

Volume 40 Issue 7



# Scan

The journal for educators

**English textual  
concepts**

**A strategy for  
supporting  
student mental  
health**

**Supporting EAL/D  
students**



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Scan is a leading refereed journal, published monthly between February and November. Scan aims to bring innovative change to the lives and learning of contemporary educators and students. Through Scan, teachers' practice is informed by critical engagement with peer reviewed research that drives improved school and student outcomes across NSW, Australia and the world. Scan aims to leave teachers inspired, equipped and empowered, and students prepared.

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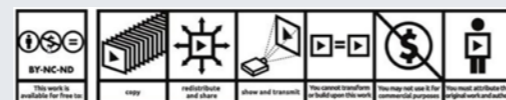
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# Could English textual concepts futureproof students?



**Felicity Young**

Curriculum Support Project Advisor  
English K-6, NSW Department of  
Education

**Felicity Young explores how the explicit teaching of English textual concepts can prepare students for the future, and suggests practical ideas for teachers investigating the conceptual understanding of character and theme in the middle primary years.**

In a world that is becoming increasingly automated, there is a lot of discussion about what skills and understanding students need to know for life beyond school. Engaging with the 4Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication) is necessary for future innovation, productivity and economic growth in an artificial intelligence (AI) world. Creative thinking and collaboration are specific skills that currently set humans apart from AI, and addressing these skills in classrooms of today can help students to shape careers of the future.

However, what students need to navigate their future is not going to be achieved by focusing on one thing alone. We need to ensure students have access to a high quality, comprehensive education which fosters

their intellectual, social and moral development (Gotsis, 2017). As such, what are the possible roles of the subject of English in helping students to learn about human compassion and moral courage, and to develop an understanding of what drives us as human beings? Could we also serve our students by showcasing our 'human-ness' through the subject of English?

This article investigates emerging research that evidences the explicit teaching of [English textual concepts](#) (2016) to support the comprehensive education students require. It also suggests practical ideas and content for teachers of Stage 2 students investigating the conceptual understanding of character and theme in children's literature, to prepare students for the future.

## Being human

In the 2021 TED Talk, [The value of your humanity in an automated future](#), Kevin Roose advocates for living and working more like humans and less like machines to make us impossible to replace. As evidence now shows, AI programs can create their own algorithms (Gent, 2020). Instead of trying to compete with the speed and intelligence of AI, Roose discusses our natural advantage if we excel at being human.



TED talk: [The value of your humanity in an automated future](#) by Kevin Roose [10:40 minutes]

These inherently human skills, or 'work of the heart', are introduced as the job currency of the future in the 2019 Deloitte paper, [The path to prosperity: Why the future of work is human](#). Recognising that we should capitalise on excelling in areas where technology cannot automate or augment human efforts, a suggestion for what governments can do is to 'identify the human value' (Hillard & Rumbens, p 51).

**By exploring specific textual concepts evident in quality literature, teachers can deepen students' conceptual understanding, contributing to their personal judgements about self, morals, attitudes and values, and higher order thinking about what 'life' is – what makes us human.**

As some areas of work become increasingly automated, the socio-economic divide will increase amongst humans, causing social unrest and unhappiness (Goux-Baudiment, 2014). A suggested strategy to alleviate this is to prepare people to take on new jobs by adopting new ways of teaching and learning which stress critical thinking, creativity, imagination and empathy. This learning highlights our humanity in a world shared with robots (p 412).

Uniquely human capabilities are discussed by former Secretary of the NSW Department of Education, Mark Scott (2017a), in his essay [Preparing today's students for tomorrow's world](#). Scott promotes the capabilities of: resilience, flexibility, adaptability, a sense of community, citizenship and collaboration, teamwork, trust, leadership and responsibility, communication, influence, creativity, complex problem solving and empathy. Scott recognises these as skills that 'will be hardest to instil in machines and will therefore remain the province of human endeavour' (Scott, 2017b, p 102). He goes on to say that devoting sufficient space and time to develop and value these skills cannot be underestimated.

There is a way to devote time and space to developing and valuing these skills and that is through the teaching of [English textual concepts](#) (2016). The textual concepts are at the heart of the subject of English, and are expressed in NSW English syllabus outcomes and content. As stated in the syllabus [rationale](#), the subject of English supports student development and expression of values, hopes and ideals, based on understanding of moral and ethical matters.

By exploring specific textual concepts evident in [quality literature](#), teachers can deepen students' conceptual understanding, contributing to their personal judgements about self, morals, attitudes and values, and higher order thinking about what 'life' is – what makes us human.

This has been proven in research conducted by Macken-Horarik et al (2019). Their article, [Building a knowledge structure for a twenty-first century discipline: The affordances and challenges of textual concepts](#), presents secondary school case studies showing the benefits of exploring textual concepts in literature, whereby students see, feel and experience vicariously, and apply this to their own lives (p 37).

Serafini and Moses (2014) concur that children's literature is a way for students to know the human world. Their article, [The roles of children's literature in the primary grades](#), discusses the function of literature as a space for thoughtful discussion around the themes and ideas inherent within it (p 465). This article is cited in the English K-2 draft syllabus (2021) released by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), and therefore has significant impact as evidence for the explicit teaching of English textual concepts in a primary school setting.

## Understanding the textual concepts: character and theme

Enhancing student understanding of human qualities can be achieved through the study of the English textual concepts: character and theme. The [English textual concepts](#) resource clearly defines these concepts and outlines the concept progressions.

### Character

[Character](#) is traditionally viewed as a description of a fictional person. The reader, listener or viewer fleshes out what the character says, does and thinks to imagine a person-like character, sufficiently individualised and coherent to establish the sense of an identity. In this way, representation of a 'real' person invites personal identification and judgements about the character's morality and value to their society. This kind of analysis can contribute to shaping one's own sense of a moral and ethical self, and so becomes a way of enculturation.

### Theme

A [theme](#) is a statement about life, arising from the interplay of key elements of the text such as plot, character, setting and language. Theme differs from the topic of a text (war, the sea) or an idea addressed by a text (prejudice, friendship) in that the theme conveys an attitude or value about an idea. At its most

basic level, a theme may be regarded as the message or even the moral of a text. Themes invite us to think about our place in the world. A theme is a statement about human experience that is profound and which responders may accept or reject, depending on their own worldview.

## Teaching ideas

Stage 2 has been selected as the launch stage for the futureproofing journey. Developmentally, it is an ideal stage as it is when students move from literal comprehension and making inferences, into integrating and linking ideas.

Learning aligns with the Stage 2 syllabus outcome [EN2-10C](#): 'A student thinks imaginatively, creatively and interpretively about information, ideas and texts when responding to and composing texts'.

### Character and theme in Stage 2

To assist in designing learning for high intellectual quality and students' deep understanding of character and theme, the expectation is that by the end of Stage 2 students need to understand that:

- characters are represented in such a way as to have motives for their actions
- characters may be judged by the reader, the other character constructs in the text, the narrator or the author
- characters are constructed in such a way as to invite an emotional reaction, such as identification, empathy or antipathy
- ideas in texts may be made into thematic statements that tell us about human experience
- the ideas of a text are suggested through particular details such as events, character behaviour and relationships.

## Planning to teach

Many quality texts contain textual elements which lend themselves to a range of conceptual understanding. Developing student understanding of character and theme can be achieved through considered selection of quality literature which supports the study of these concepts.

The following are examples of quality literature, suitable for Stage 2, containing textual elements conducive to the study of both character and theme.

In these texts, the narrative evolves around human characters. This removes the layer of personification and allows for direct connections to human qualities and experiences to be made.

In addition to the recommended books, teachers could use a variety of texts to explore the concepts, including spoken, visual, written, media and multimodal texts. The NSW Department of Education resource, [Checklists for selecting quality texts](#), can be used as a guide to provide teachers with criteria to support the English textual concepts.

### Sample texts

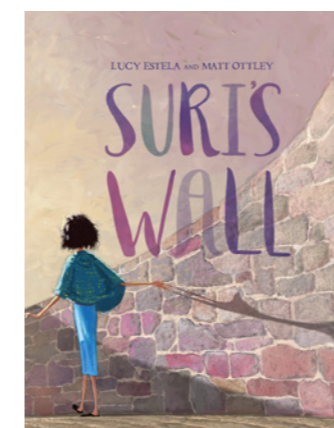


#### 'The Invisible Boy' by Trudy Ludwig

Alfred A. Knopf, New York (2013)

'The Invisible Boy' is a picture book which tells the story of Brian who is a quiet student. Nobody ever seems to notice him or think to

include him in their group, game, or birthday party ... until a new boy, Justin, arrives. Justin is different too but is accepted by his classmates. Imagery and use of colour play a large role in this book. The story explores acts of kindness, acceptance of differences, isolation, loneliness and inclusion.



#### 'Suri's Wall' by Lucy Estela and Matt Ottley

Penguin, Australia (2015)

'Suri's Wall' is about a group of children who live behind a wall, separated from the rest of the world outside.

In this picture book, Suri's character emerges as the story progresses. The book deals with friendship, resilience, refugees, and war and hope. It also shows the human capacity to protect others from human injustices and the power of the human spirit.

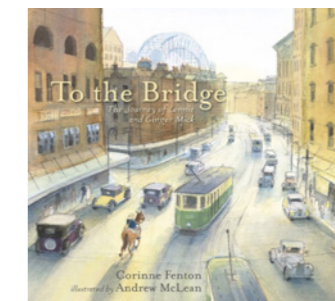


#### 'The Brothers Quibble' by Aaron Blabey

Puffin, Australia (2014)

'Spalding Quibble ruled the roost. He shared it with no other. But then

his parents introduced a brand new baby brother.' This picture book explores jealousy, consequences and love.

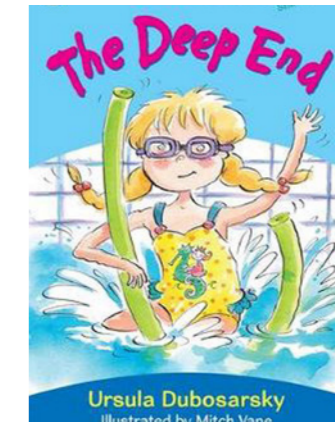


#### 'To the Bridge' by Corinne Fenton

Walker Books, Australia (2020)

'To the Bridge' is a picture book based on the true story of 9 year

old Lennie Gwyther who set off on his pony in 1932 to ride from Victoria to Sydney for the opening of the Harbour Bridge. It explores determination, courage, farm life, adversity, adventure and goals.

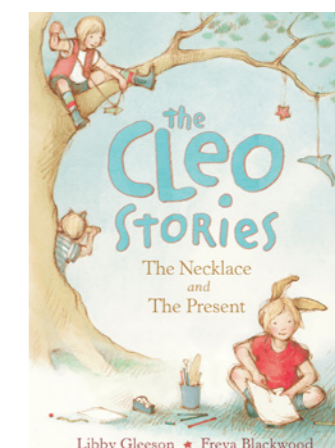


#### 'The Deep End' by Ursula Dubosarsky

Aussie Nibbles, Puffin, Australia (2010)

'The Deep End' is a beginner chapter book. Any students who have taken part in swimming lessons can relate to

Becky, who experiences fear and success as she progresses through her swimming levels.

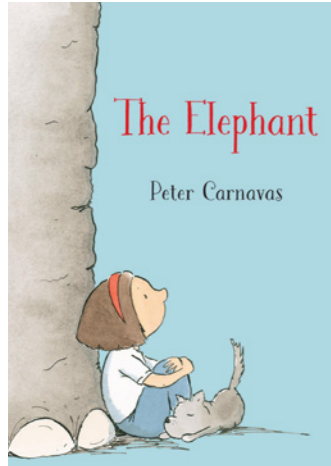


#### 'The Cleo Stories: A friend and a pet' by Libby Gleeson and Freya Blackwood

Allen and Unwin, Australia (2015)

Two short stories about a girl called Cleo who experiences both boredom and the

realities of responsibility. The text draws attention to the value of imagination and making the most of what you have.



**'The Elephant' by Peter Carnavas**  
University of Queensland Press, Australia (2017)

Olive's father has a sadness so big that she imagines it as an enormous elephant following him around. In this novel, Olive

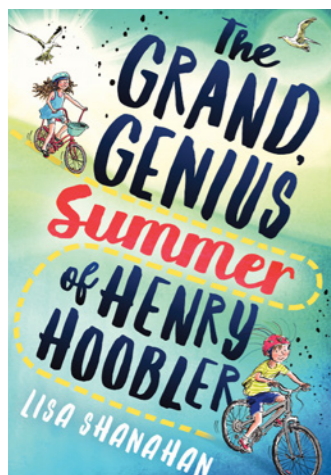
tries to work out how she can chase the elephant away. The text cleverly raises awareness of mental health at a Stage 2 developmental level.



**'The Secrets of Magnolia Moon' by Edwina Wyatt**  
Walker Books, Australia (2019)

This is a whimsical novel about nine year old Magnolia Moon and the secrets and events that occur over the period of one year. Full of

metaphors and imagery, it explores family, friendship, joy, imagination, creativity and self-reflection.



**'The Grand, Genius Summer of Henry Hoobler' by Lisa Shanahan**  
Allen and Unwin, Australia (2017)

This is a novel about Henry Hoobler – a reluctant adventurer who worries about everything. Each chapter

focuses on different values such as courage, genius, loss, truth, belonging, beginnings and endings.

## Scaffolding student understanding

Select three (or more) quality texts.

The following teaching and learning activities are designed to be used with the first text selection. They are teacher-directed with explicit teaching to model responses and provide exemplars for subsequent texts. Where group work is suggested, mixed ability grouping will allow peer modelling of responses.

Activities are divided into two learning sequences which could be taught over several days.

### Text 1

#### Learning sequence – character

1. Explain the purpose: To identify and understand human qualities by exploring the way [character xxxx] has been constructed in [text xxxx].
2. Read the text. For student engagement, it is strongly suggested that modelled reading of texts is conducted by the teacher, rather than students viewing texts via an online platform.  
Note: picture books should be read in their entirety. Chapter books and short novels may only require the reading of the synopsis and a specific chapter for conceptual understanding to emerge.
3. Lead a discussion to show how the author, and illustrator if relevant, constructed the text to create a positive or negative character (or characters). The discussion could include:
  - vocabulary choices
  - images
  - events
  - relationships with other characters.
4. In groups, students review the text and recall the discussion from activity 3 to record information in a [plus, minus, interesting \(PMI\)](#) chart of character traits/qualities.
5. Share charts with a [gallery walk](#) and discuss any newly arisen information. Display charts for reference in future writing tasks.
6. [Think-pair-share](#): Can you identify with the character or does the character remind you of someone you know?
7. Whole class discussion: What are your feelings about the character? Why?  
If not revealed in the discussion, introduce the terms 'empathy' and 'compassion' by explaining how you may feel empathy or compassion for

character/s. Responses can be recorded in an [affinity diagram](#).

8. Discuss: Why do you think the character/s act the way they do at the start of the text? Was their behaviour right or wrong? Why? Introduce the term 'motive'.
9. [Think-pair-share](#): Can you think of a time when you or someone you know acted with the same motive? Was it right or wrong? Why?
10. Discuss how and why the character/s changed as the events unfolded. In groups, students record these changes using a [cause and effect tool](#).

#### Learning sequence – theme

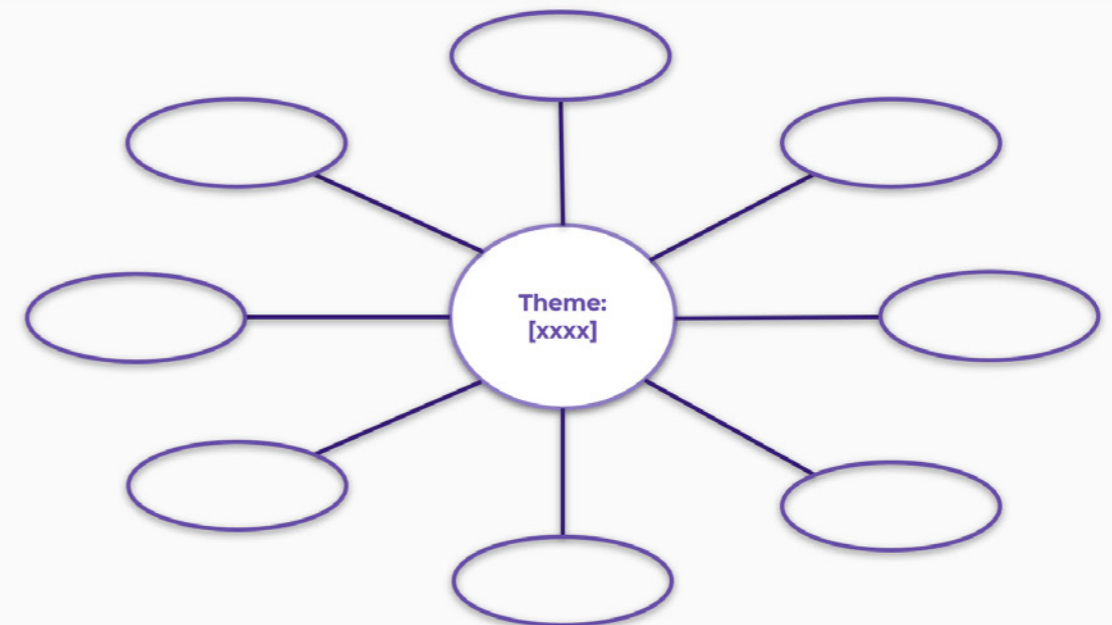
1. Explain the purpose of this learning sequence: To identify and understand human experiences by moving beyond the details about [character xxxx] to consider the main ideas in [text xxxx] implied by these details.
2. Review responses from activities 7 and 10 in the previous learning sequence. Pose the question: 'Based on the events and the behaviour of the character/s, what do you think are the main ideas the author is telling us?' In groups, students [brainstorm](#) their responses.
3. Each group shares what they think the main ideas are. Introduce the term 'theme'. Explain that the main ideas they came up with could be

**The purpose of exploring the concepts of character and theme in Stage 2 is for students to gain an increased understanding of qualities that are innately human.**

themes and sometimes morals. Display or keep these responses for activity 6.

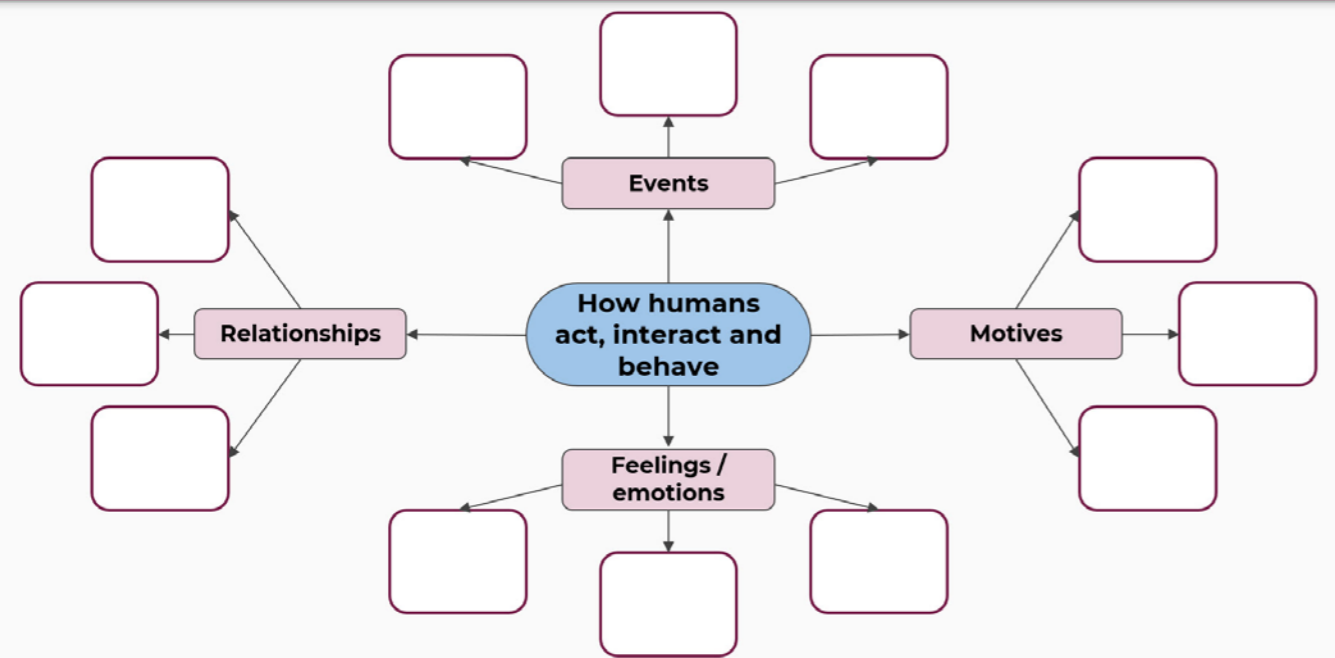
4. Additional activity if required – if students are struggling with the concept of theme, read and discuss some Aesop's Fables which have clear morals.
5. Select one of the themes identified in Activity 3. Pose the question: 'The author wants us to believe that [xxxx]. The evidence that supports this in the text is ...' Complete a [spider map](#) to record evidence (example below).
6. Using the themes identified in activity 3, and evidence in activity 5, create thematic statements about human experience. For example, in the text 'To the Bridge', identified themes are 'keep trying even when things go wrong' and 'never give up'. Several statements can be created: People like to achieve goals. People can have adventures. Sometimes things go wrong in our lives. Sometimes people feel scared. People can ask others for help when needed. A [concept map](#),

### Spider map



Sample spider map for recording evidence of a theme within a text

## Concept map



Sample concept map for recording thematic statements about human experience

organised with headings to assist, could be used to record the thematic statements about human experience (example above).

Display all recorded responses throughout the learning where possible. For subsequent texts, add to these initial displays with new information.

### Text 2

The activities are repeated with the new text/s, this time adapting the instruction to use a teacher-guided approach. The aim is to gradually release responsibility to the students to elicit responses. Where group work is suggested, ability grouping will allow the teacher to guide instruction for individual student needs. The final two activities could be conducted in groups with guided instruction.

### Final text

The activities are repeated for the final time, adapted for independent student responses. The purpose could be to provide an **assessment opportunity** towards Stage 2 syllabus outcome EN2-10C: 'A student thinks imaginatively, creatively and interpretively about information, ideas and texts when responding to and composing texts'. The final activity of 'Learning sequence – character' and the final two activities of 'Learning sequence – theme' can be individual and

independent responses which provide a work sample for evidence. The first lesson of each learning sequence should include the learning intentions and teacher-students' co-construction of [success criteria](#).

### Next steps

To build deep understanding from students' current level of competence into new learning, design learning that moves from understanding into making connections and engaging personally and critically. Activities should transition from discussion and written responses into students creating their own texts which reflect their understanding.

To make connections, students could:

- discuss the similarities and differences in characters and themes across the selected texts
- compare how characters and themes are presented in the selected texts to written and spoken texts in other contexts.

To engage personally, students could:

- identify particular elements of character and theme in texts that are engaging and use these in their own composing
- distinguish their own perspective of human experiences that shapes their responses to texts and composition of texts.

To engage critically, students could:

- demonstrate their judgments and values about human experience by interpreting texts and justifying their opinions.

### Futureproofing

The purpose of exploring the concepts of character and theme in Stage 2 is for students to gain an increased understanding of qualities that are innately human.

Conceptual understanding is powerful and transferable. As students progress through the years of schooling and develop a deep knowledge of 'human-ness' through continued conceptual study of character and theme they will be able to make these connections for themselves.

The human qualities and experiences students identify and explore in children's literature will become, for them, the recognisable human skills to which many

**The human qualities and experiences students identify and explore in children's literature will become, for them, the recognisable human skills ... that they will be able to apply to their future careers.**

researchers have referred. These are the skills that they will be able to apply to their future careers.

As teachers begin to observe students developing conceptual understandings and making connections, the benefit will become apparent - explicit teaching of concepts can successfully prepare students for the future.

When designing student learning opportunities, teachers should prioritise explicit teaching of English textual concepts as part of a high quality, comprehensive education, inclusive of a range of disciplines.

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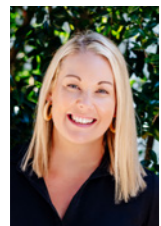


# Implementing 'Collaborative & Proactive Solutions' for students with additional needs



**Bronwyn Thoroughgood**  
Principal, St Philip's Christian College (SPCC) DALE and SPCC DALE Young Parents

**Bronwyn Thoroughgood and Hayley Adcock describe the successful adoption of a neuroscience-informed intervention at St Philip's Christian College to support students with social, emotional and behavioural challenges.**



**Hayley Adcock**  
Registered psychologist and Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing at SPCC DALE and DALE Young Parents

**Our school context**  
St Philip's Christian College (SPCC) DALE is a school for students with diagnosed mental health disorders. Our goal is to be at the forefront of working with these students and looking for the best ways to

cater for their needs, help them overcome their challenges, and engage them in education for their future. We are a special school with a unique enrolment criteria catering for students that do not quite fit the typical mainstream education mould. Our context is unique. DALE, which stands for Dynamic Alternative Learning Environment, is a school specifically oriented towards providing an alternative education environment to students diagnosed with anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and/or autism.

SPCC DALE Young Parents is also a part of our school cluster. This school provides young parents an opportunity to complete the HSC in conjunction with meeting their parental responsibilities. We have five campuses in total, comprising of three DALE campuses (Waratah, Cessnock, Gosford) for students from Years 3 to 12, and two Young Parent campuses (Waratah and Wyong) for students in Years 11 and 12. We are an alternative education environment that meets individual needs and achieves educational outcomes. Many of the students who attend our school display some oppositional and challenging behaviour due to the effects of trauma and/or anxiety. What we have found in our setting is that students with mental health issues often have challenging behaviours due to the nature of their mental health condition and either their inability to meet expectations or due to their mental health disorder preventing them from trying.

**Our journey began by researching best practice for reducing challenging behaviours to increase student engagement.**

## The unsolved problem

The typical behaviour management strategies used in mainstream schools do not work with all students (Greene, 2010). The traditional authoritative, top-down approach we found caused more escalation and disengagement among our students with trauma history, anxiety, depression and autism. Students with additional needs are often unable to communicate or self-regulate effectively enough

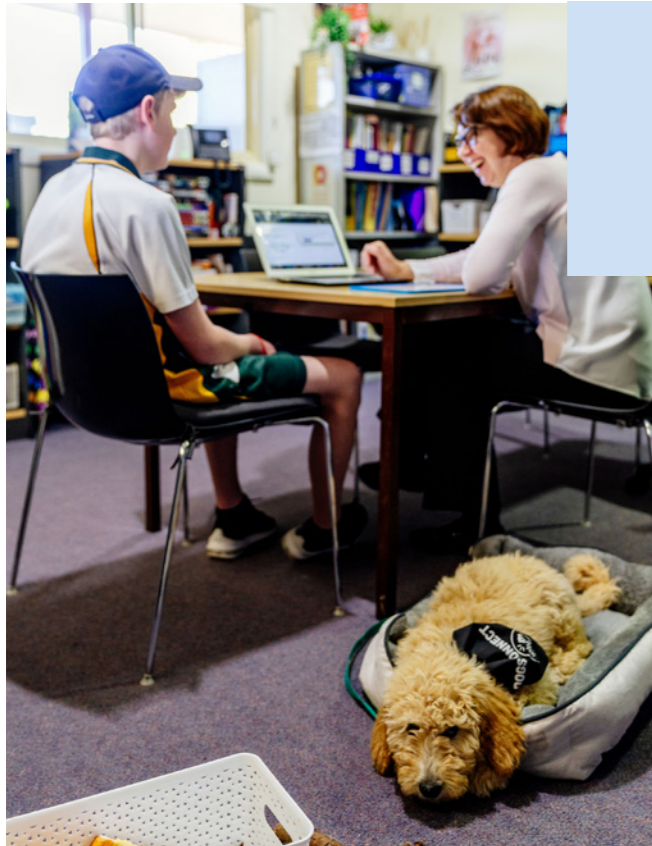
**Collaborative and Proactive Solutions focuses on identifying and treating lagging cognitive skills that interfere with a child's ability to meet expectations ... The aim of the CPS model is for adults and children to identify undeveloped skills, and through collaborative problem solving, learn to solve the problems precipitating challenging behaviour, while learning new skills.**

to navigate life's challenges as typically developing students can. It was observed that teachers were relying on their 'mainstream' behaviour management strategies to manage challenging students, which were not working and, in some cases, were fuelling the challenging behaviour. Gandhi famously said: 'be the change you want to see in the world'. So, we set ourselves a challenge to be that change by reframing the way behaviour is viewed, and addressed, in the educational setting. Our journey began by researching best practice for reducing challenging behaviours to increase student engagement.

## Collaborative & Proactive Solutions model

Dr Ross Greene established a [Collaborative & Proactive Solutions \(CPS\) model](#), based on research from neuroscience, to offer a new conceptual framework for understanding the difficulties of children with social, emotional and behavioural challenges. Dr Greene originally developed the CPS model to address challenging behaviours in children and youth diagnosed with disorders such as oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), conduct disorder (CD), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Over the past ten years, the CPS model has been used with many children and adults exhibiting social, emotional and behavioural challenges and has been promoted as effective in a variety of settings including the home, schools, clinics, and juvenile detention facilities.

In contrast with standard behavioural methods that provide incentives for meeting adult expectations, CPS focuses on identifying and treating lagging cognitive skills that interfere with a child's ability to meet these expectations (Pollastri, A. R., et al., 2013).



**'Kids do well if they can' ... when adults recognise the factors underlying difficult behaviour and teach children the necessary skills in increments, the results are overwhelmingly positive.**

When children are taken through the CPS process, they overcome their obstacles; the frustration of teachers, parents, and classmates diminishes; and the wellbeing and learning of all students is enhanced (Greene, 2010).

There is a growing body of research and reviews that have shown that CPS is a highly effective approach in reducing challenging behaviours (Greene & Winkler, 2019; Martin, Krieg, Esposito, Stubbe & Cardona, 2008). The CPS model has also demonstrated effectiveness in reducing stress associated with the management of challenging behaviours in multiple settings (Greene & Winkler, 2019; Schaubman, Stetson & Plog, 2011), has had a positive impact on staff dynamics (Greene, Ablon & Martin, 2006), and improved teacher-parent, teacher-student and parent-child communication and relationships (Epstein & Saltzman-Benaiah, 2010).

### Why CPS?

The Collaborative & Proactive Solutions model, as its name suggests, is a relationship building tool. It seeks the engagement of teachers and students in working together to generate and implement strategies to proactively solve unsolved problems in their environment. With the implementation of the CPS model at DALE, we predicted that there would be an increase in positive student-teacher relationships which in turn would increase student engagement.

The CPS model has been implemented for 'behaviourally challenged' children in several school settings around the world, but *not among students specifically identified with mental health disorders and autism*. These are a large and growing subset of all students in schools for whom evidentiary support for an effective intervention such as CPS would be of considerable value. The CPS model emphasises the development of cognitive skills crucial for handling life's social, emotional and behavioural challenges, which can be implemented and taught within the school context.

The aim of the CPS model is for adults and children to identify undeveloped skills, and through collaborative problem solving, learn to solve the problems precipitating challenging behaviour, while learning new skills (Greene, 2010).

Greene believes that children with challenging behaviours have a kind of learning disability – difficulty being flexible, solving problems and dealing with frustration. Dr Greene emphasises the notion that 'kids do well if they can, not if they wanna', and he asserts that children with behavioural challenges are not attention-seeking, manipulative, limit-testing, coercive, or unmotivated. Instead, they lack the skills necessary to behave adaptively. He claims that when adults recognise the factors underlying difficult behaviour and teach children the necessary skills in increments, the results are overwhelmingly positive.

**There is a growing body of research and reviews that have shown that CPS is a highly effective approach in reducing challenging behaviours.**

### Implementation of CPS

Following the advice of Dr Ross Greene, we adhered to a specific model for implementing CPS across the five campuses in both our schools. Twelve staff members were invited to participate in a 12 week program with one of Greene's clinicians from the USA. The participants were chosen so that 2 were from each of the participating campuses and were from varied roles. This approach was coined the 'champions model', because the 12 participants trained in the model could then 'champion' the model back at their campuses and train the next group to proficiency.

### Impact of CPS on staff, students and families

Early results indicate that suspension rates reduced over three years of implementation. A decrease in suspensions is one example of evidence of a decrease in challenging behaviours. The other is anecdotal evidence from our staff, in particular heads of each campus, who noted decreases in student referrals to them and an increase in the amount of time students were spending inside the classroom.

A student shared that their experience participating in a '[Plan B' conversation](#) 'was like being busted for doing something unexpected' but that they enjoyed the process and out of it they had 'learnt about co-operation and understanding'. They stated that the thing they enjoyed most about participating in CPS was that 'it can help me find some solutions' and 'that the solutions work' because they get to be a part of creating them.

During follow up interviews, one teacher reported that the CPS journey helped her with a strategy to build rapport with her most challenging students – 'having those 1:1 conversations with a child, it's allowed them to feel like they are heard, and allowed me to be able to connect with them'. Staff reported an increase in positive teacher-student interactions and a decrease in challenging behaviour when using CPS as a strategy for addressing unsolved problems.



A few parents were interviewed about their experience with CPS at DALE. One parent shared that the most valuable thing CPS has taught them was that: 'He's doing that because he actually doesn't have the skills to do whatever it is, he was attempting to do or had been asked to do'. And 'with CPS coming on board ... you're looking at a child and being able to see that oh, there's actually something that they don't know and it's not just a curriculum problem.' She stated:

**'That's a game changer! Because what that does is... it takes the pressure off the child, it gets them involved, and when the teacher and the child can collaborate, come up with a solution, trial it, test it, they're both on board, the relationship that that builds and the trust that that builds is really important.'**

### Challenges for staff

Initially, many staff reported that implementing CPS would not be effective due to the time constraints teachers face on a daily basis. They felt it was easier and more time efficient to enforce a solution than collaborate on one. There was also fear about relinquishing the power that comes from implementing a CPS 'Plan A' (that is, an adult-imposed consequence for a behaviour in the classroom), and a perception that 'if there's no consequence, then they [students] are getting away with it'. During the implementation of CPS, staff began to see the positive effects of CPS. Teachers reported seeing some positive changes with the



increase in collaboration and a slow development of skills by students. One teacher during interview stated:

**'Teachers have been taught about functional behaviour assessments and have been taught to use reward charts and punishment to gain compliance – but it doesn't help everyone. The reality is that it hasn't been working for a long time, but it's all everyone has ever known, it only works for those kids it can work for because they have the skills and doesn't work for the kids that we are actually trying to target.'**

All staff in education need to view behaviour as a communication tool, and recognise that it is part of their role to help students build the skills they need to navigate their world in prosocial ways. CPS has a significant positive effect on the behaviours of challenging students, including a decrease in suspension rates. Although we are only in the early stages of the full implementation of CPS, there has been a positive impact. In the next phase, we will be looking at our use of 'Plan A', including suspension, as research shows that these methods do not work in enabling students to build the prosocial skills necessary to engage in life outside of school. Therefore, we will be looking at changing to collaborative meetings, held over a period of days, with a system for building the lagging skill during that time (Beauchamp, 2012).

Further skill building within SPCC DALE and DALE Young Parents for phase 2 of the implementation will focus on reducing 'Plan A', increasing understanding of 'Plan C' (setting the problem aside temporarily), and updating our school policies and procedures to reflect the CPS model.

Our full research will be released as an article for the [AIS Evidence Institute](#) in August and presented in October at the AIS Research Symposium. A full academic journal article will then be collaborated on with our academic supervisor, Dr Nicole Bruncker from the University of Sydney. If you would like to monitor our journey in the interim, follow us on Twitter ([@SPCCDALE\\_CPS](#)) or Facebook ('St Philip's Christian College – DALE'), or email us at [Bronwyn.Thoroughgood@spcc.nsw.edu.au](mailto:Bronwyn.Thoroughgood@spcc.nsw.edu.au) or [Hayley.Adcock@spcc.nsw.edu.au](mailto:Hayley.Adcock@spcc.nsw.edu.au).

## Getting started with CPS

**Dr Anna Dedousis-Wallace, Senior Clinical Psychologist at The Kidman Centre, UTS, explains the steps involved in implementing CPS. The following information is adapted from Dr Ross Greene's website, [Lives in the Balance](#).**

### Step 1. Change your lenses

Step one begins with a close examination of your own beliefs about the cause of challenging behaviour in young people. The CPS model argues that challenging behaviour is not the result of poor parenting, faulty learning, or poor motivation. Instead, children who exhibit challenging behaviour do so **because they do not have the skills to meet the demands of a given situation**. Viewing behaviour from this new lens allows for a more accurate, compassionate understanding of a child's challenging behaviour. It also enables a clear course of action for teachers moving forward.

### Step 2. Identify 'lagging skills' and 'unsolved problems'

Step two involves better understanding the situation in which the student is having difficulty meeting expectations (called the 'unsolved problem'). As part of this discussion, specific skills that the student is lacking are identified (also known as 'lagging skills'). For example, difficulty maintaining focus. This process is accomplished by completing an [Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems \(ALSUP\)](#).

Recognising lagging skills provides caregivers with new lenses through which to view the problem. Rather than viewing a student's difficulties as attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, unmotivated, lazy or limit testing, understanding lagging skills facilitates more accurate, productive, actionable lenses.

While identifying these lagging skills helps to understand the student's situation, the primary targets of intervention are the unsolved problems.

As mentioned, unsolved problems are the specific expectations a child is having difficulty meeting, such as 'difficulty raising hand during geography discussions'. Often, a student may have several unsolved problems. So, once these have been identified, you'll need to prioritise which ones you'll be working on first, using the [Problem solving plan](#).

To get started with this step, download the [ALSUP template](#) and follow the instructions to identify a learner's lagging skills and unsolved problems. Extra help to complete the ALSUP is available in the [ALSUP guide](#). Explanatory videos can also be accessed via the Lives in the Balance [Walking tour](#), including a sample ALSUP meeting for a Kindergarten student.

### Step 3. Solve problems collaboratively and proactively (the 'Plan B' conversation)

After identifying and prioritising the student's unsolved problems, you can start solving those problems proactively. This conversation between the student and teacher involves 3 steps to support effective collaborative problem solving.

#### 1. Empathy step

The goal of this step is to gather information about (and achieve a clear understanding of) the student's concern or perspective on the unsolved problem you're discussing. You introduce this step to the student by starting off with the words: **'I've noticed that ... [insert unsolved problem] ... What's up?'**

For example, 'I've noticed that you're having difficulty raising your hand during geography. What's up?'

Subsequent drilling for information is done in a curious, genuine and non-judgmental manner. It usually involves reflective listening and clarifying questions, gathering information related to the who, what, where and when of the unsolved problem, and asking the student what s/he's thinking in the midst of that problem. Drilling can also probe why the problem occurs under some conditions and not others. Examples of these drilling strategies are available in the [Drilling cheat sheet](#).

#### 2. Define the problem step

The goal of this step is for the teacher to express their concerns regarding the unsolved problem. This step is introduced to the student with the wording: **'The thing is ... [insert teacher concern] ...'** or **'My concern is [insert teacher concern] ...'**

For example, 'My concern is when you don't raise your hand in geography, you prevent others from contributing and learning'.

#### 3. Invitation step

In this final step, the goal is to generate solutions that are realistic (meaning both parties can do what they are agreeing to) and mutually satisfactory (meaning the solution truly addresses the concerns of both parties). This step typically starts with the words: **'I wonder if there is a way that we can address [insert student's main concern] and [insert teacher's main concern].'**

For example, 'I wonder if there is a way we can address your concern of forgetting what you want to say and my concern of you preventing others from contributing and learning'.



YouTube video: ['Do you know how to do a "Plan B" for solving behavior problems?'](#) by Carla Butorac [5:23 minutes]

For more practical guidance on solving problems collaboratively and proactively, download the [Plan B cheat sheet](#) and view the video demonstrations available in the CPS [Walking tour](#). Further information about CPS, including [training opportunities](#) for teachers and parents, is also available via the [Lives in the Balance website](#).

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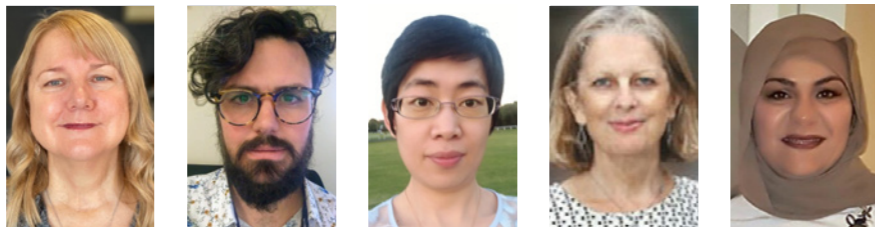
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# Setting EAL/D students up for success at school: A diamond view



In this research article, Dr Lorraine Beveridge and a team of researchers explore evidence based teaching practices which support EAL/D students.



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Schools play a pivotal role in ensuring a successful future for students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). EAL/D students are a diverse group who enrich the classroom in multiple ways through their linguistic and cultural contributions. With increasing numbers of EAL/D students in both metropolitan and regional classrooms in Australia, addressing their varied language and literacy learning needs can be challenging for teachers. In this paper, academics, practitioners and parents of EAL/D students consider the challenges and opportunities that arise for teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse classes. Evidence based teaching practices which support EAL/D students are reviewed from multiple perspectives and presented here as a multifaceted 'diamond view'.

The globalisation of the workforce, alongside the Humanitarian Settlement Program (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2019; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019) has led to an increasingly diverse student population in both urban and regional schools in Australia. This includes students from migrant and refugee families learning English, as well as students in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities learning Standard Australian English (SAE) as an additional language or dialect.

**A diamond view**

This paper considers EAL/D teaching from multiple perspectives which are diagrammatically presented as a 'diamond view' (figure 1). The multifaceted lens includes input from a curriculum support officer, EAL/D leader, university lecturers, an Aboriginal Education Languages manager and EAL/D parent, and provides a synopsis of their combined evidence based experiences in supporting teachers in setting EAL/D students up for success at school.

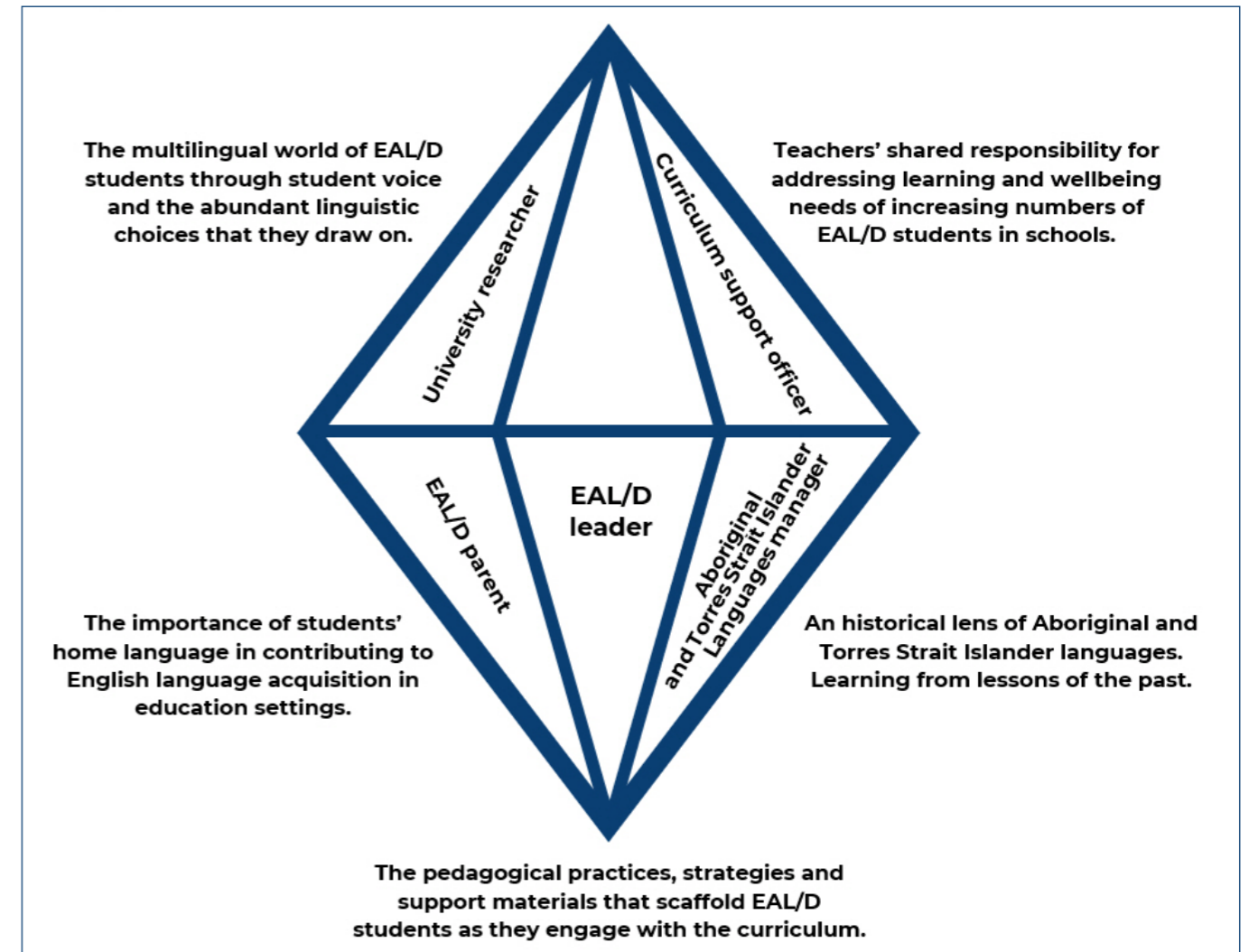


Figure 1: Setting EAL/D students up for success presented as a diamond view.

Each perspective offers a facet of the figurative diamond and together they display:

- the diversity represented by EAL/D learners and their potential contribution to Australia's future, and
- the varying insights that each researcher brings to the topic.

Initially, Lorri Beveridge outlines the collaboration required in meeting the language learning needs of EAL/D students, given that at some time, most Australian teachers will have EAL/D students in their classroom. Thus, all teachers share the responsibility of ensuring they have a sound understanding of the language learning needs of these students and related pedagogies, so they can best cater for the varied learning and wellbeing needs of EAL/D students in their classrooms.

Next, Henry Fraser points out the gravitas of learning lessons from the past relating to the emerging language learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The lessons he outlines include an understanding that the first languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people must continue to be recognised, respected, and utilised in classroom learning. As with all EAL/D learners, Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander students benefit from best practice teaching strategies, and these students have the right to access the educational opportunities afforded to all students to achieve success in academic English.

Of equal importance, Chaumei Dong provides a parental lens that focuses on valuing students' home languages and ensuring students have the best chance of success in learning English. She shares her confusion, echoed by many of her friends with EAL/D children entering formal education in Australia for the first time. Dong wishes for her child to remain multilingual but is concerned that keeping home languages alive may hinder or slow childrens' English language acquisition and impact success at school. English language acquisition is highly prized because it is regarded as a precursor for academic success, and because English is widely considered a global language.

Robyn Cox garners the voices of primary-aged EAL/D students in her research. She investigates their multilingual childhoods and the place of multiple languages in their lives. Her findings suggest that all students benefit when EAL/D students share their multilingual knowledge and experiences with the wider school population. The challenge for teachers is ensuring equitable, adequate and sufficient support both at home and in English languages classrooms.

Finally, the 'diamond view', suggested by Abby Saleh, is a pragmatic one. She shares the notion that many EAL/D students have experienced trauma in their migration journey and emphasizes the absolute importance of students feeling emotionally and socially safe, through schools collectively focusing on building trusting relationships between students, teachers, peers and the wider school community. Saleh asks teachers to self-reflect and seek out the additional learning they require, through personal research or engaging in relevant professional learning or further study. Such self-reflection, evaluation and ongoing professional learning is critical in ensuring the progress and achievement of every EAL/D student.

## English as an additional language or dialect

The acronym EAL/D describes a diverse group of students learning English as an additional language or dialect (ACARA, 2014). This includes students whose first language is a language or dialect other than Standard English, a diverse group previously described as learning English as a second language (ESL), as well as those learning Standard Australian English (SAE) as an additional dialect, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who use one or more varieties of Aboriginal English as a first language (Eades, 2013). Students from these backgrounds require different levels of support to learn academic English at school, depending on their level of proficiency in SAE in general, and academic English in particular (Choudry, 2018; Hertzberg, 2012; Dobinson & Buchori, 2016).

Over half the world's population speaks more than one language (Hessel & Murphy, 2019; Choudry, 2018), a capability that has been shown to have cognitive and social advantages (Ward, 2019; Hessel & Murphy, 2019; Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2012). Additionally, on arrival in Australian schools, EAL/D students often require support to help them develop proficiency in 'academic' English, the language variety students need to master in order to achieve educational success in Australia (ACARA, 2014; Hessel & Murphy, 2018; Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2012; Hutchinson, Whitely, Smith & Connors, 2003).

Success at school is not only measured by academic learning. There is an increasing understanding of the importance of ensuring students' wellbeing as the foundation of academic achievement at

**EAL/D students experience anxiety, low esteem and low motivation if they are exposed to written or spoken input they do not understand. These affective responses can impede academic learning, and thereby reinforces the importance of students feeling safe, valued and comfortable in the classroom if they are to learn successfully.**

school (Roche, 2015; Graham, Powell & Truscott, 2016). The link between academic learning and student wellbeing has been modelled by Krashen (2009) using an 'affective filter hypothesis'. According to Krashen's hypothesis, EAL/D students experience anxiety, low esteem and low motivation if they are exposed to written or spoken input they do not understand. These affective responses can impede academic learning, and thereby reinforces the importance of students feeling safe, valued and comfortable in the classroom if they are to learn successfully. These affective variables are related to success in language acquisition.

## Contextual commentary

The goal of all language learning is meaningful communication. Speakers of one or more languages, where one language is considered dominant (L1), are described using terms such as 'bilingual', 'trilingual' and 'multilingual'.

The term 'plurilingualism' is increasingly used to recognise that multilingual

speakers integrate all their linguistic and cultural experiences and resources when communicating (Bak & Mehmedbegovic, 2017; Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009). This shift is reflected in a recent focus on the potential of translanguaging in education (Cox, 2015; Garcia, 2011, 2017).

Translanguaging accounts for the resourceful use of a full language repertoire, by those who speak more than one language in response to features of the context, for example, the purpose of the communication and the audience. In other words, students who use more than one language select from their entire verbal and non-verbal repertoire (words, gestures, technology tools), to make meaning which best facilitates understanding in each context (Pennycook, 2014).

Drawing on students' entire repertoire of language resources, including multiple languages, dominant home languages, individual ways of speaking (idiolect) and use of gestures, has the potential to maximise learning and achievement (Garcia, 2011; Bloomaert, 2010; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Haig, Konigsberg & Collard, 2005). A student's first language is both the foundation and a resource for learning additional languages and additional language learning benefits from first language maintenance (ACARA, 2014; Adoniou & Macken-Horarik, 2007; Hessel & Murphy, 2019). For example, students who are literate in their first language can apply this knowledge and skill to achieving literacy in English. Students' existing linguistic and cultural capital is valued and used in the classroom when teachers provide opportunities for students to use their first language (L1) to learn academic English.

For EAL/D students, developing the proficiency in English required for success at school takes time. In general, it takes about two years to attain functional use of an additional language, and five to seven years to attain academic proficiency in the language (Baker & Wright, 2017; Cummins, 2008; Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000). The younger a student is on arrival in Australia, the less time it takes to achieve parity with similar aged peers, while older school students tend to take longer to achieve language parity (Creagh et al., 2019), highlighting the need for additional language learning support for older, new arrival students. The English language proficiency of EAL/D students, and their educational achievement in Australia, varies greatly and depends on prior schooling, supportive home environments and the level of development in the home language. Some EAL/D students may require more support than others.

To succeed at school, EAL/D students need to develop two varieties of language. These are basic interpersonal communication skill (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008; Baker & Wright, 2017). BICS, sometimes called 'playground language' (Hertzberg, 2012), refers to the informal conversational

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**Teachers share the responsibility of ensuring that they have a sound understanding of the language learning needs of these students, and related pedagogies, so they can best cater for the varied learning and wellbeing needs of this diverse and significant student group.**

English students learn through interacting with their peers. CALP, in contrast, refers to the more challenging language use required for educational success. While BICS is typically used in context-embedded face-to-face exchanges with much nonverbal support, CALP tends to be more specialised and abstract, and more removed from supportive contexts

(Baker & Wright, 2017). CALP takes longer for EAL/D students to acquire than BICS, and often requires specialist EAL/D support.

Classroom teachers share with specialist EAL/D teachers the responsibility of meeting the language learning needs of EAL/D students. At some time, every Australian teacher will have EAL/D students in their classroom. Up to 2020, the number of EAL/D students in schools has been increasing each year. Teachers share the responsibility of ensuring that they have a sound understanding of the language learning needs of these students, and related pedagogies, so they can best cater for the varied learning and wellbeing needs of this diverse and significant student group.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D: a brief historical overview**

In Queensland, over 11,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have been identified as having a language background other than English, and therefore potentially requiring EAL/D support. This number has nearly doubled over the past four years, largely due to an awareness campaign and improved enrolment practices. It is suspected that many of the over 61,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students remain unidentified, and therefore unsupported. These students have various language backgrounds including some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and many under-researched and often mislabelled varieties, including Aboriginal English, Cape York Languages, and simply English to describe a range of varieties of English, from standard varieties to non-standard and creole varieties.

Teaching English as an additional language for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners is the oldest field of English language teaching in the country. During the 1790s, Bennelong famously learned English and actively worked with Governor Phillip. Before this, in 1788, Arabanoo was captured and unwillingly learned English to support the work of the colonisers. Nearly two decades earlier, Joseph Banks worked to document the languages he encountered while mapping the east coast of Australia – the start of a long and still ongoing project to understand the complexity, variety and uniqueness of First Nations languages.

These moments of language exchange capture the essence of what was to come in Australia, including the dominance of English, a mixture of active, passive and unwilling engagement with learning and using it, and occasional, anthropologically recorded exchanges and interest which set the scene for ‘two-way’ learning approaches centuries later.

During the 19th century, language became an essential means for Aboriginal people to engage in the changing economy of the continent. Aboriginal people from many language groups began to learn English for their own purposes. Nevertheless, the lack of access to formal education for Aboriginal people, the reduced purposes and restricted domains for using English available to Aboriginal people, and the widespread use of shipboard pidgin<sup>1</sup> in the early colony resulted, unsurprisingly, in a pidgin soon developing in the colony. This early contact language was largely based on English vocabulary.

<sup>1</sup> A pidgin is a limited form of language that is developed as a result of the communicative needs of groups who speak different languages (Dutton, 1983; Bakker, 2014).

Later described as NSW Pastoral Pidgin, this pidgin language variety was used by Aboriginal people and others working in the pastoral industry as it spread through what is now NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory (Dutton, 1983). In conjunction with the spread of Pastoral Pidgin, in Western Queensland particularly, there is a well-documented history of violent massacres (Bottoms, 2013). Aboriginal people were murdered, moved to missions, reserves and town fringe camps, or joined the industry that was reshaping their ancestral lands, while also learning and adding to the pidgin that came with so much rapid change and disruption (Sutton, Hinkson & Beckett, 2008; Dutton, 1969). This pidgin, in effect, was the only variety of ‘English’ that many Aboriginal people could access and was used for communication with the coloniser and between Aboriginal language groups.

During the early 20th century, English language learning continued a parallel path for many Aboriginal people. Under the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897, many people came under greater control of missionaries and government officials. This often included the explicit restriction of the use of Aboriginal languages. Even though Aboriginal people were expected to use English, access to and explicit teaching of standard English was limited and sporadic. Mission and reserve schools generally focused on giving students enough basic education to enable them to work as low or unpaid servants in homesteads or stations. During this time, through regular use within Aboriginal families and communities, various pidgins, spoken as a first language, developed into creoles, that is, full languages with complete meaning systems which children learned as their first language (Bakker, 2014). These creoles have a shared Aboriginal and English linguistic inheritance but with some variation in linguistic features (Mushin, Angelo and Munro, 2016).

### **Torres Strait Islander people**

Torres Strait Islander people also have a mixed history of learning English. The Torres Strait Island variety of English, called Yumplatok, or Pacific Pidgin English, is the result of many people actively attempting to learn the ‘English’ they were exposed to following colonisation (Shnukal, 2004). In generations that followed, Torres Strait Islanders discovered that this variety was not the language of government and power they sought to learn, so as to understand ‘what the language of the “white” people and their institutions do that keeps [them] at a disadvantage, that keeps [them] as the lesser “knowers” in situations’ (Nakata, 2007).

The use of pidgins and creoles alongside limited access and no opportunity to learn Standard Australian English continued throughout the second half of the 20th century. Flint (1968) was one of the first to use the term ‘Aboriginal English’, while describing the contact language varieties spoken by Aboriginal children at school in Woorabinda, Palm Island, Yarrabah and elsewhere. This term is now applied to many varieties with varying degrees of shared linguistic heritage, structure, phonology, and relationship to Standard Australian English. Following others like Sharifian (2001) and Eades (2013), Malcom (2018) defines Aboriginal English in terms of shared cultural conceptualisations and lists some of the most common structural and phonological features.

Some of the earliest work in response to the English language or dialect learning needs of Aboriginal children in an English language education system was undertaken by Flint (1968), whose report to the Queensland government proposed options for ‘integrating’ Aboriginal children into mainstream education. However, his approach was decidedly assimilationist. Having recognised the existence of new languages, he suggested eradicating them and replacing them with English, supposedly for the benefit of their speakers.

In the decades that followed various responses to the language backgrounds and language learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have been implemented, alongside a growing focus on their learning needs. These have ranged from the assimilatory, replacive monolingual model, through additive bi- or multilingual/dialectal models with a focus on code-switching, to the more recent preoccupation with plurilingualism, translanguaging, and the aspiration to move towards a genuinely celebratory multilingual society where standard English language skills are not a precondition for success or participation (Parkinson & Jones, 2019).

## Learning from the past

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to learn from the past and attempt to apply this knowledge to the future. Such lessons include:

- Attempting to erase, replace or remove languages and dialects in favour of English is not just unethical, it is also a barrier to the future educational success of children whose cultural heritage is expressed in these languages. The first languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people must be recognised, respected and used in classroom learning.
- English needs to be explicitly taught, using best-practice language teaching methods, if students are to learn to use it fluently and effectively.
- Like all EAL/D learners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have the right to engage with opportunities to learn Standard Australian English and academic English, to access the power and opportunities associated with these varieties.

The experiences and advice detailed elsewhere in this paper are applicable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners. If these basic principles are not followed in EAL/D teaching practice, particularly for speakers of English-lexified contact languages or non-standard varieties of English, there is a risk of repeating history, devaluing and destroying existing languages. This would maintain the power imbalance rather than advantaging multilingual citizens, empowering those with multiple languages to share their perspectives and experiences, and to learn to use Standard Australian English in the contexts in which it is required.

## EAL/D students in schools: a parent's view

Though bilingualism, or multilingualism, is believed to be beneficial for children, families and the wider community, the importance of supporting children to grow up multilingually in a monolingual English-speaking country like Australia is not always valued or recognised (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014). Many children from immigrant family backgrounds have already developed language proficiency in their home language before they enter Australian educational settings. Whether these children will eventually become bilingual or multilingual or lose their home language and become mainly English speakers, is influenced by many factors, including parents' attitudes (Hu et al., 2014) and language practices (Lan, Torr & Degotardi, 2012).

A recent study of Chinese immigrants, one of the largest ethnic groups in Australia, determined that parents value bilingualism highly and actively support their children in developing bilingual skills prior to school (Hu et al., 2014). On the one hand, Chinese parents have a strong desire for their children to become bilingual for practical reasons such as future careers and to enable communication between family members. On the other hand, they share concerns about their children's English language development during the early years of education and are worried about whether their children will be able to understand their teachers fully by the time they enter primary school. It appears that learning multiple languages concurrently can be a dilemma for families with EAL/D backgrounds as some parents are unsure whether knowledge of a first language can help or hinder

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the development of learning a second language. Some parents believe that home languages can negatively affect their children's English learning, including English pronunciation (Hu et al., 2014). For these reasons, the parents desire that their children learn English during the years

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prior to school. It is not too difficult to understand and empathise with these immigrant parents' concerns and expectations. For parents around the world, proficiency in English is a highly valued aspect of children's school readiness and predictor of future success because of the status of English as a global language (Lan et al., 2012).

In addition, many EAL/D families feel that they do not receive effective and practical support from educational settings for teaching and maintaining the home language (Law, 2015). Apart from programs such as the Australian Early Learning Language program, and schools like the NSW Community Language Schools, EAL/D children generally have limited opportunities to hear, speak and learn their home language in educational settings (National Centre for Multilingual Education, 2012). Most of these children will primarily hear and speak their first language at home but prefer to use English as the language of communication outside their home environments. This places high demands on the parents, who along with educators in early years settings and schools, need to work towards stimulating children's development in their home languages.

Understanding children's multilingual development, and support in educational settings can help preserve home languages (Law, 2015). EAL/D families are concerned about the loss of their heritage language, but 'most feel alone, helpless, and inadequate' (Law, 2015, p 3) in addressing the issue of maintaining the home language

**... it can take the whole of the primary school years for young EAL/D children to achieve academically at the same level as their English-speaking peers.**

while supporting their children's English acquisition. This highlights the importance of developing parents' understanding of multilingual education and supporting them to gain knowledge and skills to aid their children's multilingual learning.

EAL/D children not only face the risk of losing their home language, but also encounter barriers to gaining competencies in learning Standard English in educational environments. As stated previously (Baker & Wright, 2017; Cummins, 2008; Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000), it can take the whole of the primary school years for young EAL/D children to achieve academically at the same level as their English-speaking peers. This suggests that EAL/D students must overcome significant challenges to succeed in English-speaking educational contexts (Creagh et al., 2019). Specifically, EAL/D children face challenges in developing academic English and engaging with increasingly abstract and complex curriculum knowledge. In an English dominant society, the degree to which educators, families, and communities can provide EAL/D children with equitable, adequate and sufficient support for both home and English languages is the key to them successfully becoming bilingual or multilingual (Creagh et al., 2019). To be able to support EAL/D students, it is crucial that adults, especially parents and educators, have a clear understanding of multilingual education and EAL/D students' needs, so as to inform their engagement with multilingual children and to be able to work collaboratively to address the issues that arise from multilingual practices.

## Multilingual world of the children in our classrooms

In order to set EAL/D students up for success, educators need to consider the teaching/learning context from the perspective of the learner. Oftentimes, the student's own perspective is ignored or downplayed in the light of teachers' intentions or prescribed learning outcomes. Also, at times, schools and systems rely on an 'outmoded idea' of the language use of their students based on an 'immigration' model which was prevalent at the end of last century. This model suggests that EAL/D students are still seen as being newly arrived or new to the English language and thus present a problem that needs to be solved, or a gap that needs to be closed. A recent study (Cox, 2015) aimed to examine more closely the perspective of EAL/D learners in schools by engaging directly with a sample of students and asking them about their 'linguistic lives'.

This study explored the language use of a small sample of primary-aged children who speak English and another language or languages. The study design incorporated the 'children as co-researcher model' (Lundy,

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McEvoy & Byrne, 2011), as the researcher wanted to explore the lived experiences of multilingual learners in Australian classrooms. The study took place with ethics approval from both the researcher's university and the school system.

The findings of the study revealed the rich and sophisticated linguistic lives of these EAL/D learners and suggest that these language skills and understandings were rarely used or valued in the teaching and learning contexts they were familiar with. When interviews with the 17 participating students were analysed, four broad themes emerged. A review of these themes suggests knowledge, strategies, and tools teachers of EAL/D students' can use to support successful teaching and learning in their classrooms.

These four themes suggest that EAL/D learners in schools already have:

- meta-awareness of language and identity links
- emerging understanding of the role of language in their education
- significant understanding of what it means to have a global childhood
- metalinguistic awareness of how to go about learning and consolidating a new language

By assuming that many of the EAL/D students also have these insights, it is possible to broaden the framing of the way they are taught. Furthermore, when considering these insights in relation to the work of Blommaert (2010), in which he identifies a shift in sociolinguistics from the sociolinguistics of variation to a sociolinguistics of mobility reflecting an increasingly globalised world, it is likely that these learners have thought a lot about the place of multiple languages in their lives.

### **Classroom practice which recognises learners' multilingual lives**

The following offers a partial discussion of a study reported by Cox (2015), which explores bilingual and multilingual children's understanding of language usage and the linguistic choices that they make. The findings indicate how teachers can appreciate and work with the 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) embedded in these students' multilingual ability.

#### **Theme (i): Meta-awareness of language and identity links**

##### **Student comments**

- 'In the house I always speak Cantonese but sometimes when I like don't know the word in Cantonese I just say it in English. My Mum and my family always understand.'
- 'Vietnamese, French, Japanese, English, Croatian, Chinese, Korean ... all the languages in the world ... because I want them to learn different languages so if they travel they can understand.'

##### **Possible ways of incorporating existing abilities**

- explicit valuing of other languages through discussions, story reading and labelling (beyond the already common welcome signs)
- accepting other words for common items including words from other languages
- building library collections in languages of the school community
- using SBS programs in languages within the mainstream
- studying language groups and sociolinguistics formally, including Indigenous languages, language families and identification of languages with the largest numbers of speakers in the world.

#### **Theme (ii): Emerging understanding of the role of language in their education**

##### **Student comments**

- 'I learnt Slovak because my parents they weren't speaking English to me. They ... Slovak a lot and then when I was in preschool, I learnt how to speak English.'
- 'I went to school when I was in China, so I learned to write it. Say when I was in Year 2, when I was in school here. But in China, when I was Year 2, we have English lessons when we go there. But in China we speak Chinese even in English lessons.'

##### **Possible ways of incorporating existing abilities**

- focusing on how we learn languages and how vocabulary builds from Tier 1, 2 and 3 words
- explicit teaching about ways that spoken language becomes written language, including the more formal aspects of grammar and spelling, while comparing with language that use an orthography

#### **Theme (iii): Significant understanding of what it means to have a global childhood**

##### **Student comments**

- 'I would speak to them in Greek and teach them English, so like one day if there something goes wrong and there is no work – then they can come here.'

##### **Possible ways of incorporating existing abilities**

- a school wide valuing of multilingualism, through library collections and film days, national days that foreground language as well as national dress or costume
- recognising that there are large nations and economies which operate without the use of the English language.

#### **Theme (iv): Metalinguistic awareness of how to go about learning and consolidating a new language**

##### **Student comments**

- 'When it comes to my head like if it's – if I have to say something to my father or my mother; if it comes in Greek quicker to my head I can say it but if it comes quicker in English I can say it.'

##### **Possible ways of incorporating existing abilities**

- active classroom discussions and games which focus on metacognition and on how languages are learnt
- classroom bingo and memory games where both English and mother tongue languages are accepted (supported by bilingual teachers, and multilingual teacher aides).

Setting EAL/D learners up for success requires consideration of the 'intercultural turn' (Thorn, 2010), which is the effect of living global lives, alongside the emergence of government policy which attempts to reconcile immigration, language difference and education and the transnational literacies which exist in multilingual classrooms. Importantly for EAL/D learner success, Portes and Zhou (1993) have noted that it is among the second (and third) generation that issues such as maintenance of language, cultural traditions and ethnic identity are decided.

### **Key principles for supporting the language needs of EAL/D students including refugee students**

The migration journey is often a traumatic experience for students, especially those from a refugee background. In supporting the learning needs of students, wellbeing must be at the forefront of any support strategy. It is vital that teachers ensure that students feel welcomed into their new learning environment which is often in vast contrast to educational settings they are accustomed to. Teachers need to take positive steps to ensure that their students feel safe (both emotionally and socially), and to foster trusting relationships so the students

**In supporting the learning needs of students, wellbeing must be at the forefront of any support strategy.**

develop attachments to their teachers, peers and the school community. In doing so, teachers establish optimal conditions and environments where learning can flourish.

Few classrooms exist in Australia where there are no EAL/D students. These students have very diverse backgrounds, experiences, English language proficiencies and cultural capital. Whilst intensive support for students with limited English is an important feature of EAL/D education, all teachers must have the mindset of collective responsibility for language acquisition. For primary schools this includes mainstream teachers, as they teach EAL/D students for the majority of the school day, and for secondary teachers, it means that ALL subject area teachers understand the role they play in language instruction. For teachers to truly be able to design well-targeted learning experiences for culturally and linguistically diverse students, they must possess a certain level of professional knowledge, develop explicit professional practices and foster certain mindsets to ensure effective language learning.

Not all teachers have had the necessary training to address the needs of EAL/D students. Consequently, it is essential that teachers identify areas for further development. In doing so, they may seek the professional learning required to build their capacity (such as engaging in personal research, enlisting in professional development course or further study). When teachers develop their specialised knowledge of EAL/D education and pedagogy, they reinforce their capacity to support the efficacy of their colleagues by transmitting this knowledge to others who may need additional professional support in teaching EAL/D students. Often, the best form of professional learning occurs through collegial and collaborative professional discussions and incidental workplace learning.

Mainstream teachers may request pedagogical support to cater for the needs of EAL/D learners. Identification of who EAL/D learners are, and assessment of their language proficiency, is the first port of call for any teacher supporting EAL/D students. There is a range of useful support materials for teachers of EAL/D students to use as a guide for their practice. In particular, the EAL/D Learning Progression (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2014), which is used in some states, has proven useful in guiding teachers and schools by providing a description of the stages through which students usually pass as they move toward English language proficiency.

The nomenclature of the EAL/D Learning Progression (ACARA, 2014) is regarded as a 'common language' shared by EAL/D specialists and mainstream educators to describe student language proficiency. Teachers must recognise that learning a new language takes time. The time taken to move from one level to the next is dependent on several factors, including each student's previous educational experience and students' literacy skills in their first language. For refugee students who have experienced trauma or disrupted schooling, this time frame extends substantially, possibly to around ten years. Similarly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students requiring EAL/D assistance, whose language learning needs often go unrecognised and unsupported, may attend a mainstream English-only school for several years without progressing beyond the developing or even emerging stages. It is important for teachers to be patient with their EAL/D students' progress with English whilst maintaining high expectations (DeCourcy et al., 2018; Herzberg, 2012; Hammond, 2012).

**It is important for teachers to be patient with their EAL/D students' progress with English whilst maintaining high expectations.**

Teachers of EAL/D students must also recognise and acknowledge the cultural capital which these students bring to the classroom. The term 'cultural capital' refers to those cultural elements that help students succeed at school, including family background, status, taste and cultural resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Di Maggio, 1982). A student's cultural capital is usually developed across different educational contexts. There are times when their cultural capital can help promote their learning and the learning of others. For example, students may be well travelled, or have lived in societies vastly different to their Australian contexts. When students share these experiences, others can develop a deep knowledge, understanding and appreciation of different cultures. Conversely, EAL/D students may have limited knowledge of aspects of Australian culture, which can impact their learning. For example, EAL/D students may not be familiar with common nursery rhymes, which children from the dominant culture in Australia learn from a very young age. EAL/D students may also bring with them learning skills such as memorising, which served them well in schools in their home country but may not be valued to the same extent in Australia where many classrooms are underpinned by pedagogies based on constructivism, a view that students learn more by doing than by rote learning. These students bring knowledge, experience and orientations to learning into the classroom that, if recognised and valued by teachers and peers, will enrich the curriculum, and expand and extend the learning repertoires of EAL/D students in ways that will lead to success in their new educational context.

**EAL/D students ... bring knowledge, experience and orientations to learning into the classroom that, if recognised and valued by teachers and peers, will enrich the curriculum, and expand and extend the learning repertoires of EAL/D students ...**

EAL/D students are learning English, through English, and about English simultaneously. When compared with students who are developing their English skills in their first language, EAL/D students face additional challenges, first needing to learn how to use the language to communicate successfully and to interact formally and informally within their immediate environment. They learn through English as they access the mainstream curriculum in carefully designed programs which make key knowledges, skills and language visible. Finally, students learn about English, how it works, how to use it, and how it acts as a resource in classrooms where language itself becomes the focus for explicit instruction (Halliday, 1980; 2004).

### **Strategies for English competence in the classroom**

A key strategy in valuing the cultural capital that EAL/D students bring to school is developing an inclusive curriculum where diversity is valued and celebrated. This may be achieved through text selection, including the use of bilingual books and texts which represent diversity through stories and illustrations. Parkin and Harper (2019) stress the importance of selecting quality literature in the classroom that 'represents the lives of our minority students' (p 8), so all students can identify, understand and engage with characters and plots in texts. Teachers may also consider using the child's first language (L1) in the classroom, especially during discussions when EAL/D students are confirming or clarifying ideas, or seeking support (ACARA, 2014; Adoniou & Maken-Horarik, 2007; Hessel & Murphy, 2019). Teachers must understand the benefits bilingualism brings to the classroom and harness them.

Best practice in supporting EAL/D learners is established based on several key conditions. These include oral language development, learning through contextualised experiences, scaffolding and modelling language, message abundancy, zone of proximal development and explicit vocabulary instruction (ACARA, 2014; Beck, 2014; Herzberg, 2012). These teaching strategies can be augmented with strategies that support the language learning needs of EAL/D students, including the use of visuals, integration of interactive technologies, and providing timely and constructive feedback, all useful inclusions in teaching repertoires that contribute to effective EAL/D education.



## Concluding discussion

It is clear from each of the varying facets of the EAL/D teaching 'diamond view', as outlined in this paper, that given the increasing number and diversity of EAL/D students in mainstream Australian classrooms, all teachers share responsibility for addressing these students' learning and wellbeing needs. Teachers can be reassured that EAL/D students typically arrive at school with an existing rich linguistic repertoire of one or more languages, a diverse range of global experience, intercultural competence and social capital, all of which they can apply to the learning of the English they need to succeed at school. A student's first language is a valuable resource for educators to draw on as students acquire both second and subsequent languages. The linguistic resources and cultural capital students bring to school provide a foundation on which they develop forms of English language knowledge and skill that guarantee their success in Australian education settings (Albright & Luke, 2006).

Whilst developing academic English, EAL/D students may experience challenges, for example, when engaging with increasingly abstract and complex curriculum concepts as they progress through school. To help their children meet these challenges, some parents of EAL/D students are unsure whether they should strive to keep their children's first language alive. In an English-dominant society, such as Australia today, the degree to which educators and schools provide EAL/D children and their families with adequate support for both their home language and English is the key to their success at school (Creagh et al., 2019). The aim of language learning is effective communication, therefore moving towards a genuine multilingual society where all languages are valued is an important pursuit.

**Teachers can be reassured that EAL/D students typically arrive at school with an existing rich linguistic repertoire of one or more languages, a diverse range of global experience, intercultural competence and social capital, all of which they can apply to the learning of the English they need to succeed at school.**

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## Writer biographies



**Felicity Young**

Felicity Young has over 20 years' experience as a teacher and senior leader in NSW Public Schools. She is currently the Curriculum Support Project Advisor English K-6 for the NSW Department of Education – Education Standards Directorate.



**Bronwyn Thoroughgood**

Bronwyn is principal of St Philip's Christian College (SPCC) DALE and SPCC DALE Young Parents. She has a Masters in Special Education and has been working in the field of education for over 40 years. Throughout her career, Bronwyn has worked with students, parents and staff in her roles as teacher, consultant and principal. Bronwyn is passionate about providing an educational setting where students love to come each day.



**Hayley Adcock**

Hayley is a registered psychologist with the Psychology Board of Australia and is a Member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS). Hayley began her career in child protection before moving into family therapy, school psychology and private practice, before becoming the Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing at St Philip's Christian College DALE and DALE Young Parents. Hayley is passionate about supporting leaders and staff to ingrate best practice into pedagogy and build capacity in the areas of mental health and wellbeing.



**Dr Anna Dedousis-Wallace**

Anna Dedousis-Wallace is a senior clinical psychologist at The Kidman Centre, UTS. Anna has extensive experience working with adolescents, their parents and teachers, both as a high school teacher and in her role as a clinical psychologist. Anna has undergone intensive training in Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) by Dr Ross Greene and is one of two certified trainers of CPS in Australia. She has used CPS to treat children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder within a large randomised controlled trial, and more recently enjoyed training hundreds of school staff in the CPS model across rural and regional NSW.



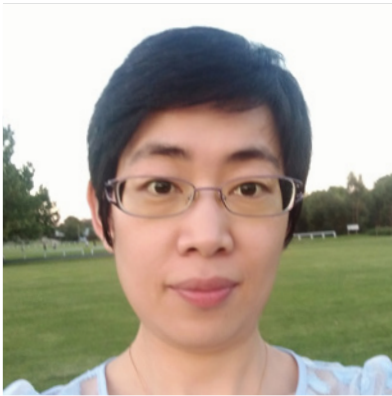
**Dr Lorraine (Lorri) Beveridge**

Lorri's current role is curriculum advisor, supporting schools in curriculum implementation. Her PhD research centres on *Collaborative teacher professional learning: investigating impact and sustainability* (2015). Recent papers for teachers encompass publications and co-publications for English, including those focusing on the alphabetic principle, writing, spelling, collaborative teacher professional learning and teachers as researchers and practitioners. Lorri particularly enjoys collaborating with teachers on writing English units using the vehicle of quality texts.



**Henry Fraser**

Henry Fraser manages the Languages and Cultures team in the Queensland Department of Education. This team supports teachers to improve their cultural responsiveness, engage with the Cross Curriculum Priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and respond to the language learning needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. He has published research in EAL/D for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the early years, and worked with Aboriginal language centres in Queensland and Western Australia to support Language Owners in the maintenance, revival and reclamation of their First Nations languages.



### **Dr Chuanmei Dong**

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Chuanmei Dong is a lecturer in early childhood and primary education at Macquarie University. She has a keen interest in English learning and development in the early years for EAL/D students. Chuanmei has been involved in initial teacher education and training across different universities in Australia.



### **Dr Robyn Cox**

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Dr Robyn Cox is Associate Professor in English Curriculum and Pedagogies in the Faculty of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Education at the University of New England. She researches language use in educational contexts with a recent focus on early literacy, learning and teaching early reading and policy directions around the teaching of early reading. Her research has been published in a wide range of educational journals.



### **Abby Saleh**

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Abby Saleh is Deputy Principal and Instructional Leader at Fairfield Public School. She has held numerous roles in EAL/D in South Western Sydney including Refugee Support Leader and EAL/D Network Leader. Abby is also an accredited Highly Accomplished teacher and has trained teachers in EAL/D pedagogy over many years.