students to use their hand as a reminder, checking off each step with their fingers. Beginning a speech with this approach creates self-confidence and confidence for the audience.

L – Lots of practice

Normalising speaking in class and with others is important to reduce anxiety around public speaking. It is important that speaking aloud is not limited to a presentation once a year. Having students speak aloud each day is important. One technique is to have students stand to answer questions for a lesson each day as it is very different to answering a question while standing than in your chair. Randomly selected students to speak or assigning students a number and pulling a number out of the hat for question time encourages greater participation. Impromptu speaking is also a great skill to practise speaking and sharing of stories and ideas. Of course, building trust and rapport with your students is very important before attempting some of these activities.

It is common for most adults and children to feel nervous about speaking in public at some time in their lives. We know that public speaking is enough to make anyone's heart start to sound more like Eminem than Michael Bublé. For some, speaking in public may never become effortless (let's face it, even the most seasoned performer experiences nerves) but learning to harness and use our nervous energy will make the experience considerably less stressful and infinitely more rewarding. Glossophobia is a very real fear that stems back to our cavemen days, but it is not insurmountable. Training, practice and understanding the mindset that causes this fear is key. Hopefully the CHILL concept will give you tools that you can take back into the classroom to help your middle schoolers begin to find their voice. Cue the Michael Bublé track….

References

Croston, G. (2012). The Thing We Fear More Than Death: Why predators are responsible for our fear of public speaking. *Psychology Today*. www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/the-real-story-risk/201211/the-thing-we-fear-more-death

Cuddy, A, Wilmuth, C, & Carney, D. (2012) The Benefit of Power Posing Before a High-Stakes Social Evaluation. *Harvard Business School Working Paper, No. 13-027.*

Dahl, R.E. (2004). Adolescent brain development: a period of vulnerabilities and opportunities. Keynote address. *Annals of New York Academy of Sciences 1021*, 1-22.

Goldin, P.R., & Gross J.J. (2010). Effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) on emotion regulation in social anxiety disorder. *Emotion 10*, 83–91.

Jarwoski, M. (2020). The Negativity Bias: Why the Bad Stuff Sticks. *Psych.com.net. www.psycom.net/negativity-bias*

Kahlon, S., Lindner, P., & Nordgreen, T. (2019).Virtual reality exposure therapy for adolescents with fear of public speaking: a non-randomized feasibility study. *Child Adolescent Psychiatry Mental Health, 13* (47).

Ma, X., Yue, Z.Q., Gong, Z.Q., Zhang. H., Duan, N.Y., Shi, Y.T., Wei, G.X. and Li YF. (2017). The Effect of Diaphragmatic Breathing on Attention, Negative Affect and Stress in Healthy Adults. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8* (874), 1-12. https//doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00874

Moore, C. (2012). What is Negativity Bias and how can it be overcome? *Positive Psychology* https://positivepsychology.com/3-steps-negativity-bias/

Plaisted, H., Creswell, C., & Waite, P. (2022). Optimising exposure for adolescents with public speaking anxiety: Affect labelling or positive coping statements? *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 148*.

Seidman, E., Allen, L., Aber, J. L., Mitchell, C., & Feinman, J. (1994). The impact of school transitions in early adolescence on the self-system and perceived social context of poor urban youth. *Child Development, 65*(2), 507–522.

Sumter, S. R., Bokhorst, C. L., Miers, A. C., Van Pelt, J., & Westenberg, P. M. (2010). Age and puberty differences in stress responses during a public speaking task: Do adolescents grow more sensitive to social evaluation? *Psychoneuroendocrinology, 35*(10), 1510–1516.

Tekşan, K., Mutlu, H. H., & Çinpolat, E. (2019). The examination of the relationship between the speech anxiety and speaking skill attitudes of middle school students and the opinions of teachers on speech anxiety. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 15*(4), 1395-1412.

Vaish, A., Grossmann, T., & Woodward, A. (2008). Not all emotions are created equal: the negativity bias in social-emotional development. *Psychological Bulletin, 134*(3), 383-403.

Attracting High-ATAR Students to Teaching: Conversations, Statistics and Analysis

Dr. Rebecca Seward-Linger with Grace Crow and Gianni Visentin

Introduction

Despite being named the "life-blood of the education system" and the people who "have the greatest in-school impact on student learning" the current status of teachers in Australia is worryingly low (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022, p.3). A recent survey of 2444 primary and secondary teachers by Heffernan et al. (2022) found that only 41% of teachers intended to stay in the profession. They also found that between 40-50% of teachers are predicted to leave the profession within their first five years in the job (Heffernan et al., 2022). As teacher shortages continue to persist across the country, education departments at federal, state and territory levels are posing questions on how to raise the status of teaching, and how universities might attract high-achieving students to education. The 2022 Issues Paper on teacher workforce shortages highlighted the fact that many high-achieving senior secondary students tend to select more "prestigious" professions above teaching (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022, p.5). The paper also noted that practising teachers often felt undervalued and overworked, thus adding to negative perceptions of teaching as a career path.

In order to understand the current context of recruitment to undergraduate teaching degrees, this paper presents quantitative data from a survey of 20 Australian university websites (conducted in August-October 2022), which advertise ATAR entry requirements for teaching/education degrees. The paper also shares qualitative data from conversations with two high-achieving, high-ATAR and current university students who are studying to become teachers. Interview data from the students reveal how negative stigma is affecting the career choices of Year 12 students. The interviews also give insight into what might attract highly capable students to the teaching profession.

Background

The Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank or 'ATAR' as it is commonly known, is a number from 0.00 and 99.95 which indicates a student's position relative to all of the students in their year group per state (Universities Admission Centre, 2022). This ranking is then used by universities to offer placements to students commencing undergraduate degrees. According to the Universities Admission Centre of NSW and ACT (2022), the average ATAR usually sits around 70.00. Whilst universities often use other means of assessing candidates for admission to courses (such as interviews, auditions, or portfolios), the ATAR remains an important factor in determining which courses are offered to which students (Universities Admission Centre, 2022).

A report by the Grattan Institute (Goss & Sonnemann, 2019) found that only 3% of high achieving students choose teaching as a career path, while 19% choose science, 14% health sciences, and 9% engineering. They explain that demand from high-achieving students wanting to enter education degrees has declined steadily over the past 30 years as the low-status of teachers has become self-reinforcing (Goss & Sonnemann, 2019). Studies such as Boyd et al. (2008) show that teachers with strong academic backgrounds themselves can have positive effects on student learning and achievement. They also show more potential to narrow achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged learners (Boyd et al., 2008). Sahlberg (2015) explains that in Finland, a country celebrated for its educational outcomes, the selection process for entry into teaching degrees is stringent. Teachers are required to obtain master's degrees and they enjoy high levels of status as professionals within their communities (Sahlberg, 2015). This is in stark contrast to Australian teachers who are currently experiencing high levels of workplace stress and feelings of being unappreciated and disrespected (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022; Heffernan et al., 2021). As this paper will reveal, the entry requirements to teaching degrees in Australia also strikingly contrast those reported by Sahlberg (2015) in Finland.

Australia currently faces many simultaneous challenges within education. First is the challenge of raising teachers' status and perceptions of the profession. Doing so is expected to improve the work conditions of current teachers, as well as aid in attracting more candidates to the profession (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022). Secondly, the challenge of maintaining and improving teacher quality has been a contentious topic in politics and recent media. If Australia is to take lessons from the Finnish educational model, attracting high achievers to the profession may be an effective step in improving teacher quality. This paper will reveal some reasons why high-achieving students may choose teaching as a profession. It will also reveal how teaching could be rebranded as an intellectually challenging, creative, and constantly changing role, which may be attractive to highly capable students.

Methodology

Two types of data were collected to compile this paper. Firstly, a survey of 20 Australian university websites was conducted from August to October 2022. The survey recorded the advertised ATAR requirements of universities for undergraduate teaching degrees. It is important to note that the advertised ATAR requirements were inconsistent across institutions. Whilst some institutions recorded the minimum ATAR requirements (as ascertained by the previous year's entrants), other institutions advertised a 'guaranteed entry' score instead. Some universities that were surveyed did offer education degrees, however they did not advertise ATAR requirements and so were not included in the final data set.

The second data collection method involved surveys and semi-structured interviews with two high achieving and current university students. The students included: Gianni Visentin and Grace Crow who achieved ATARs of 92.95 and 99.65 respectively. Gianni is currently enrolled in the Master of Teaching degree at the University of Tasmania and hopes to commence his career in 2023 as a secondary science and mathematics teacher. Grace is currently studying a Bachelor of Secondary Education at Queensland's University of Technology. She hopes to become a secondary mathematics and English teacher upon graduation. Gianni and Grace participated in this project on a voluntary basis and gave permission to be named as contributors to this paper. They were provided with a selection of questions that they first responded to in written form, and then in semi-structured interviews. The interviews gave opportunities to clarify and elaborate on information. A member-checking process was employed to ensure that experiences, thoughts and opinions were captured accurately.

Interviews with Grace & Gianni

Topic 1 - Teacher Recruitment

Question: Why did you decide to study teaching and to become a teacher?

Grace: I don't think I can pinpoint exactly what inspired me to study teaching – instead I'd describe it as a calling I had always felt to the career path. I feel a vocational call to education because it is where I believe my full potential can be realised – my potential for intellect and academia, for adaptability, for hard work, for leadership, for empathy and to enact change. There are several factors, however, that I believe helped me make this decision:

- I have always had a healthy relationship with school – I have a thirst for knowledge, and I love learning. It's an environment that I want to be a part of.
- I have had numerous fantastic teachers both within and outside of school who I look up to and who I'd describe as vocational teachers – teachers who have been both incredibly intelligent and have had a passion for teaching.
- I grew up in a household in which learning and teaching has always been valued. My parents were my first teachers – in reading to me, in teaching me music, and in answering my constant questions about life.
- I have been teaching music for a few years now and even in such a short time I have learnt and improved so much in getting to know my learners and developing my teaching philosophy. I enjoy the challenging and ever-changing nature of teaching music and see it as another opportunity to learn about myself and others.
- I love sharing knowledge – I find it so rewarding when a student of mine has finally understood something, or even better, has shown intrinsic motivation and determination. It is when that happens that I feel like my gifts have been put to their best use.

University student - Grace Crow

Gianni: I chose teaching as a profession as I believed that I was able to use my knowledge that I have gained and pass it onto others. I was very fortunate during my high school studies that there were teachers who were willing to provide the skills I needed to achieve academically during that time. During my undergraduate studies, I was unsure of what direction I wanted to continue my career. Upon reflection, I thought back to my high school studies and the knowledge my teachers were able to provide me and I believed that I was able to provide knowledge to other students to help them with their own career paths.

I knew that teaching wasn't as high paid as other professions, but that wasn't what brought me into the teaching profession anyway. I want to use my skills and what I have learned to try to help people and engage students in their education.

Question: As high-achieving students, were you encouraged or discouraged to take on teaching as a career?

Gianni: No-one had ever prompted me to consider the teaching profession, even though I was often explaining things to other students in the class and in Year 12, my teacher would even let me explain things to the class on the whiteboard. Despite that, I was never told to give teaching a look in. I think that was very unfortunate, that I had to wait this long to consider it.

I think that parents and other stakeholders that students interact with instil in children that teaching isn't as prestigious as other courses. That could be for a myriad of reasons. It could be because of

pay scales, it could be due to the perceived lack of difficulty within the job. You could say that teachers are teaching the same thing every year - it must just get simpler as the years go on - when that definitely isn't the case.

It is not really about what the students perceive, it is more about the influences they get throughout their lives. They get conversations from teachers throughout their years who tell them things like "you will be good at engineering" or "you will be good at science".

Grace: Although I received many messages of support, one of the teachers at my school thoroughly encouraged me to expand my horizons and told me I was underselling myself by choosing education. I don't blame them because it was with the intention of wanting me to reach what they viewed as my 'full potential' – my intellectual potential. However, I believe that a person's true potential consists of a range of personal qualities; qualities that should not be relegated in comparison to intellect. I think the advice bothered me so much at the time because, admittedly, it reflected the implicit opinions of some people around me as well as my own subconscious telling me that I should be aiming for a more 'prestigious' degree. When you're in the ATAR system, it's all about being in competition with your peers because you are literally ranked against them. So, a competitive spirit is lit within you and you're constantly stuck in a mindset of wanting to be 'the best' or 'the smartest' student. Then when you receive your high ATAR, it becomes almost a label on your forehead – everyone knows you as the '99+ ATAR girl' and that gives you an immense feeling of satisfaction. A little

University student – Gianni Visentin

healthy competition is effective in motivating students to work hard, however, the issue is that the competitive mindset then translates into choosing a career path. If you get a high ATAR, then you have to get into the high-ATAR degree so that everyone still knows you got a high ATAR. The only difference is that the label on your forehead now becomes 'the girl who got into medicine' which is synonymous with 'the girl who got a 99+ ATAR'. Many high ATAR students don't want to go into teaching because the entrance ATAR is much lower than what they believe reflects their ability. And that competitive mindset is so ingrained in students, some teachers, and schools that it causes even the most passionate prospective teachers (like myself) to doubt their decision making.

Topic 2 - Perceptions of Teaching

Question: Do you think there is a negative stigma surrounding teaching? How are teaching degrees perceived? How is the profession perceived?

Gianni: I think that there definitely is a stigma present when it comes to students applying for education courses. Teaching can generally be seen by high-achieving students as a degree that doesn't involve the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills that you have, instead you are just passing it on. For example, in a degree such as engineering, you are applying what you have learned in your course and producing new goods and services. Whereas as a teacher, you aren't necessarily creating something

with the skills you have, you are passing them on to students who can use those skills in their future endeavours. Therefore, I think there is that stigma that people (who study education degrees) are throwing their potential away. It is quite a harsh thing to say, but I think there is that stigma.

When high-achieving students speak to their career advisors and people like that at schools, teaching isn't something they usually bring up. They usually funnel students elsewhere. They definitely funnelled me into the engineering and science bracket, and I don't ever remember having a discussion about teaching with the people who knew me best. I think if teaching was placed on a much higher pedestal, and it was held at an equal level to engineering, science, and medical courses that you typically see high-achieving students, then many more high achieving students would consider teaching.

Grace: I think there definitely is a stigma surrounding teaching being an easy degree and career path, and I think it mostly emanates from the entrance ATAR being quite low. It contributes to the notion that if someone with a lower ATAR – 'a true measure of their smartness' – can get into the course, then it must be easy. What I think they don't realise is that the entrance ATAR is made lower for two reasons; the teacher shortage, and the fact that there would be some students who would make fantastic Arts teachers, for example, that received a lower ATAR because their subject of achievement scales lower.

Secondly, I think this stigma emanates from a deep-rooted belief in 'those who can't do, teach'. As insulting as the saying is, I can understand where it comes from.

Not everyone has been as lucky as I am to have such a healthy relationship with school and with my teachers, and that can result in resentment and disrespect for the system, and those in the profession.

Quantitative Survey: Advertised ATAR Requirements for Teaching Degrees

Table 1 presents data on a survey of university ATAR entry requirements for undergraduate education/teaching degrees. 20 Australian university websites were surveyed to collect this data and over 30 course options were viewed. Data collection took place from August 2022 to early October 2022. The table presents the advertised ATAR requirements from the university websites surveyed. Degrees have been combined in the table where primary and secondary education degrees had the same entry requirements. It is important to note that some universities choose to advertise a minimum ATAR score selected for entry, whilst others advertise a 'guaranteed entry score'. It is also important to note that entry requirements, particularly ATAR rankings, change from year to year and course to course. Course intake is influenced by student demand, the cohort of Year 12 learners in any given year, and university budgets.

Table 1 *Advertised ATAR Requirements for Education/Teaching Degrees in Australia*

State	Institution	Degree Name	Advertised ATAR Requirement
ACT	Australian Catholic University	Bachelor of Education (Primary & Secondary)	63.00
ACT	University of Canberra	Bachelor of Education (Primary)	60.00
ACT	University of Canberra	Bachelor of Education (Secondary specialisations)	60.00
NSW	Charles Sturt University	Bachelor of Education (K-12)	65.00
NSW	University of Newcastle	Bachelor of Education (Primary)	65.00
NSW	University of New England	Bachelor of Education (K-12 Teaching)	77.1
NSW	University of Sydney	Bachelor of Education (Primary)	85.00
NSW	University of Sydney	Bachelor of Education (Secondary)	80.00
NT	Charles Darwin University	Bachelor of Education (Primary & Secondary	60.00
QLD	Griffith University	Bachelor of Education	70.00
QLD	James Cook University	Bachelor of Education (Primary)	70.00
QLD	Queensland University of Technology	Bachelor of Education (Primary)	72.00
QLD	University of Southern Queensland	Bachelor of Education (Primary or Secondary)	66.00
SA	Flinders University	Bachelor of Education (Primary & Secondary)	70.00
SA	University of South Australia	Bachelor of Primary Education (honours)	73.00
TAS	University of Tasmania	Bachelor of Education (Primary)	71.55
VIC	Deakin University	Bachelor of Education (Primary) & Bachelor of Physical Education	70.00
VIC	Monash University	Bachelor of Education (primary & secondary)	61.15
VIC	RMIT University	Bachelor of Education	70.00
VIC	Victoria University	Bachelor of Education (P-12)	72.30
WA	Edith Cowan University	Bachelor of Education (Primary & Secondary)	70.00
WA	Curtin University	Bachelor of Primary Education	70.00

The range between the lowest entry score given and the highest was a significant 25.00 points. This may have been due to some universities advertising guaranteed entry scores and some advertising minimum requirements. The highest advertised entry requirement came from the University of Sydney for the Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree, whereas the lower scores in the 60s, came from smaller cities and regional areas such as Charles Darwin University and the University of Newcastle. Higher entry scores for the University of Sydney may be attributed to higher levels of competition and student applications for city-based placements. The lower entry scores for regional universities may be a response to more pronounced challenges of staffing regional and remote schools. It may also reflect universities adopting more flexible entry methods and accepting greater diversity. The average advertised ATAR entry requirement from the survey was 69.14, which is just shy of the overall average ATAR for all Year 12 graduates which usually sits at 70.00 (Universities Admission Centre, 2022).

Interviews with Grace & Gianni

Topic 3 - Raising Teacher Status and Perceptions of Teachers' Work

Question: How have you found your teaching degree so far? Do you think teaching is a professionally challenging or rewarding career?

Gianni: My first placement in a middle school (Years 7 & 8) setting was an insightful and beneficial experience for me. It was my initiation into the teaching profession and allowed me to learn key skills of teaching STEM subjects to middle school students from more experienced teachers, as well as deal with behaviour management for the first time in a classroom setting. The methodology that my supervising teachers used in the classroom was backed by evidence-based practice, which was reassuring to me entering the profession.

I definitely do not think teaching is an easy career, based on my last placement. The level of understanding that you need regarding child development, behaviour management, and the content of what you teach as well, it is challenging. I think one of the hardest things, for people who have high competency in a given subject, is that not every student actually wants to learn what you are teaching them. For some students, learning in a classroom isn't naturally enjoyable and so it is difficult for people who are competent learners to understand why students learn in different ways and might not always "get it". Learning how to explain things and teach things in different ways that students find enjoyable, and will therefore want to pursue, that is one of the most difficult things within teaching and the teaching degree. The learning styles that I have developed myself and that work for me are not necessarily going to work for other students. As a beginning teacher, I know it will take time for me to know how different students learn and what difficulties students might have and how to engage those students.

I think teaching is intellectually stimulating. I will say that learning the content (of what I will teach) itself was easy because I had already covered more than that in my bachelor's degree but having done that means I can focus now on how I can teach this to students who may never have experienced this subject area in their lives. That is a completely different challenge.

Grace: Teaching as a degree is challenging in a way that I have not experienced before. In terms of intellectual concepts or ideas I have to wrap my head around, and the amount of content I am required to know, I would say that the subjects I studied in Year 12 challenged my brain a little more. However, studying teaching requires you to step outside of yourself and think about education in a way you haven't before; to challenge your preconceived notions about education, to think about what goes on behind the scenes in the classroom, and to learn how to understand others. These are things that can be very difficult to do – and it's easy to see that these challenges will grow even more as I enter the profession.

I haven't entered any professional practicum yet but through work experience and my part-time job, I have realised that I will probably face more challenges in the classroom than in the degree. An example of how I have been challenged in my experience as a piano teacher was when we were required to switch to online learning during the state-wide COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. With piano being such a tangible discipline, to teach online required a thorough revision of established music pedagogy and an accountability check on my own musical skills. In teaching online, I have had to come up with new ways to teach aural, sightreading and technical skills to students of diverse abilities, that do not rely on just 'showing' my students as I would have done in person. Now I permanently teach piano online and am constantly challenged with developing different approaches for different learners, and I've had to ensure that I have not become complacent in my own skills as a musician and teacher.

Question: What strategies could be used to attract more high achieving undergraduate students to teaching?

Grace: While we could have discussions about raising the ATAR, I don't think that would be entirely fruitful. I think more work needs to be done in senior high schooling in helping students to determine what their gifts and talents are and in what career these gifts and talents would shine. Within career discussions, teachers should focus less on ATAR and the academic potential a student has, and more on the potential a student has as a whole person. Teachers should encourage students to explore their options, but degrading language should never be used. I believe that this approach to career discussions would slowly but surely create a more positive

discourse surrounding teachers as well-rounded professionals, and subsequently raise the societal perception of teachers. This kind of approach to career discussions could be put in writing by the government. The government has already put in place monetary incentives [to attract teachers], and I think that's a necessary start – not only for the teachers who have been overworked but for levelling the salary with the skills, professionalism and time that teachers offer.

Gianni: I think that governments and other stakeholders who want to retain and bring in new teachers to the profession, they need to think about how people perceive teachers as a whole. Changes need to be made to reflect the changing presence of the teacher. Teachers have taken on so many different roles nowadays - the role of a counsellor, roles that a parent should take in some circumstances, and they are on the front line of what the students see for most of their day. I think these multifaceted roles need to be reflected in how teachers are perceived and how they are paid.

I think it is clear that the teaching profession is one which is on the lower end of pay scales in the middle career stage when compared to similar professions with the same years of training required (such as engineers), which is not very alluring to high achieving students. However, I do believe government bodies are moving in the right direction by providing subsidies to students in undergraduate education courses and providing faster movement upwards in salary depending on if post graduate studies have been completed. I believe that by raising the standards required for science and mathematics teachers (e.g., competency tests) in addition to increases in reimbursement for these teachers will attract more high achieving students to the profession.

Discussion

With only 3% of high-achieving students selecting teaching as a career pathway (Goss & Sonnemann, 2019), students like Grace and Gianni are rare. For these two university students, choosing a career path meant more than just chasing high salaries or following expected pathways for high ATAR students such as medicine, engineering or law. Instead, they felt called to teaching and the opportunities it offers to help others. Grace used the word "vocation" to describe the work of teachers. For her, studying education presents an opportunity to not only develop her intellectual self, but also to enhance her leadership skills, empathy and ability to bring about positive social change. For Gianni, teaching gives him the chance to share his knowledge and to help younger students who may not have found learning as easy as he did. These are admirable reasons for wanting to join the profession, and reasons that are likely shared amongst teachers who continue to teach across the country.

An interesting observation from both Gianni and Grace's stories, is that despite enjoying strong and positive relationships with their teachers in high school, neither student was encouraged by their teachers to join the profession. A survey by Heffernan et al. (2019) found that 53% of teachers would not recommend their own career to young people. Surveys to the public produced less alarming results with 30% of respondents from the public saying they would not recommend teaching as a career to young people (Heffernan et al., 2019). Reasons for not recommending teaching included concerns regarding low pay, high teacher workloads and low levels of teacher wellbeing (Heffernan et al., 2019). Overall, the attractiveness of teaching to students in general appears low, but for high-achieving students with arguably more options to select from, it is little wonder that the uptake of teaching degrees for this group is only 3% (Goss & Sonnemann, 2019).

As well as lacking encouragement from their high school teachers to join the teaching profession, both Grace and Gianni observed a negative stigma in relation to teaching degrees and their perceived level of difficulty. As high achieving students they were encouraged to look at more "prestigious" career pathways as teaching was considered "underselling" themselves or "throwing their potential away". Grace believed that the low ATAR requirements for teaching is one of the reasons why negative perceptions of teaching exist. Gianni, too, felt that if teaching were placed on "a much higher pedestal", then more high-achieving students would consider it. The data collected in Table 1 for this paper, shows that the average advertised ATAR requirement for teaching degrees was 69.10. This is very close to the average ATAR for the country which usually sits around 70.00 (Universities Admission Centre, 2022). For several universities, the entrance score was much less than 70.00 making education degrees amongst the lowest ranking degrees on offer.

Despite the negative stigma surrounding teaching and perceptions of it being a simplistic

career option, both Grace and Gianni felt that teaching was intellectually stimulating. For Gianni, whilst understanding the content of what it was he had to teach was evidently "easy", the pedagogy and differentiation involved in delivering content proved challenging. For Grace, teaching presented a career that would allow her to use many facets of her own personality, not just her academic excellence. Gianni and Grace both identified the importance of interpersonal elements within teaching and acknowledged the complexities and challenges of these in teachers' work. By taking a more holistic view of teachers' work, Gianni and Grace were able to articulate some of the rewarding challenges of the profession.

Perhaps rightly so, Gianni and Grace identified that raising the status of teachers and attracting more high-achieving students to teaching needs a multifaceted approach. Whilst salaries and workloads have already been identified as barriers to encouraging people to teaching (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022), Gianni and Grace were also able to identify that teachers themselves can inhibit recruitment by not painting their own careers in a positive light and not encouraging Year 12 students to education.

Conclusion

Whilst raising ATAR requirements, reducing teachers' workloads, and raising teachers' pay have all been cited as ways of raising the status of the profession, perhaps another solution lies a little closer to home. Teachers themselves could consider how they view their own work and question whether their possibly negative perceptions are holding back the next generation of educators. As Grace and Gianni explained, teachers' work is complex and varied. It requires talented people with intellectual capacity, but also strong emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, organisational skills, creativity, flexibility, and commitment. As Grace advises, we need to promote teaching as a "vocation" and not just a job. And whilst it may be difficult to be motivated to inspire others when teacher working conditions and pay are less competitive than they should be, hopefully teachers will believe in the power of their agency and know that they can shape the future of their profession. Let us join together to inspire more future teachers like Grace and Gianni.

References

Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). *Issues paper: Teacher workforce shortages.* Department of Education.

Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Rockoff, J., & Wyckoff, J. (2008). *The narrowing gap in New York City teacher qualifications and its implications for student achievement in high-poverty schools.* National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved October 2, 2022, from www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w14021/w14021.pdf

Goss, P., & Sonnemann, J. (2019, August 2019). *Attracting high achievers to teaching.* Grattan Institute. Retrieved September 16, 2022, from grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/921-Attracting-high-achievers-to-teaching.pdf

Heffernan, A., Bright, D., Kim, M., Longmuir, F., & Magyar, B. (2022). 'I cannot sustain the workload and the emotional toll': Reasons behind Australian teachers' intentions to leave the profession. *Australian Journal of Education, 66*(2), 196-209.

Heffernan, A., Bright, D., Longmuir, F., & Magyar, B. (2021). *Perceptions of Australian schooling: What matters in 2021.* Monash University. Retrieved October 2, 2022, from www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2705748/perception-of-australian-schooling-2021.pdf

Heffernan, A., Longmuir, F., Bright, D., & Kim, M. (2019). *Perceptions of teachers and teaching in Australia.* Monash University. www.monash.edu/thank-your-teacher/docs/Perceptions-of-Teachers-and-Teaching-in-Australia-report-Nov-2019.pdf

Sahlberg, P. (2015). *Finnish Lessons 2.0.* Teachers College Press.

Universities Admission Centre. (2022). ATAR - *Australian Tertiary Admission Rank.* UAC. Retrieved September 16, 2022, from www.uac.edu.au/future-applicants/atar

Focus on Schools – Endeavour College's Teams with Superpowers

Kirsty Hansen,
Middle Years Director of Learning, Endeavour College

Endeavour College is a vibrant Christian learning community located in Adelaide, South Australia. Our school caters for approximately 750 students from Years 7-12. From 2019-2021, our school engaged in the Agency Lab project in partnership with the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia. During the project, we established our 'Vision for Learners' learning framework derived from the Personal and Social Capabilities within the Australian Curriculum. There are three principles to our framework – independence, interdependence, and collective action.

Our young people will enter a workforce where they will form and disperse teams regularly. On top of recognising the most effective ways to work with others when problem-solving, students will need to know how to identify and augment other people's behaviour to make the most of their skill set. The leadership and collaborative styles of team members influence cooperation, information sharing, and team performance. Design thinking is the key to preparing our middle years students to lead in effective ways. Effective teamwork and leadership are needed to solve ambiguous issues such as climate change, global shortages, and economic inequality. Dynamic teams need more than just base knowledge and task descriptions to address problems at hand. To solve the problems of the future, teams need to have a strong leader, a relationship builder, a disruptive thinker as well as a process and rule follower.

Through our 'Vision for Learners' framework, Endeavour College is implementing several initiatives to help develop students' personal and social capabilities including their teamwork and leadership skills. The

three principles of independence, interdependence and collective action are used to map student learning and assessment. To date, mapping student learning and assessment using the attributes within the principles has led to growth and reflection regarding students' self and social awareness, relationship management, and shared goal setting.

At Year 8, we have started to design 'Project Based Learning' units and implement classroom strategies to intentionally create conditions for students to grow in their skills of interdependence, more specifically collaboration and leadership. It is our intention for the skills to be transferrable across learning areas to prepare students for the future world of work. Endeavour College developed the 'Teams with Superpowers' strategy which is designed to help students develop effective teamwork skills and learn more about themselves and how they contribute to groups. Putting students into groups based on teacher observation and random selection does not allow students to consider and reflect on their strengths and limitations as collaborators. It also stifles students' abilities to contribute to a team in the most effective and motivated way. The Teams with Superpowers strategy, however, gives contributors the chance to draw on their strengths and maximise efficiency of the group.

The Teams with Superpowers strategy was first implemented in 2021 at the start of a Project Based Learning unit, that followed a design thinking process. It is a visible learning task where students consider which compass-point they identify with most (at that point in time) and physically assemble themselves in the classroom at their compass point before completing a reflection on their choice and what it might mean for collaboration throughout the design phases. The compass-points represent the following contributor styles:

North	takes charge
East	the big picture thinker
South	the relationship builder
West	is details focussed

An ideal group is created when all four compass points are brought together. It makes for a very dynamic team where the different styles are naturally disposed to lead the different design thinking phases. For example: East is a big picture thinker who would naturally thrive during the ideation/brainstorming phase. South, who is relationships focussed, would be called upon to monitor the relational aspects of the group and to ensure people are feeling valued. North would enjoy leading the group or delivering the group's product, whilst West would ensure that the details of the group's work are ironed out. When this balance is achieved, and there is an understanding of each team member's collaborative strengths

and limitations, teamwork is effective. It is also much easier to manage relationships and resolve conflicts during projects. When the balance of compass-points is off, group dynamics are compromised. For example, two Norths together will either clash with each other or form an alliance to get the work done quickly and shut other team members out. While Wests are brilliant with details, a detail-focussed group might not lead to innovative solutions.

The following comments are from two Year 8 students who engaged in the Project Based Learning unit and used the Teams with Superpowers strategy:

"I'm a North and we just plunge into things without knowing the details, so we need others like West to help us understand what exactly to do."

Ollie, Year 8 Student

"As a West we love organising things so when we get too bossy, Norths can calm us down."

Shakira, Year 8 Student

As well as having opportunities to lean into their strengths and lead throughout the design thinking process, students completed a self-reflection checkpoint task to monitor and provide evidence for their growth in their interdependence attributes.

Images supplied by Endeavour College

The most powerful adjustment made this year was the transfer of 'superpower data' from one Project Based Learning unit to another. Last year, Project Based Learning teaching teams passed the data on to one another and managed the grouping process without student input. This year however, we asked Year 8 students to reassign themselves to a compass point based on their growth/reflection of the previous project. This led to an increase in motivation and energy within the student teams. Our next step as a college is to create a common language and process for students to use to resolve conflicts that may occur within teams. Our college values of love, hope, courage, and forgiveness will form the foundation for this development.

"I'm a North and we just plunge into things without knowing the details, so we need others like West to help us understand what exactly to do." ***Ollie***

Who is Going to Teach the Kids?

Cameron Paterson,
Director of Learning, Wesley College

Reprinted with permission.

> "A cold sweat shivered on my skin. This is it, I thought. This isn't teaching. I'm not a teacher anymore… There's something sinister happening to this profession that I loved. And it breaks my heart. We don't trust our teachers anymore."

In her book Teacher, Australian author Gabbie Stroud (Stroud, 2018) beautifully encapsulates what is happening by stealth to the teaching profession around the world. She continues, "Good teaching… comes from teachers who know their students, who build relationships, who meet learners at their point of need and who recognize that there's nothing standard about the journey of learning. We cannot forget the art of teaching – without it, schools become factories, students become products and teachers: nothing more than machinery."

There have been profound changes in the work and workload of teachers. School education is becoming a much more bureaucratized system, asking more of teachers and getting less in return (Dixon, 2020). The current workload is unsustainable and the pandemic is exacerbating teachers' feelings of being silenced. A lack of respect, staffing challenges, low pay, high workload, conflicting demands and now the pandemic, have conspired to generate a perfect storm. According to Clarke (2021), 30% of Australia's teachers are over 50. Education applications have plummeted by 20%. 48% of teachers are thinking of leaving the profession. Teacher workloads are 'massive' and 'unrealistic' (even though 87% of teachers still find teaching rewarding).

Schools now need to be run as if every teacher has one foot out the door (Caposey & Shelley, 2021). During remote learning, both teachers and students discovered a new sense of autonomy. Few lamented the loss of restrictive practices like early start times or only being able to eat or move when bells ring. Workers now have a sense of mobility they have never had before. In the United States, over 3 million people per month are walking away from their jobs and the same is occurring in Europe. These competitive labor market conditions and the 'war for talent' amplify the necessity for educational leaders to adopt innovative strategies to dynamically recruit and retain excellent teachers. We must rethink the entire way we staff and manage schools.

We should not be surprised if teachers are escaping from an education system that is milking them to serve a purpose that is not aligned with the reasons that they entered the profession to start with.

Perhaps we are talking less about 'burn-out' and more about 'moral injury' – when people see that the systems they are in are not designed to properly support the people they are meant to serve.

Reprioritizing the work of teachers so that their focus is on actual teaching is critical to the success of schools and this is a crucial conversation for education leaders. The less meaningful and frustrating elements of teaching must be actively cleaned off the plate by targeting anything that reduces workload.

- Cancel meetings if they can be done by email instead. Many schools have moved information dissemination to asynchronous bulletins and recordings. When digital summaries are shared with teachers, it makes face-to-face conversations more effective (and staff happier).

- Can the requirements of the marking policy be reduced while still meeting its aims? Kat Howard (2021) writes about how whole class feedback is now an established feature in some school feedback policies and is a way of approaching feedback with the time/value cost mantra in mind.

- Lighten teachers' lesson planning load by making sure teachers have shared, high-quality common instructional resources across subjects and/or year levels (Hunter et al., 2022). Natasha Mercer (2022) uses a shared Google drive of lessons and has brought in Edrolo and Atomi as resources for flipped learning or as a backup tool if students or teachers are on extended sick leave.

- Arrange for non-teaching staff to cover extra-curricular and yard-duty responsibilities.

- Trial innovative timetable models as mentioned by Baker (2022) . There are plenty of examples of systems that have less face-to-face teaching time and higher performance. In Finland, students' days start later and finish earlier (Colagrossi, 2018). They usually have 3-4 x 75-minute classes with 15-20 minute breaks to digest learning, use muscles, stretch legs, get fresh air and let out the "wiggles" (Colagrossi, 2018).

If you have leadership responsibility in 2022, it is hard to overstate the depth of the disruption we are facing. We are witnessing the end of the 'command and control' structures that have dominated management since the Industrial Revolution. Teachers should be treated like adult professionals who can manage their own lives and time. This system cannot come at a cost to students; but if we don't figure out how to do it, the cost may be the teaching profession as we know it. Fundamental transformation of the entire one-size-fits-all schooling model is needed to build a more potent and fulfilled profession – one in which educators are empowered as design thinkers. If we want people in classrooms teaching kids, let's press the pedal on creative possibilities, pull the reins back on the crushing bureaucracy, and trust and support teachers to be the outstanding professionals that they are.

References

Baker, J. (2022, February 8). *How St Luke's Catholic College dumped the traditional 9-3 day*. Sydney Morning Herald. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/new-opportunities-how-one-school-dumped-the-traditional-9-3-day-20220208-p59utd.html

Caposey, P., & Shelley, A. (2021, November 24). *How School Leaders Can Build Realistic Optimism This Year*. Edutopia. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from www.edutopia.org/article/how-school-leaders-can-build-realistic-optimism-year

Clarke, M. (2021, December 16). *Who is going to teach the kids?* NEiTA. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from www.neita.com/post/who-is-going-to-teach-the-kids

Colagrossi, M. (2018, September 10). *10 reasons why Finland's education system is the best in the world.* The World Economic Forum. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/10-reasons-why-finlands-education-system-is-the-best-in-the-world/

Dixon, J. (2020). *Gallop Inquiry Fact Sheet | NSW Teachers Federation*. NSW Teachers Federation |. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from www.nswtf.org.au/files/gallop_inquiry_fact_sheet.pdf

Howard, K. (2021, August 12). *Teaching | A note on marking and feedback*. Saysmiss. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from saysmiss.wordpress.com/2021/08/12/a-note-on-marking-and-feedback/

Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., & Joiner, R. (2022, January 30). *Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help*. Grattan Institute. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from https://grattan.edu.au/report/making-time-for-great-teaching-how-better-government-policy-can-help/

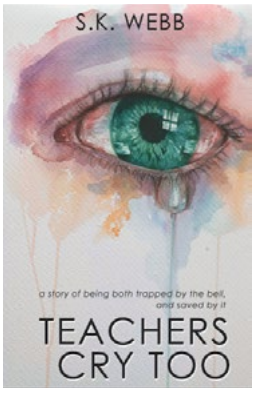
Mercer, N. (2022). *Natasha Mercer (@NatashaLMercer)*. Twitter. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from https://twitter.com/NatashaLMercer

Stroud, G. (2018). *Teacher.* Allen & Unwin.

Excerpt from "Teachers Cry Too"

By Sue Webb

Sue Webb is a high school English teacher in Queensland whose memoir, Teachers Cry Too was released in November. Her story shares the joys, the triumphs, the heartaches and the challenges of a thirty-year teaching career, during which she felt at times trapped by the bell, and at others, saved by it. Here, Sue shares an extract from the book in which she champions the benefits of reading-for-fun, which, she argues, is essential in nurturing a love of literature and learning. Sue has been a member of Adolescent Success since 2014, and has recently joined the editorial team at the Australian Journal of Middle Schooling.



Reprinted with permission

Reading for Fun: The Last Bastion of the English Classroom

When I enter into learning, real learning as opposed to simply giving kids something to do, I can get lost in it, much like I imagine a conductor can be carried away by an orchestral composition. Literature, like music, consists of different genres and lends itself to interpretation, which means it's never enough to simply teach the notes—the goal is to teach the rules and then show students how to break them. To let them play with language and develop an appreciation and love of the art itself so that it stirs something within them—something that whispers to their childhood and calls to them far beyond their school years.

This is why my junior English classes always start with reading—readers are born when stories meet a deep yearning of the human spirit. The students are used to the routine, choosing a book from the yet-to-be air-conditioned school library. On what was shaping up to be a particularly sticky afternoon, four girls cornered me in a little reading nook between Action and Adventure, and Science Fiction.

'Look what we found,' said a voice from the huddle, holding out a freshly date-stamped book, now valid for another fortnight. Leaning in, I asked, 'What am I looking at?'

'Alliteration!' she said triumphantly.

'And listen to this,' said her friend, reading dramatically, 'My heart is thumping like a drum. That's a simile.'

'The sun enters the room like an unwelcome guest,' read another.

'Check this out, "a burst of orange … that bled out like a sunset".'

Wow, we agreed. These are wonderful similes and fantastic images. I fist-pumped myself on the inside.

Back in the classroom, I watched as they were lured into different worlds. When students are fully engaged, you can feel it; I could almost hear the synapses connecting as I moved quietly among them. Some were immersed in futuristic worlds, others lauded heroic victories. Others wandered through romance or lamented an untimely demise they didn't see coming. Their tastes were wide and varied.

Suddenly, one of the boys sat straight up, gripped by something he'd just read, his eyes the size of small plates. He absorbed learning like a sponge, soaking up ideas, growing them until he found a

place to plant the seeds of his new knowledge. I knew it was only a matter of time before this kid grew something important for the world. He saw that I'd seen him. I put my finger to my lips and gestured, 'Shhh.' He knew the chance to tell me would come, and although his eyes shone, he didn't break the magical silence of the room.

When reading time is finished, I always ask, 'Who wants to tell us about their book?' Most of the hands in the room go up. In this class, there were still some who didn't enjoy reading, and I found myself hoping that I'd be able to give them this gift before the end of the year. I chose 'the sponge' before he imploded.

'Anh Do's uncle was laid in a coffin in the morgue, but he wasn't really dead!' He whispered this, the thought of being buried alive too terrifying to say out loud.

'O-M-G, that is like my worst nightmare!' someone said, and for a minute, they talked about what you would do if you were buried and not really dead. This idea was too awful to contemplate and led to further discussion about what if. One by one, they described their books—the suspense, the heartbreak, the narrow escapes, the human tragedies, and the triumphs of their adolescent heroes.

In the back corner of the classroom, a girl, a natural leader with the enviable combination of being both curious and clever, was hooked by a dystopian novel where the stories of people's lives were told in pictures tattooed on their skin. Used by a totalitarian regime to control social order, strangers read each other's ink, summing up one another in seconds.

The students were at an age when tattoos were noteworthy. Until recently, the teachers at our school had to cover their tattoos, but as the word 'diversity' gained traction, this requirement had softened, so the teachers' tattoos were a topic of interest. The class discussed what tattoos they would choose and why. Some of the more conservative kids were adamant they'd never get one, while others with older siblings thought they were 'cool'.

The idea of becoming walking illustrations of our choices, good and bad, was food for thought. Having tattoos as permanent public records of our lives led to a discussion about the value of our privacy, our personal freedom. I suggested this was a discussion the author wanted us to have, repeating my mantra that good literature always leaves us asking more questions.

'This is why certain regimes over the centuries have tried to restrict reading, to ban books,' I said. 'It's hard to control people who ask too many questions.'

'Is that why the Taliban shot Malala?' There it was from the middle of the room. Real-life connection.

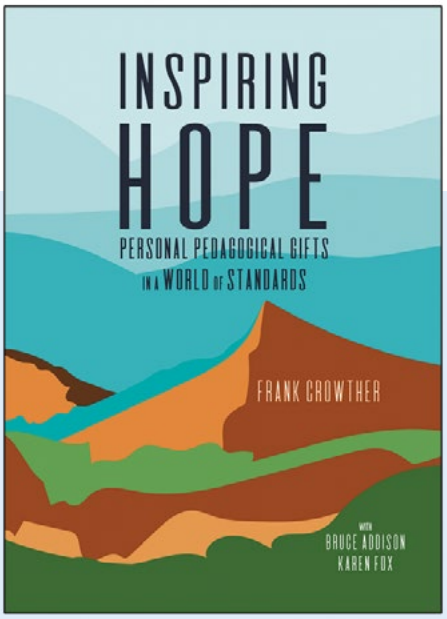
'Who shot who?' The classroom buzzed as the ones who knew filled in the ones who didn't, who looked to me in disbelief as if to say, Can this be true? When the buzz settled, the reader of the dystopian novel explained that when people died, their skin was removed and made into books, which became a library of human archives—a library of warnings. The thought of skinning people was a bit off-putting, so the discussion turned to another person's book. They put 'dibs' on the good ones and discussed them in much the same way they talked about the latest Netflix series.

Sometimes they said, 'Miss, you have to read this book, you would love it!' Sometimes they brought in books their parents had read when they were teenagers. To them, they were 'just reading'. But I knew their books were the vehicles through which they would learn to think bigger and ask better questions. They would build empathy as they shared the protagonist's emotional journey in overcoming adversity. They would safely experience universal themes—survival, hope, tragedy, and triumph—through the pages of someone else's story. Later that week, I noticed one of the girls had borrowed I am Malala from the library. I almost danced to my next class. I didn't, but I wanted to.

It was, and still is, a luxury to get lost in learning that is not assessed against syllabus criteria and for which I am not bound to report. During these precious, free-reading minutes, I don't have to assign a grade, collect data, analyse, or measure reading growth. There are no assignments or exams. There is just the room and the space we create each day to read. In this space the kids learn to play with the notes and be carried away by something that stirs them to ask questions, to seek meaning.

Echoing the words of children's author Mem Fox, who'd been my lecturer at teachers' college and whose passion for literacy had rubbed off on us all, when I tell a child to read, I want it to sound like chocolate, not like medicine. Some days, reading for the fun of it feels like the last bastion of my English classroom—the one piece of the learning paradigm that hasn't yet been swallowed up by data metrics—and I guard it stubbornly.

Book Review



Inspiring Hope: Personal Pedagogical Gifts in a World of Standards (2021)

by Frank Crowther, Bruce Addison and Karen Fox, Hawker Brownlow

$49.95

Inspiring Hope is a refreshing book written for teachers and school leaders who currently face an educational climate of high standardisation, high anxiety, and constant accountability. The main message of the book is for teachers to embrace their own unique "personal pedagogical gifts" and for schools to implement strategies to strike a balance between mandated, standardised practices and the artistry of individual pedagogy.

After a forward by Pasi Sahlberg (Deputy Director and Research Director of the Gonski Institute for Education), Part A begins with a clever analogy, which likens schools to orchestras. Just like an orchestra, schools need talented individuals (teachers) to play their parts. They also need high levels of trust in the music (policy, procedures, and curriculum) and the conductor (school leaders) to produce quality music as an ensemble (high quality educational experiences). The next section of the book presents a history of educational standards within Australia, taking note of reforms, legislation, vision statements (such as the Hobart, Adelaide, Melbourne, and Alice Springs education declarations) and socio-political factors that have influenced educational practice.

Part B examines how teachers are affected by anxiety in the workplace. Following this, the authors begin to unpack what is meant by personal pedagogical gifts and share six key factors that influence teachers' gifts.

Part C of the book seeks to establish a sense of balance in teachers' work, where educational standards and personal pedagogical gifts can work in harmony with one another. The book finishes with an optimistic message and practical suggestions on how educational leaders can help promote balance in the workplace and inspire hope amongst teachers.

Each chapter in Inspiring Hope features a chapter summary, reflective exercises and "searching questions" for both practising and pre-service teachers. These sections provide an ideal resource for use in staff-meetings, pre-service teacher education, and in teacher professional development workshops.

Thinking Tools and the Writing Process

Gerard Alford, ITC Publications

Gerard is an author and the Director of ITC Publications, established in 2002. He has over 20 years' experience as a full-time Secondary teacher in a range of independent schools in three Australian states and in the UK. He has held a number of senior positions including Head of Faculty, Director of Studies and Dean of Staff. Gerard's company develops and sells school resources to aid in the teaching and learning of thinking skills.

Thinking tools, especially in the Middle Schooling years, are well-known for providing students the means to organise their research and thoughts in a targeted and specified way. But did you know you can use them to help student's block and break up their learning – essentially reducing their cognitive load? In other words, thinking tools can be a useful way of separating the thinking and the writing phases.

Before writing even begins, students need to determine:

- What are the crucial ideas, issues and arguments?
- What opinions or perspectives are there?
- What is the evidence and is it reliable?

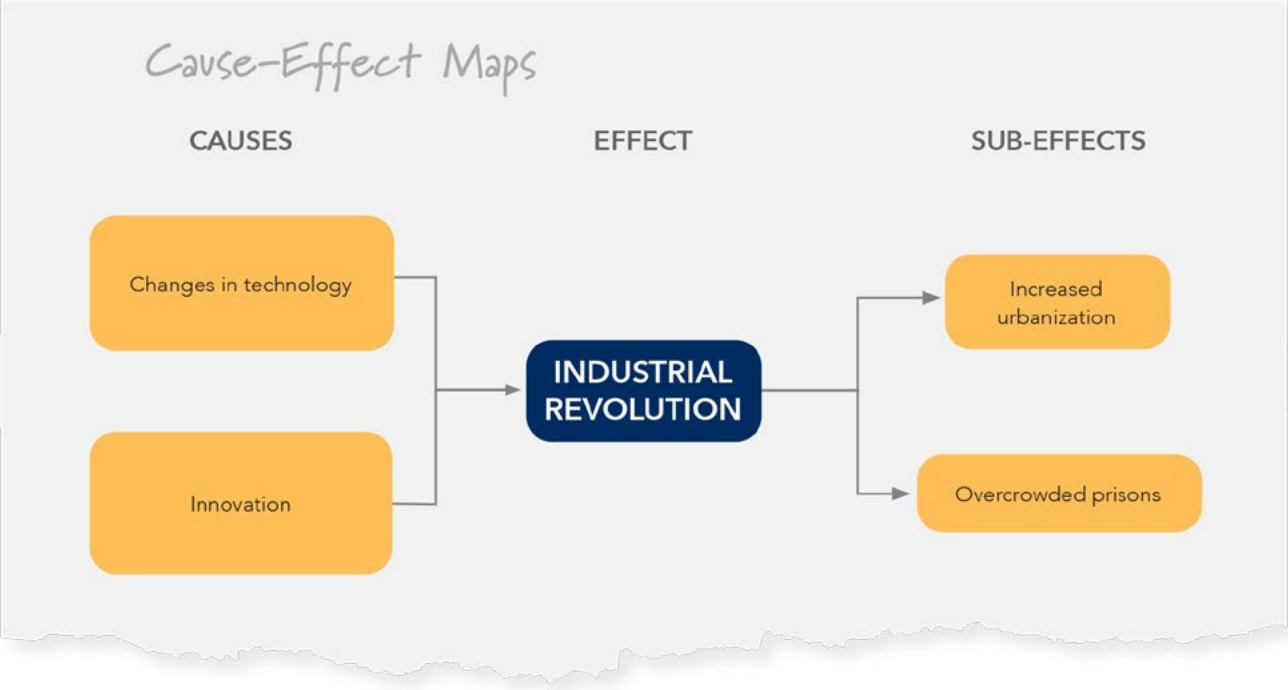
With all of this and more to think about, students cannot just jump into the writing phase – they must organise their thoughts with such thinking tools as the Double Bubble Map or Y-Chart, to name a few. Only after doing so, can the writing process be taught and tackled.

Let's examine one of these thinking tools in action.

Student Task:

- Analyse the impacts of the Industrial Revolution (1750 – 1914).
- Identify the main winners and the people who were disadvantaged.

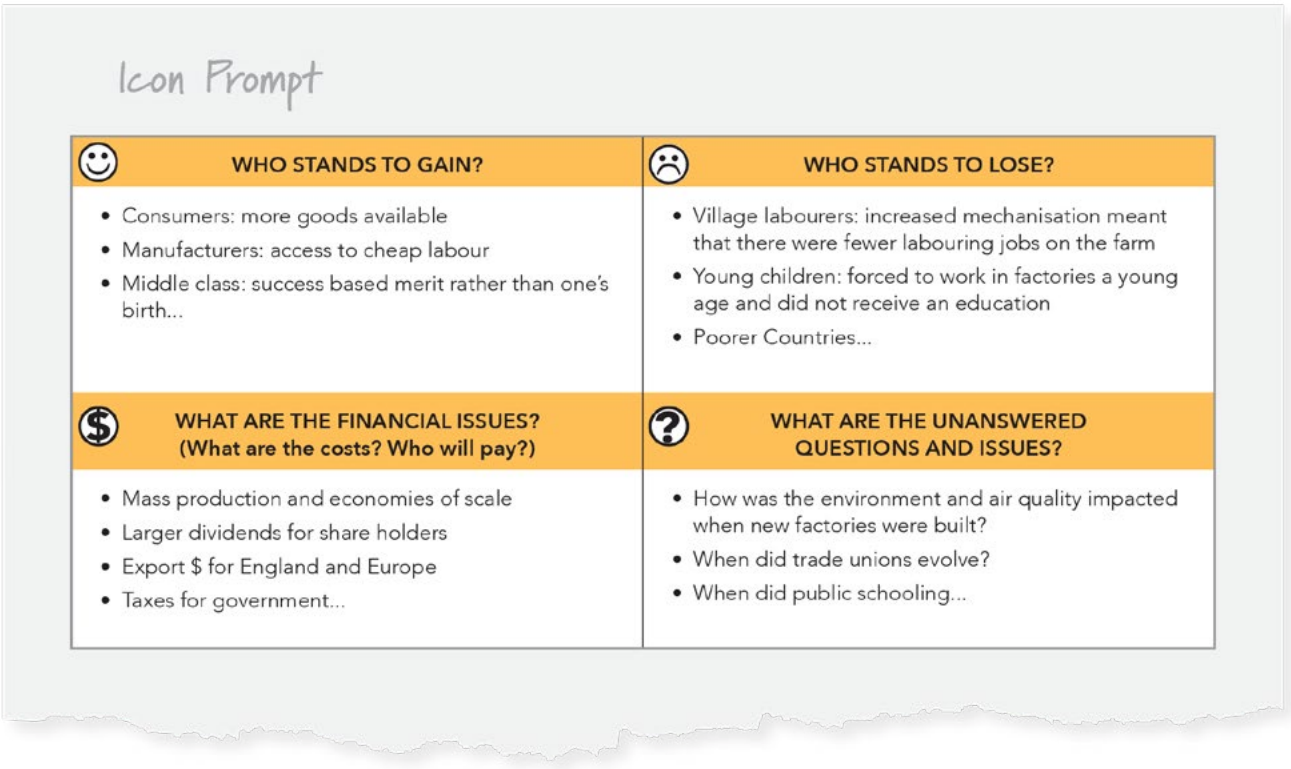
Figure 1 *Cause and Effect Map Thinking Tool*



At this stage, the emphasis is not on the writing but rather the thinking. Have students listed the major causes and effects of the Industrial Revolution? Is there a deeper understanding of the event, including its impact on different social groups and people?

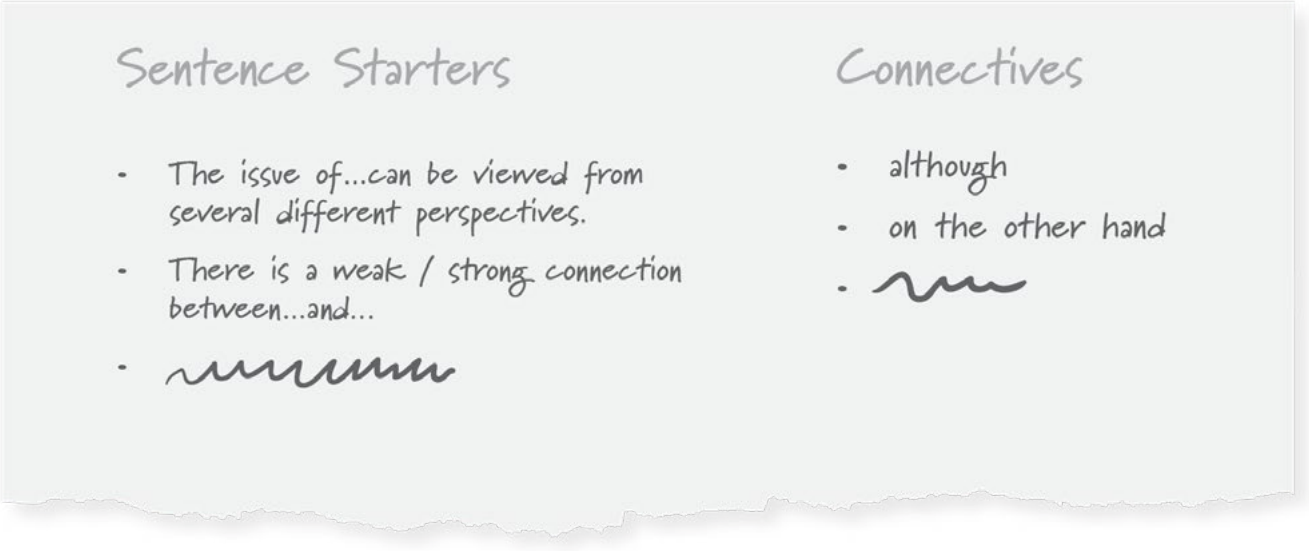
Another thinking tool that could be employed is the Icon Prompt as it clearly shows who gained in, who lost in, the financial issues and the unanswered questions of the revolution.

Figure 2 *Icon Prompt Thinking Tool*



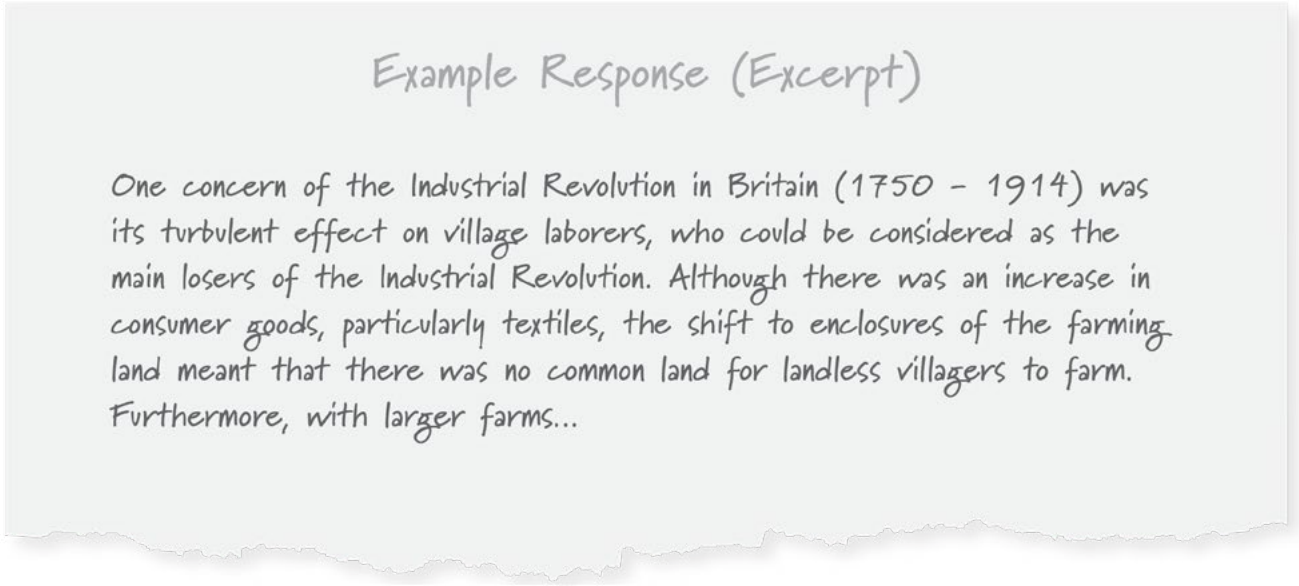
With the research and thinking phase now largely realised, the writing phase can now begin. One of the most practical ways to assist students with this stage is to provide them with aligned sentence starters and connective to the associated task verbs, in this case, *analyse and identify*.

Figure 3 *Examples of Sentence Starters*



These sentence starters should be adapted to suit the task's subject and the writing ability of the students.

Figure 4 *Example Response*



Refining and developing the skills of deep analytical thinking and quality in-depth writing is crucial to success, particularly in the Middle School years. One of the most supportive things we can do for our students is to break their extended writing tasks into two main phases – (1) the thinking phase and (2) the writing phase - and to ensure we explicitly teach and model each stage. In this way, students are less likely to feel overwhelmed, less likely to procrastinate and more likely to meet submission deadlines, as you've created clear milestones and checkpoints.

For more information on the topics discussed in this article and for information on products and services from ITC, please visit: itcthinkdrive.com.au/

Are our Schools Failing Their Teachers?

Gary Bruce,
Going Beyond Results

Gary Bruce is an educator, writer and speaker with over 35 years of teaching and leadership experience across state and independent schools, co-educational and single sex schools, and the private sector. He is an accredited instructor with Mental Health First Aid Australia [MHFA] delivering MHFA programs (Standard, Youth, Tertiary and "Conversations about Suicide"), an accredited coach with ICF, a Master Practitioner of NLP and a certified Master Practitioner with the American Board of Hypnotherapists. He is currently studying a Master of Counselling through the University of Canberra and is a member of the ACA and PACFA. Gary founded Going Beyond Results after working with numerous students who benefited from one-on-one coaching to develop executive functions skills such as time management, organisation skills and assessment preparation and improve stress management. After observing a number of his clients suffering from anxiety and depression, he became an instructor in Mental Health First Aid. He has delivered MHFA training to hundreds of teachers, parents, coaches, and employers of youth.

There were tears in the eyes and the impact of having experienced a traumatic event was evident.

"If I had done this training 12 months ago things could have been so different."

It is lunch break in a Mental Health First Aid Youth course and this passionate, experienced teacher is dealing with the realisation that if they had been trained in MHFA earlier, it might have changed the outcome for a member of their class.

Nine months earlier, a student left their class at the end of the lesson and, in the lunch break that followed, attempted to end their life through suicide. The teacher had been aware in class that something was unusal.The student was out of sorts and acting differently. Instead of having a conversation about their mental health the teacher made an attempt at humour: "Have you had a late night, too much Netflix?"

"Gary, why isn't every teacher made to do this course?"

It is a great question without an answer.

The facts are well known to all school leadership and governance teams.

- 1 in 4 Australian youth will experience a mental health issue in the next 12 months.
- 1 in 12 Australian youth will have serious thoughts about suicide.
- 1 in 40 Australian youth will attemp to end their life with suicide the number one cause of death in Australian youth.
- 50% of all people who suffer mental illness throughout their life will have their first episode before they turn 18 (75% before 25).

The majority of young people will not seek help and if not provided help the impact on their life will be ongoing and substantial. Additionally, it is important to consider the needs of teachers, especially those who are impacted by students' mental health issues and do not feel that they have the skills to have the important (sometimes life saving) conversations that are needed.

In 2022, I have personally trained over 300 educators from more than 20 different schools. In almost every course there are teachers who shows signs of being traumatised by the mental health issues amongst their students, staff members, family or friends. For some, their concern is the fear of making things worse by saying or doing the wrong thing. Unless people are trained in MHFA they may well be concerned that what they say may be wrong or make things worse.

What is the short and long term impact on these teachers, their mental and physical health?

Schools ensure staff are trained in physical first aid, fire safety, child protection and so many other important things. All are vital but mental health seems to be lesser in importance as a focus. Why is this so? In over 30 years of working in schools, I have completed fire training every year and yet never have I had to put out a fire. Bandaging a snake bite in real life is also a zero for me.

I am not suggesting that schools stop other vital professional development, but when we are aware of the horrible statistics and recognise that mental health issues are the top four health burdens for youth aged 15 -24 years old (asthma the first physical health issue at number five), surely things must change.

Most secondary teachers will have four or five classes of up to 25 students. If the statistics say one in four students will experience a mental health issue, then the average secondary school teacher will potentially have up to 25 students in their classes impacted by mental health each year. Statistically, seven or eight will have serious thoughts of suicide and statistically two or three will attempt to end their life.

Feedback from a recent MHFA course:

"I highly recommend this course to all staff at school. I wish I had done this course ten years ago."Participant

"It should be made mandatory for all education staff." Participant

There are schools who do undertake mental health training. Many more just 'tick a box' by recognising RUOK day and bringing in an 'expert' to talk about mental health to an entire cohort (often well over 100 students in the room). This may be useful in raising awareness, but I would argue that it is not enough.

When recently completing physical first aid training, I was required to practise resuscitation, defibrillation and bandaging in addition to learning the content. It wasn't just a talk. I had to practise the skills. If we are not getting our teachers

"I highly recommend this course to all staff at school. I wish I had done this course ten years ago."

to practise the skills of mental health first aid we are at best providing a tokenistic response to what is acknowledged as a major issue for our youth. We are also setting our teachers up for failure and emotional pain.

There is a solution that is well researched, evidence-based and proven to provide positive outcomes – Mental Health First Aid. Mental Health First Aid is affordable and has options that make it possible to timetable it into a schools' professional development schedules.

The MHFA Youth Program

With a focus on improved mental health literacy and early intervention, Youth MHFA is for adults who work, live or care for adolescents. This can include: teachers, school support staff, parents, sports coaches, community group leaders and youth workers.

Youth MHFA is an education course that teaches adults about adolescent development and the signs and symptoms of common and disabling mental health problems in young people, including crisis situations. Topics covered include: depression, anxiety, panic attacks, eating disorders and suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

Participants will learn how and where to get help when a young person is developing a mental illness; what help research has shown to be effective; and how to provide first aid in crisis situations. The Youth Mental Health First Aid course will teach you how to assist adolescents who may be experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis until appropriate professional help is received or the crisis resolves, using a practical, evidence-based action plan. This course is based on guidelines developed through the expert consensus of people with lived experience of mental health problems and professionals.

The mental health problems covered in the course include:

- Depression and anxiety
- Eating disorders
- Psychosis
- Substance use problems
- Suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- Non-suicidal self-injury
- Panic attacks and traumatic events
- Severe psychotic states
- Severe effects from alcohol or other drug use

The blended program is made up of an online component plus face-to-face training. The online component is approximately 4 – 5 hours which can be broken into smaller blocks. All attendees are provided a hard-copy manual.

The face-to-face training is 1 day (approximately 8 hours including breaks) or 2 x 3.5 hours (2 x ½ days or afternoon/evenings). This provides the opportunity to practice the skills of having a conversation.

Going Beyond Results works with schools to provide affordable and convenient opportunities to complete MHFA Youth courses. In the last 12 months they have trained over 300 educators across more than 20 schools.

Contact Coachgbr1@gmail.com to find out how your school can support your teachers.

Why I Teach in the Middle Years

In our next edition of the Australian Journal of Middle Schooling, we are seeking personal reflections from teachers on what inspires them to work in the middle years.

- What makes teaching in the middle years special or enjoyable?
- Why is your work important?
- What stories of success as a middle years' teacher can you share?
- What are your hopes for the future of middle years' education?

If you would like to contribute a piece to our next edition, start drafting now! Submissions should be written in the first person and be up to 1000 words in length. They must be formatted in Microsoft Word or Google Documents. Please use Times New Roman size 12 font and do not alter standard page margins. Photographs are also welcome.

Submissions can be emailed to journal@adolescentsuccess.org

We look forward to hearing from you and sharing your stories!

Visit www.adolescentsuccess.org.au to book

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

UQ LEARNING LAB

PARTNER SCHOOLS PROGRAM (PSP) 2023

The Partner Schools Program (PSP) brings together educators, researchers, and knowledge brokers to mobilise the Science of Learning in your school.

UQ researchers work collaboratively with your team to identify how the Science of Learning can inform teaching and learning in your unique context.

Invitations to participate in 2023 are now open.
Download the EOI form here: https://tinyurl.com/2p9by8z2 (or QR code above)

Email Dr Stephanie MacMahon for more information: s.macmahon1@uq.edu.au

CAPABILITY BUILDING

REFLECTION

ONGOING SUPPORT

"The PSP really gave an insight into how data collection can inform teaching practice."

"I think the vision [of the PSP] - of research meeting education, and theory moving practice - is a fabulous one."

inspiring learning spaces...

support better learning outcomes.

contact us

we work in close partnership with you to deeply understand your school's unique environment, and design solutions to meet your performance goals.

learn more
1800 133 155 | furnware.com

furnware®

Information for Contributors

Adolescent Success welcomes submissions for journal inclusion that reflect the aims of the association and address issues relevant to the middle years of schooling. Possible topics include: the developmental needs and interests of young adolescents; family and community partnerships; varied approaches to teaching and learning integrated curriculum; authentic assessment; school leadership and organisational structures in the middle years; information and communication technologies and resources in the middle years; research findings and future developments in the middle years.

Contributions may take the form of:

- academic and research papers that make an original contribution of an empirical or theoretical nature
- literature reviews
- papers of a practical or applied nature
- reports
- viewpoints
- book reviews

Contributions

- The journal has two levels of acceptance of papers for publication: refereed and non refereed. Refereed papers will have two referees selected from relevant fields of study by the editor. Papers must clearly indicate if they wish to be considered for refereed status. Refereed articles will be included in a specific section of the journal.
- Contributions shall be submitted electronically via email to the Adolescent Success email address, as a Microsoft Word document. Articles must be doublespaced, without the use of styles, 12 point font Times New Roman. The submitted article become the property of Adolescent Success.
- All contributors need to complete an Author's agreement form to be submitted with the article.
- Papers should be between 700 and 5000 words in length.
- Each article should have a separate title page that contains the title, the names of all authors, their contact addresses, email addresses, and telephone and facsimile numbers. The names of the authors should not appear on the rest of the paper.
- An abstract of no more than 200 words must accompany each refereed article.
- All references should be placed at the end of text using APA (7th edition). For example:

Journal article
Rumble, P., & Aspland, T. (2010). The four tributes model of the middle school teacher. *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling, 10*(1), 4–15.

Book
Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

- Footnotes are not to be used.
- Figures and diagrams should be professionally prepared and submitted in a form suitable for reproduction, indicating preferred placement.
- Photographs should be submitted separately (not included within the text). All student photographs, art work, poetry etc must be accompanied by copyright release forms, which are available on the website or from the editor.
- If the material has been published elsewhere, details must be included on the author's agreement form.
- The Middle Years of Schooling Association Inc holds copyright for articles published in the Australian Journal of Middle Schooling, excluding those previously published elsewhere.
- It is the right of the editor to make minor editorial amendments without consultation.
- Upon acceptance of contributions for publication, the contributors will be advised of the likely issue and date of publication. A complimentary copy of the journal in which the article appears will be sent to contributors.

Email

journal@adolescentsuccess.org

Return to Contents Page

Adolescent Success
PO Box 140
Buderim Q 4556
Australia