Scan

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Special issue – spotlight on supporting EAL/D learners

Analysing perspective in history

Introducing the Authentic Connected Engaged (ACE) Framework

Contents

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20

Welcome to our Term 2 issue!

This issue begins with a special focus on supporting EAL/D learners.

Thank you to all our contributors for generously sharing their expertise.

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Learning through argument – bringing EAL/D learners into the conversation

Margaret Turnbull

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Margaret Turnbull describes ways in which argumentation skills are developed through talk and outlines teaching practices that scaffold talk for students learning English as an additional language.

Much has been written about the integral role of talk in learning (Alexander, 2020). When a young child learns to talk through interacting with adults, they are learning how language works while learning about their environment. Halliday (1993) said, 'When children learn language. ... they are learning the foundations of learning itself' (p 93).

As adults, we continue to learn through talk. You only have to think of your own struggles learning something new (for example, a new language) to appreciate the role of talk in the learning process. Whether recounting an experience to a friend or summarising a podcast for colleagues, it is the process of putting thoughts into words that can

clarify understandings, stretch comprehension of concepts and give the opportunity to experiment with new vocabulary.

Dr Sue Ollerhead (2022) describes the importance of explicitly teaching oracy across the school curriculum. My article provides a complementary perspective to Dr Ollerhead's by describing both dimensions of 'learning to talk' and 'learning through talk.' It describes ways in which argumentation skills are developed through talk and outlines teaching practices that scaffold talk for students learning English as an additional language.

Why focus on developing argumentation skills?

There is good reason to develop argumentation skills to equip all students to reason critically, interrogate evidence and negotiate shared understandings (McNaughton et al., 2019; Reznitskaya and Švaříček, 2019). Argumentation is key to both civic participation and academic achievement (Iordanou et al., 2016). In the broader social context, the nature of debate on social issues is often distorted by polarising media and limited use of rigorous research. Positions are often asserted using emotive language to flame conflict and there is a diminishing understanding of what counts as evidence. Now, more than ever, students need the language and thinking skills to construct and evaluate argument.

Argumentation skills required for school learning include examining and critiquing evidence, exploring different perspectives and constructing, organising and justifying positions (Reznitskaya and Wilkinson, 2019). Talk plays a key role in the development of argumentation skills as it is through conversations that students present, support and clarify their views, thus building an internal schema for argumentation (Mercer, 2008; Mercier, 2011). Mastery of both oral and written argumentation is necessary for school academic success. Whereas written argumentation is an intellectual exercise constrained by the norms of the written mode, oral language is considered a more flexible resource for negotiating understandings and/or achieving consensus (Newell et al., 2011). For 'English as an Additional Dialect' (EAL/D) learners, oral interaction plays a critical role in the development of language for argumentation.

Why is talk important for students learning English as an additional language?

Students who are learning English as an additional language are learning to talk in English and learning about the English language at the same time as using spoken English to explore new concepts (learning through talk). They may draw on linguistic resources in their home languages as well as their developing English language when teasing out their understandings of new concepts through talk. Hence, there is a hefty cognitive load for EAL/D learners in classroom interactions. Often these learners report a reluctance to participate in class discussions because they lack confidence in their language skills, or they are not given the opportunity to use their full linguistic resources. When EAL/D learners sit on the sidelines of classroom interactions, they are at risk of missing out on key learning through talk.

The importance of talk and interaction in learning language is clear. When students are pushed to produce language, they are required to think more deeply and to work harder than when simply listening (Swain, 1995). It is in the intellectual struggle to make oneself understood where deep language learning occurs.

By varying classroom interaction patterns, we can enrich talk opportunities. There is considerable evidence that classroom interactions continue to be dominated by teacher talk and the classic pattern of 'Teacher Initiation – Student Response – Teacher Evaluation/Response' move (Nystrand, 1997):

> **T: So what can you tell me about Leif Erikson? (Initiation)**
> **S: He discovered America (Response)**
> **T: Right. (Evaluation)**

While this type of interaction pattern may be useful for checking student comprehension, it tends to limit students' spoken contributions to a single word or phrase. When the teacher opens up the third move, however, by pushing students to elaborate their ideas and extend talk, students'

language skills are stretched, as in the following example:

> T: Right. So why do we think that Columbus discovered America?
> S: So maybe it's about how his life was recorded in History.

There is also evidence to show that more interactive classrooms that are socially supportive and include opportunities for cumulative, purposeful and deliberative talk, create positive learning outcomes. Between 2014 and 2017, a trial of Dialogic Teaching, a model of pedagogy underpinned by these principles (Alexander, 2020), was conducted in the UK with nearly 5,000 Year 5 students and 208 teachers over a period of 20 weeks. An independently commissioned evaluation through a randomised control trial found that students in the intervention group were up to 2 months ahead of their control group peers in standardised tests of English, mathematics and science. Video analysis showed impressive developments in teacher and student talk (Alexander, 2018).

While findings of the randomised control trial illustrate the potential of interactive classrooms to increase scores on standardised tests, they may distract from the significance of this pedagogy for student engagement. When students are respected as thinkers and reasoners in classroom interactions, they will build a more positive perception of their own intellectual and learning abilities, which supports more active engagement in learning (Resnick and Schantz, 2015). It follows, that EAL/D learners would benefit from a supportive and challenging interactive learning culture.

Furthermore, Resnick and Schantz (2015) warn that without careful attention to cultural and linguistic differences, efforts to increase opportunities for argumentation through classroom interactions could reinforce, rather than reduce, inequities in learning opportunity within schooling systems. Given their limited linguistic resources in the target language and prior learning experiences outside Australia, EAL/D learners may have restricted access to talk that is key to building reasoned argumentation

Argumentation skills required for school learning include examining and critiquing evidence, exploring different perspectives and constructing, organising and justifying positions ...

competence. Explicit language teaching and a culturally responsive approach to planning classroom talk is required to scaffold EAL/D students' inclusion in learning interactions (Davies and Esling, 2020; McNaughton et al., 2019; Schleppegrell, 2013).

Strategies for scaffolding the language of argumentation in talk

In the secondary context, the persuasive language used in argumentation is a little more subtle than the persuasive texts produced in primary school. Argument is less about passionate assertions and more about convincing others through tempered use of emotive language, increased use of abstract academic language, considered emphasis of key points and subtle evaluation of different perspectives and sources of evidence (Christie and Derewianka, 2008).

Examples of these language strategies of argumentation are:

Using nominalisation to build academic spoken language

Nominalisation is a powerful language resource for creating academic spoken and written texts. Everyday spoken language typically uses very few nominalisations. Put simply, we can think of nominalisation as changing a verb into a noun; for example, 'invaded' becomes 'invasion'. Sometimes, as in this example, in the process of changing a verb into a noun, we also move from a concrete action to an abstract concept (Derewianka and Jones, 2021).

Using nominalisations can also change the structure of the sentence. Compare the following spoken and written texts. The first sentence using everyday language has more words, verbs (attend, remember, celebrate) and clauses, illustrating the complex structure of spoken language. The second sentence

uses nominalisation to increase the density of the language and includes only a single verb (is).

> **Everyday language: 'On ANZAC day people attend public ceremonies to remember the soldiers who died and to celebrate the Anzac legend.'**

> **Written language: 'The Anzac day public commemoration is a celebration of the ANZAC legend.'**

In the first example, the subject of the sentence is the 'people', while the subject of the second sentence is 'the ANZAC day public commemoration.' Using nominalisation, 3 clauses from the first sentence have been condensed into one noun phrase – 'the Anzac day public commemoration.' This removes the person (people) from the sentence and makes the subject of the sentence an abstract concept (commemoration), which is typical of academic texts.

The second sentence is written as a single clause with the verb 'is' joining the 2 nominalisations. This is a typical construction of an academic text used, not just in argument but in other informative texts, to define, classify or describe.

Nominalisations can also be used as a strategy to create cohesion. In the following example, the author compacts information from 2 clauses in the first sentence into a single nominalisation in the second sentence. This helps the text flow.

> **'On ANZAC day people attend public ceremonies to remember the soldiers who died.'**

> **'This public commemoration is a celebration of the ANZAC legend.'**

It is important to make visible for students, the role of nominalisation in constructing academic language. Joint construction provides the ideal opportunity to co-construct nominalisations from spoken language to model academic language. For example, teachers write students' responses on the board during discussion and then collaboratively reconstruct these as nominalisations that can then be used to jointly construct paragraphs.

Using intensifiers to graduate arguments

We can adjust the strength of force of an argument by using intensifiers. Intensifiers are words such as: very, somewhat, extremely, less, simply, most, terribly, exceptionally, incredibly. These words help the speaker or writer to strengthen the point they are making (Derewianka and Jones, 2023).

In more academic writing, moderate use of intensifiers can be more effective. Consider the difference between the following sentences:

> **'Talk plays an incredibly important role in the classroom and is extensively supported by overwhelmingly positive research findings.'**

> **'Talk plays an important role in the classroom and is supported by extensive positive research findings.'**

It is important to discuss the use of intensifiers with students and teach them how to moderate their use by examining and critiquing their effectiveness in exemplar texts.

Student spoken language	Teacher recasting of student language into nominalisation
'It is representing something from the war.'	The representation of war
'On ANZAC day people attend public ceremonies to remember the soldiers who died and to celebrate the ANZAC legend.'	The Anzac day public commemoration is a
'Cook basically took over someone else's country.'	Cook's invasion of Australia
'Like they all remember it because it was such a horrible thing.'	The horrors of war

Figure 1: An example of board work where the teacher shows how nominalisations can be constructed

In the history classroom, intensifiers can be used to evaluate the usefulness of evidence or the source in an argument. In the following example, teachers use a cline, or graduated rating scale, to teach the language for describing usefulness of history sources (Figure 2). This language can be modelled on the board as a whole class, then practised in group discussion where students analyse the sources and justify their decision before completing a joint construction of a source annotation (Figure 3).
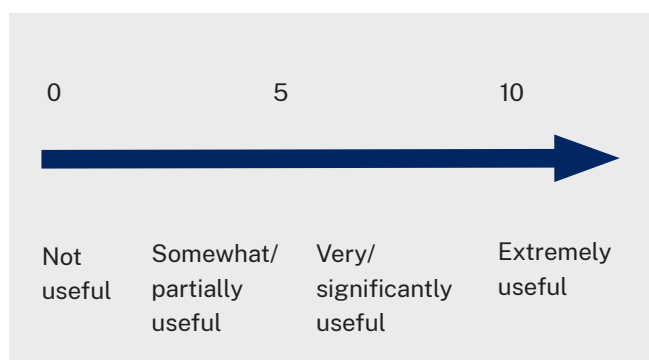
Figure 2: Usefulness cline for describing primary and secondary sources

Significance of the US Civil Rights movement on changing rights and freedoms in Australia
Source 3 is a secondary source produced in 2009 comparing Martin Luther King's key activities with Charles Perkins' from 1936 to 1965. Source 3 is somewhat useful as it doesn't tell us whether Charles Perkins was directly influenced by Martin Luther King; however, the dates do provide information that suggests that Martin Luther King was an influence because he has key events that Charles Perkins follows. Therefore, this source is partially useful in providing information.

Figure 3: Joint construction of source annotation in Year 9 history

Using 'saying' verbs to evaluate other perspectives

In argumentation, other perspectives can be introduced by explicitly referring to what others say about the issue or topic. This can be done using direct quotes; for example, 'Alexander (2020) states,

"dialogic teaching is more than just classroom talk" (p 1)', or by reporting what was said: 'Alexander suggests that classroom talk is complex.' The use of saying verbs in these examples (states, suggests) carries particular meaning that can be used in an argument to subtly evaluate the perspective (Derewianka and Jones, 2023).

A range of saying verbs includes: argues, states, says, suggests, points out, implies, explains, concludes, reveals, confirms. Some of these saying verbs give the impression that the perspective is factual or neutral (states, reports, explains), while others give the impression that the perspective is open to interpretation and therefore, evaluative (suggests, implies, claims).

The meaning of each of these verbs can be articulated and exemplified for students so that they are used appropriately. For example, as a group, students can classify the saying verbs as either evaluative or neutral (Figures 4 and 5).

Saying verb	Definition
States	To present information as a fact
Reports	Give an account of a particular matter
Explains	Provide a clear detailed description giving reasons

Figure 4: Group activity to classify and define neutral saying verbs

Saying verb	Definition
Confirms	To establish that something is truthful or correct
Suggests	Put forward an idea for consideration
Implies	Indicates without explicitly stating
Argues	Expresses a view and gives reasons
Claims	Put forward an idea without providing evidence

Figure 5: Group activity to classify and define evaluative saying verbs

Knowledge of language is key to effective scaffolding

When teachers understand the language features of argumentation, this knowledge is reflected in their contingent scaffolding of student language during class discussions. Contingent scaffolding, sometimes referred to as interactional scaffolding, occurs when teachers take the 'in-the-moment' opportunities to respond to student comments with the intention of providing support and/or challenge. According to Hammond and Gibbons (2005), one way teachers scaffold students' academic language is by appropriating their everyday language and recasting as academic language (see Figure 6).

> T: Why did the Cold War begin?
> S: The superpowers were competing for power
> T: Yes. They were competing for dominance. Can you say that again but use the noun 'competition'?
> S: Competition... competition for dominance by the superpowers
> T: (writes) 'due to the competition for dominance by the superpowers'

Figure 6: Example of recasting students' everyday language into written academic language

In this example, the teacher has appropriated the student language 'competing for power' and recast it as 'competition for dominance.'

In interactive classrooms characterised by principles of high support and high challenge, opportunities for contingent scaffolding are enriched. Teachers who have a strong knowledge of argumentation language can integrate contingent scaffolding and explicit language instruction into class discussions. This amplifies the visibility of language of argumentation and equips EAL/D learners to participate in reasoned argumentation in the classroom.

Conclusion

Interactive classrooms can increase opportunities for 'learning to talk' and 'talking to learn' for EAL/D students. While a classroom culture underpinned by principles of high support and high challenge is beneficial for all students, it seems that this environment is imperative for EAL/D learners to thrive. Of particular importance, however, is the amplification of language in tandem with these principles. When the language of argumentation is identified, systematically taught, scaffolded in classroom interactions and discussed as part of learning reflections, we see evidence of more literate talk in classroom interactions. The amplified language focus equips all students with the capacity for reasoned argumentation for learning at school and for active citizenship in the future.

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Art makes thinking visible for learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D)

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Cindy Valdez considers the value of responding to art as a springboard for EAL/D learners.

For over 20 years my work with schools has been to support teachers to increase their capacity to teach and challenge EAL/D learners, and especially to meet the needs of refugee students. These students have often had limited or disrupted schooling due to trauma (Burke and Field, 2023). Social, emotional and academic learning is dependent on collaboration between schools, families and external agencies to deliver educational services and specialist counselling to students and their families. I have been able to witness how learners acquire the English language and engage in meaningful and purposeful learning experiences, but most of all I have seen them develop confidence in all areas of their schooling. One way that learning can be

supported is through art. So how can viewing and responding to art provide our EAL/D learners with opportunities to develop the skills of risk taking, problem-solving, collaborating and critical thinking?

My journey integrating the arts and visible thinking routines began in 2012 and continues today. Since 2014 I have been introducing students to the Art Gallery of NSW, a place where both knowledge and English language can be stimulated. Some students were even involved in an art exhibition, the Belonging project, that focussed on the experiences of young, displaced people. The work of those refugee students was displayed alongside artworks by Syrian children, curated by Australian artist Ben Quilty. Creating and responding to artworks can help to develop the ability to describe and explain. Students can be invited to share their interpretations of what the image might be about. By sharing their wonderings or questions about an image, both language and literacy development are enhanced.

The transformative power of art

There is growing evidence that arts-based programs support the wellbeing and cognitive development of students (Ewing, 2010). In her review of the arts in Australian education, Ewing argues that research demonstrates that students from every background would benefit from an arts-rich curriculum. This is also exemplified in the research conducted by Belinda Davis and Rosemary Dunn with pre-school children who were creating and viewing art in the context of an art museum – The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (MCA). Davis and Dunn (2023) state, 'As children hear more specialized language in context, they are more likely to use and understand it.' They argue that creating and interacting with art provides opportunities to explore symbolic meanings since even when very young children create and interact with art they are supported to use language to describe their

experiences. This is important for all children but as Rachel Burke and Rebecca Soraya Field (2023) note in their research on the impact of arts on students from refugee backgrounds:

> **... for students with disrupted or limited experiences of formal education, less structured, arts-based approaches may offer learning opportunities in which the linguistic load is lessened through embedded, multimodal supports.**

In my classrooms, I have chosen to support students who are learning English while they are also learning by using 'visible thinking' routines (Ritchhart, Church and Morrison, 2011). These routines can help to develop English language, especially for students from refugee backgrounds. For instance, using the See-Think-Wonder routine helps to develop a learner's ability to observe images, art works and artefacts closely. The careful selection of images is critical if students are to be able to make connections to personal experiences, activate prior knowledge and interpret and make inferences about what they see. Quality texts offer more possibilities and information for students to explore than do simplified texts. Furthermore, this routine helps students to develop vocabulary by learning everyday language and naming the participants and happenings in the images that they are viewing. Visible thinking routines can also support EAL/D students' understanding of what it means to 'learn', and 'think' in a new context by making thinking 'visible' to ourselves and others. When newly arrived students interact with images from rich authentic texts, they are supported to learn how to infer, make interpretations and connections, and respond. A focus on meaning nurtures the kind of thinking that readers do.

Making thinking visible

To successfully implement the See-Think-Wonder routine with EAL/D students, an initial focus on oral language can both support listening and utilise questions to extend students' responses. Support can be given by accepting responses in any language and assisting plurilingual students by translating questions into their home language. (This may be achieved by recording students' responses to play as the need arises.)

> **There is growing evidence that arts-based programs support the wellbeing and cognitive development of students (Ewing, 2010).**

After implementing the routine orally for 5 or 6 sessions, student responses may be scribed and jointly constructed and then displayed in the classroom. Students can then be asked to complete a See-Think-Wonder chart by writing their 'thinking' and 'wonderings' on paper. Images can also be described using extended noun groups. For instance, beginning with the noun, then expanding by introducing articles, adjectives, adjectival phrases and clauses.

Amplifying the curriculum through art

Rather than simplifying the curriculum for students learning English, the aim is to 'amplify' the curriculum by implementing programs with high challenge and high support. It is an issue of equity to ensure that all students have access to the Australian Curriculum (Ewing, 2010). Like any strategy that involves high challenges, students might at first find this task difficult. However, developing visible thinking through art really engages students, so my suggestion is to persevere and enjoy this routine. Images may also be viewed with a focus on a concept, or 'big idea' being developed as part of a unit of work.

> The comprehension developed through seeing/viewing is supported when students are directed to make meaning without the obstacle of interpreting unknown verbal language.

This can initially be achieved by displaying the images being viewed on an interactive whiteboard or enlarged onto A3 paper. Alternatively, multiple copies of the image can be shared between 2 students. Students would then have the opportunity to look more closely at the images, ideally in silence for 2 minutes or so. By encouraging students to work in pairs, to 'name' what they see, and by accepting responses in all languages, (D'warte, 2014) they are supported to use both English and their own linguistic resources to respond. The comprehension developed through seeing/viewing is supported when students are directed to make meaning without the obstacle of interpreting unknown verbal language. These prompts may support students to report what they can see:

- I can see a …
- I can see an …
- There is …
- There are …
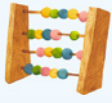
Determiner	Adjectives				Noun	Post modifiers	
Pointer	**Counter**	**Intensifier adverb**	**Describer**	**Classifier**	**Noun**	**Adjectival phrase**	**Adjectival clause**
		!		2B 3C 2J 6F K1V	person place thing	**with** a long brush stroke **in** the frame **on** the right **at** the top	who … ? which … ? and that … ?
that		really	beautiful	Chinese	picture	in the gallery	
those	two	very	colourful		images		that I really liked
my		extremely	personal		self-portrait		which I created with collage and crayon

Figure 1: The noun group

By moving to a whole class response, students can be supported to share what they saw.

By working in pairs or groups and by encouraging the use of all their linguistic resources, students can be supported to participate in discussion. Teachers can use prompts such as: 'What do you think about …?' or 'What do you think is happening here?' to extend the discussion. Similarly, questions like: 'What makes you say that?' and 'How do you know?' can elicit reasons for students' statements and encourage them to find 'clues' and 'evidence'. Modelling the language of 'interpreting' may also support students to develop their responses. For instance:
- I think this picture/image is about … I know this because …
- I think the artist wants us to …
- The author wants us to think about …
- This reminds me of …

Finally, sharing with the rest of the group can be facilitated by working in pairs to discuss both 'wonderings' and questions they might have about the image or artwork (Hammond and Gibbons, 2001). These sentence stems might be useful in modelling the language of 'questioning' as this is the most challenging part of the routine. EAL/D students will find it hard to distinguish between what they 'think' about and what they now 'wonder' about.
- I wonder why …?
- I wonder where …?
- I wonder who, what, when, how, and so on …?

During the final sharing with the whole group, students can be supported to describe by building and expanding noun groups both orally and in writing (see Figure 1).

Learning to communicate effectively in English is vitally important for all students, and is best facilitated by creating an inclusive, engaging learning environment that provides both maximum challenge and a very high level of support (Hammond and Gibbons, 2001).

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Multilingual storytelling in the classroom

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Gill Pennington examines the value of celebrating home languages in the classroom through multilingual storytelling.

Stories delight readers and listeners of all ages and have long been employed in schools to engage students' interest, introduce new language and concepts, and inspire reading and writing. For English language learners, stories provide a useful vehicle for gaining confidence as speakers and as learners, especially when sourced from a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse traditions. All students benefit from opportunities to share and respond playfully to multilingual texts, in the process becoming storytellers themselves, using their own voice to share their experiences and interests with a wider audience.

In this article, I begin with a revealing episode of multilingual storytelling in an Early Childhood classroom, before providing background information about the value and potential of using story as pedagogy. I describe an initiative begun with students from refugee backgrounds in south-western Sydney

which has now evolved into a popular resource for use throughout the primary years. Finally, I conclude with a brief example of a multilingual 'rich task' designed as a culminating activity to enhance language and literacy learning across the curriculum.

Reading the Nepali version of *Farmer Duck*

As the students in a Year 1 class settled down to listen to one of their favourite stories, a guest reader took the storyteller's chair and opened the pages of *Farmer Duck* by Martin Waddell. The book and the illustrations were already familiar to the children – but today we were looking at a Nepali version of the story, and the text was to be read aloud in Nepali by our special guest. Within the class were 3 speakers of the Nepali language, all newly arrived in Australia and with limited knowledge of the English language. They, along with their fellow students who were also from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE), always enjoyed story time and were waiting in anticipation on the rug.

As the story unfolded, most of the class used the pictures to scaffold their understanding of the plot, smiling as they recognised some of the shared words. I was fascinated to watch the reactions of the 3 Nepali speakers. After announcing 'that's *my* language!' excitedly to the class as the book was introduced, they sat down amongst their friends – until the story began, when they were drawn, almost imperceptibly, towards the reader. As they inched forwards – ending up practically on the reader's lap – they inevitably blocked the sightlines of the rest of the students, who were then obliged to listen to the story without the help of the pictures. Surprisingly, they remained still and attentive, recognising that the 3 Nepali speakers needed to engage closely with the book, thus allowing them the space to enjoy the story through the medium of their own language.

This small episode is, I believe, enormously significant for educators of LBOTE students, especially those who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). It underlines the importance of welcoming home languages into the classroom so that all students feel valued as multilingual speakers. It also illustrates the value of providing English language learners with opportunities to use their existing linguistic knowledge to access school learning. And not least, it suggests that many LBOTE students are already aware, maybe more so than their teachers, of the diversity of linguistic and cultural knowledge to be found within their schools and classrooms.

EAL/D students in NSW schools

In NSW public schools, more than a third of students are from homes where languages other than English are spoken by either the students themselves and/or at least one parent or carer (NSW Department of Education, 2021). Most of these students can speak and understand more than one language, an asset not always recognised in the education system, where EAL/D students are often seen as failing literacy learners. By acknowledging the multilingual richness of the classroom and encouraging all voices to be heard, schools actively value and endorse the lives and accomplishments of students and their families. EAL/D students can thus be supported to learn a new language, and to learn curriculum content through that language, while continuing to develop heritage languages in their homes and communities.

The phrase 'funds of knowledge' was first used over thirty years ago to describe the knowledge and skills that are embedded in the everyday lives and practices of families and households (Moll et al., 1992). Funds of knowledge include home language skills as well as personal and family stories and cultural experiences, knowledge of local beliefs, histories and lifestyles. Many LBOTE students grow up able to use languages interchangeably according to audience and purpose, communicating with grandparents in their home languages or adopting the role of interpreter for family members less familiar with English. Such language practices have been the focus for more recent research into translanguaging (Garcia, 2009), which foregrounds the ways that EAL/D learners make use of the range of linguistic resources that they use at home and in the community. In translanguaging pedagogies, teachers recognise the versatile nature of multilingual communication outside the classroom and encourage movement between languages as a way of promoting their students' meaning making. Such movement can occur naturally within activities surrounding multilingual storytelling.

Multilingual storyboxes

Stories hold a universal appeal. Gordon Wells describes our way of making sense through the stories we share with others as 'an essential part of being human' (Wells, 1986, p 222), recognising that our stories are an essential part of who we are. This sense of identity is nurtured in homes and communities, where children listen to and contribute to the stories their families tell and retell about activities in their shared past, internalising them as autobiographical memories. Stories are the funds of knowledge that we create from those around us, learning from our society and from our cultures (Heath, 1983) and accessed through the languages of the home.

In Australia, stories in English are an important part of the literate discourse of mainstream schooling (Lowe, 2002), with early narrative competence offering a firm foundation for emergent literacy and long-term academic success (Cremin et al., 2017). If multilingual students are also to enjoy a strong foundation for their learning, then educators need to promote storytelling that represents the lives and languages of the whole school community. All students can enjoy listening to stories originating from different cultural backgrounds. By accessing bilingual versions of popular stories, EAL/D students will be supported to make connections between their home languages and English, and to use their voices to make stories of their own.

Multilingual Storyboxes are sets of resources developed to meet the storying needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students in south-western Sydney. They were conceived by Kim Cootes and me as we worked to support teachers of EAL/D students, especially those from refugee

> **By acknowledging the multilingual richness of the classroom and encouraging all voices to be heard, schools actively value and endorse the lives and accomplishments of students and their families.**

Figure 1: Multilingual Storybox: *Lima's Red Hot Chilli* by Derek Mills

backgrounds. The boxes were developed as prototypes with the idea that teachers could develop their own boxes to suit the context of their classroom and the needs of their learners. Comprising a large plastic box with a lid, each box contains one core text (written in English) supplemented by approximately 8 bilingual versions of the same story. In addition to the reading books, the box contains resources to extend and enhance students' meaning making through their use of English and home languages. Activities include the use of musical instruments, dressing up clothes, puppets, play food, suggestions for communicative activities and so on.

Each box has a theme. Some are related to Anglo-Australian stories. For example, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* box contains bilingual versions of the story (using the languages of the target group), toy animals, goat and troll masks, and paddle pop sticks to build a bridge. Other boxes are related to cultural themes. For example, *Lima's Red Hot Chilli* is a story about an Indian girl's experiences with a chilli, and the foods her family give her to cool down her mouth. It contains Indian puppets, toy chillies and samosas, and flashcards showing different foods. All students are encouraged to use their own voice, in their own languages, to respond to and create stories that reflect the knowledge and experiences of their homes and communities.

Storyboxes and their associated activities are aligned with EAL/D pedagogy. Links are made with students' prior knowledge and understandings through home languages and funds of knowledge and there is a focus on oral interaction as students listen to language and try out new words to clarify meaning. Associated activities are carefully scaffolded to encourage students to notice, practise and reformulate new language, and explicit teaching related to the box's theme develops students' understanding of new vocabulary and grammar.

At the core of the storybox pedagogy is a playful response to storytelling. Play is 'story in action, just as storytelling is play put into narrative form' (Paley, 1990, p 4), and learners benefit from the opportunity to act out their ideas and their feelings, moving between 'what is' narratives, a simulation of everyday life, and 'what if' narratives that enter into an imaginative world of fictive possibilities (Cremin et al., 2017). Through responsive play children actively participate in personally significant classroom language and literacy learning experiences, utilising their funds of knowledge by sharing personal experiences and cultural practices.

Multilingual storyboxes encourage the practice of 'book-related pretend play' (Welsch, 2008), which is a student-directed and initiated response to stories. After becoming familiar with the storybox texts, students enjoy the chance to interact with others (using English/home languages), to make object substitutions (for example, a pencil becomes a magic wand), to integrate imaginary elements (bringing new settings or characters into the story) and to assume roles directly related to the characters, objects, actions, setting, language and themes found in the stories.

The storyboxes are also designed to nurture connections between home and school, and family members are actively encouraged to participate in storytelling activities at home and in the classroom. Teachers welcome parents and carers who might like to take on the role of a storyteller with the class, providing artefacts, insights, and information for the benefit of all students.

On reflection

In closing, I return to the Year 1 class who enjoyed sharing *Farmer Duck*. They were working with the storybox featuring *Lima's Red Hot Chilli* and had read the bilingual books many times in groups and as a whole class, they had acted out the story using the toy food as props, and they had created puppet plays and written out scripts. To extend their understanding of food and family mealtimes, we decided to create our own multilingual book that would describe each student's favourite meal and who they had shared it with. In doing so, we were engaging in a 'rich task' (Hammond, 2016), that is purposeful, authentic tasks building over several weeks to culminate in a performance or the production of an artefact, with a 'real world' audience in mind.

We began with a discussion of their favourite foods, moving beyond the ubiquitous pizza and hamburgers to describe their mother's chilli sauce, or their favourite Nepali dumplings, or 'mo-mos'. They were invited to draw a bird's-eye view of their dinner table, including dishes of food and picturing all invited guests; once completed, a photocopy of each picture was sent home for discussion and annotations from family members. This version of the drawing was then returned to school to provide a scaffold for the students to write about what they were eating, with whom, and the nature of the meal – perhaps Chinese New Year, dinner with grandparents, or a birthday party. Finally, the text was translated into the student's home language.

This final stage was far easier than I had anticipated, as the school staff contained speakers of many different languages, and they were delighted to contribute – one teacher asked her father to help, and he relished the opportunity to write his language out formally. One family wrote to ask if the grandfather's language could also be included – of course it could – a multilingual connection of which the school had previously been unaware.

The book was sent off for printing, using an online facility more commonly used for creating books of holiday photos. Each student had a double page

spread featuring their picture on one side and the English and home language texts on the other. At the book launch, their faces were a picture. For the first time, they had experienced the presence of a home language context in the classroom and had welcomed this new space in which to enact their multilingual lives.

Figure 2: *Our Family Dinner* (a self-published book and part of a research project; school and class names redacted)

Multilingual storytelling holds much potential to build upon young EAL/D students' language and literacy learning. Through the storybox activities, these multilingual students were given opportunities to recognise themselves, and their lives, within the educational context of the mainstream curriculum, making progress in English whilst exploring their multilingual selves through purposeful dialogue and playful, multimodal meaning making. Throughout these sessions, the students and their families were encouraged to see their funds of knowledge as resources for learning in the classroom, thus validating their identities as capable young learners.

Afterword: To source a range of suitable stories, readers might be interested to visit the website of the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL), in particular the NCACL Cultural Diversity database. This database offers a comprehensive collection of books that feature Australia's culturally diverse population with a focus on understanding cultures, both similarities and differences. It includes 340 books aimed at young people from early childhood through late secondary and lists books usually published in Australia.

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Decodable texts and learning to read as an EAL/D learner

Anette Bremer

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Anette Bremer interviews two educational leaders, Kerry Cheeseman and Shinaz Saleh, about the role of decodable texts in teaching reading to beginning readers who are EAL/D learners.

All NSW public schools with enrolled primary students were provided with decodable texts to support the explicit teaching of phonics as a part of learning to read.

The following article presents a conversation in which Anette Bremer interviews Kerry Cheeseman, EAL/D Education Leader for the Girraween Principal network, and Shinaz Saleh, Assistant Principal Curriculum and Instruction at Harrington Park Public School, about the role of decodable texts in teaching reading to beginning readers who are English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners.

Anette Bremer (AB): What's the role of decodable texts for beginning readers who are EAL/D learners?

Shinaz Saleh (SS): Whether it's EAL/D learners or English-speaking background students, decodables are an initial tool to help teachers teach students how to read. Students don't learn letter sound correspondences without explicit instruction. Decodables help students build the skills that they're learning in the explicit instruction, and can be used one-on-one, teamed with a peer, or independently. Decodables are used to consolidate classroom learning and to learn how to read in context of known sound letter correspondences.

Decodable texts shouldn't replace quality texts. They are limited when it comes to teaching comprehension skills like understanding the setting and the vocabulary, so they cannot be the only way we teach EAL/D students or any other students how to read. Specifically, for EAL/D learners, the vocabulary in decodables is limited to begin with and doesn't assist in the learning of the non-constrained skills of Scarborough's Reading Rope.

Kerry Cheeseman (KC): Yes, decodable texts are used to practise what's been taught in class, to rehearse blending and segmenting. They are a tool to practise, for a short period of time, and for a specific purpose. In guided reading sessions, you could choose quality literature texts or predictable texts. But if you want students to practise segmenting and blending, one tool would be decodables.

SS: Without students mastering decoding skills, knowing how to blend and segment, their foundation skills will have gaps so when they attempt to read a more complex text, you start to see that those decoding skills aren't robust enough. It's very important for all students, to practise the skills being taught in a sequential and systematic approach to build their phonic knowledge and decoding skills.

> Without students mastering decoding skills, knowing how to blend and segment, their foundation skills will have gaps …

AB: We're discussing sound: hearing and saying the phoneme. But what about the grapheme? So how important is it for students to see that grapheme over and over again? As decodable texts become more complex, they use graphemes in different positions in words. Some students who have no literacy in their home language, or come from another phonetic system, may not know that the same letter or the same grapheme makes the same sound, but it's in a different place in a word.

SS: That's right. The example I know is Arabic. Arabic is phonetic and the grapheme representing the phoneme is different depending on where it sits in the word.

What I am raising in my discussion of Arabic is what does the student already know? Do they have the skills in their home language? Because if they know how to read in their home language, let's say it is Arabic, and you're teaching them about sound letter correspondences in English, you need to explain the grapheme's sound is often the same regardless of its position in a word. When teaching phonics, the first step is teaching the grapheme-phoneme correspondence (PDF 699 KB) every time a student sees one until the GPC is learned.

AB: That's why teaching of phonics needs to be sequential.

SS: It needs to be explicitly and systematically taught. Phonics needs to be taught sequentially and with a build-up of skills before we expect students to know how to read proficiently.

KC: I'm sure you agree Shinaz that EAL/D students have to learn to speak in English. We need to teach survival English and build their vocabulary. They need to develop their phonemic awareness – hear the sounds in the words, hear the t' sound in 'table' and 'tap.'

SS: And knowing that table is a word. One way I explain phonemic awareness to teachers of EAL/D students is to say a sentence in Arabic and ask, how many words did I say? They make all kinds of guesses, and as they don't have phonemic awareness in Arabic, they don't know how many words I said. It's the same for EAL/D

students learning how to read English: they need to develop phonemic awareness in English first.

AB: Let's expand on the importance of vocabulary for EAL/D and that the teaching of vocabulary needs to be in parallel to learning to decode for our EAL/D learners. They don't have the estimated 5,000 to 10,000 words in their oral language in English that English-speaking kids come to kindergarten with.

SS: You have to supplement the explicit teaching of phonics with visuals and building vocabulary. One way I build vocabulary is through images of learned and relevant words on the screen. I know EAL/D learners need to be exposed to vocabulary multiple times before it is familiar. Decodables are not the best resource for building vocabulary skills as they repeat only one or two words initially. Differentiated high challenge/high support activities can assist in building vocabulary through phonics activities. We need to provide opportunities for EAL/D students to practise their learned vocabulary in context to assist with retention.

AB: What are your thoughts: would you just focus on the sound letter combinations that you're teaching in the text or would you open up the teaching when you find a teachable moment in a decodable text with EAL/D learners?

SS: Personally, every moment is a teachable moment. Whatever pops up in a lesson, I jump on that straight away. For example, in one lesson, a decodable word was 'ram' and there was a picture of a sheep. It became both a decodable lesson and a vocabulary building lesson. If you're teaching decoding, you can still cater for vocabulary learning for EAL/D students.

KC: In an example I can think of, the child said a 'mouse is in the hat' because they were using picture cues, seeing the image of a furry creature and thinking it is a mouse. The teacher directed the student to the grapheme. The word mouse didn't match the initial sound 'r' in 'rat' so the teacher directed them to sound it out. The teacher could have quickly mentioned that a rat is like a mouse, but bigger, to build vocabulary and background knowledge.

You have to supplement the explicit teaching of phonics with visuals and building vocabulary.

AB: What about students who start school at different times of the year, who have missed that sequence of learning. Would you do a special program for that particular student?

SS: Absolutely, especially if they don't have literacy skills in their home language. You need to build those foundational skills and they need to build language and build communicating skills; it's a lot of work.

AB: Let's talk about sight words.

SS: Again, repetition and exposure and learning sight words in context, but also opportunities to practise, practise, practise, and this works for all students. Students will not have a bank of sight words without repetition, exposure, and explicit instruction. I like the new K-2 English syllabus' focus on oral language which gives opportunities for developing English language proficiency for all students.

They need to see those sight words when they need to use them, put them in front of them, put them up on the walls. Also, use bilingual materials. If a child knows how to read in their language, you're able to use that linguistic knowledge.

AB: You're reducing cognitive load – the student knows the meaning of the word and can link the meaning to the letters and sound.

KC: I use flipbooks. For the sight word/words 'This is' the student would read, 'This is my mum.' 'This is my dad.' Thus, the sight words are in context. They are also learning 'mum' and 'dad'. Also, when the students left for the day, they had to tell me 'This is my brother' and 'This is my mum.'

AB: Would you like to elaborate a little bit more about your thinking about Scarborough's Reading Rope and EAL/D students?

SS: Let's start with the lower strand, the constrained skills. With building phonemic awareness, the foundational language knowledge, we need to ask if that EAL/D student has that in their home language? In English? If in their home language, then they understand the idea of discrete sounds making up words which make up a sentence. The non-constrained skills build over time and it's a massive job because you're developing knowledge on ideas and concepts that may not be part of their culture. You must build background knowledge and the way to do that is with a broad variety of quality texts, lots and lots of reading with sustained exposure to language and ideas.

You do not learn to read without being taught. If we want students to learn how to read, we need to give them opportunities to practise and develop their skills. It is especially important to celebrate little successes, build motivation for them to learn to read. In early lessons, teach the vocabulary in context – school vocabulary, home vocabulary and then choose stories that help develop and reinforce taught vocabulary.

KC: Some decodables use contrived language and do not have the flow that is found in other texts. To expose students to the flow of English, we need to use quality predictable texts.

SS: Once students know all their single phonemes, and they are moving on to vowel phonemes, I would consider introducing predictable texts to build background knowledge. Predictable texts are better at building language and comprehension than decodables. Decodables are the first step, they will not teach students all the skills they need to read and shouldn't be the only tool to teach students how to read.

> **I like the new K-2 English syllabus' focus on oral language which gives opportunities for developing English language proficiency for all students.**

KC: Are you saying teachers need to know the purpose of texts they are using? Is it practising the blending and segmenting of GPCs that have been taught in class? You use quality decodable texts. You would use quality texts in which the language is more natural and has a typical structure to develop vocabulary, comprehension and other reading skills like drawing on background knowledge and literacy knowledge.

SS: Predictable texts have a role. However, you cannot give a student any book and say 'read it yourself' if you haven't taught the student how to read these words. It must be well chosen and introduced to the student by saying, 'I've taught you how to decode words. I'm giving you a book in which you know the phonemes, you can use your decoding skills to read the words.'

When I want to build background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and understanding of an idea, I use something other than decodables because that's not their role. Lower-level decodables are not building literacy knowledge, understanding syntax and sentence structure.

AB: Let's talk about verbal reasoning. Think alouds are an excellent strategy to develop verbal reasoning in our EAL/D learners. In a think aloud, you can demonstrate the skills in the upper strands, how you're drawing on background knowledge, morphological knowledge, understanding of syntax and text structure. Can you talk to think alouds?

SS: It's a great strategy to use as explicit teaching. Students need to see what a good thinking process looks like while reading through modelling. A think aloud will have richer language with a quality text. Let's say we're working on an under the sea theme and want to build vocabulary. We can do that with a quality text.

KC: If the quality text contains 'the boy tiptoed out of the bedroom', the inferential question could be 'why did the boy tiptoe?' The teacher could model their thinking using a think aloud – explain what 'tiptoe' means and we tiptoe when we need to be quiet. Then model the

thinking – it is night time, his brother is sleeping in the other bed, and he didn't want to wake him. So, the boy tiptoed out of the bedroom because he wanted to move quietly and not wake up his brother.

SS: With inferential comprehension, an effective strategy I used with a group of struggling readers was – I said to the class 'Mrs Saleh grabbed her jacket before she left the house. What does that mean? Students said – oh, it's probably cold outside. It could be raining. Could be snowing. I said to them – it's not raining, it's not snowing, it's not cold. I could see them really thinking. After some thinking time, one student said it's because you cover your arms. I said that's correct. It is not always the obvious explanation. We used that as the first step in a whole sequence of inferential comprehension questions. And with the EAL/D kids we used readers that included their cultures. For example, if you've got this big gathering of people, what could it be? And the students responded, oh, we do this. Using culturally appropriate readers allows EAL/D students to have their knowledge recognised. Then they are not always the students who don't know. They can say we know something, and this contributes to their motivation to learn to read.

AB: How would you use decodable texts in a teaching sequence?

SS: The purpose is to get students to practise taught phonics skills – to get the words off the page. You still need to expose EAL/D learners to a variety of quality texts and predictables which help build language and vocabulary skills. It cannot be just one type of book. If you're planning on covering all the components of the Reading Rope in a teaching sequence, decodables

definitely have an important place. However, any learning to read teaching sequence which only uses decodable is not catering for language development and building background knowledge.

KC: As you say, it's part of your toolkit, but it's not the only tool.

AB: Would you like to add other points about learning to read, decodable texts and EAL/D learners?

SS: When starting to work with an EAL/D student, my first question is: does the student have reading skills? What do they know in their own language? Do they have phonemic awareness in their language, or do I have to teach initial phonological awareness concepts, that there are words and sentences and phonemes? If they know that, I work on transferring those skills over to English.

Do they have phonemic awareness in English? I assess what I can see in this student. An EAL/D student will not to be able to explain it to you. It's a matter of observing, interacting with them to build deep knowledge of the student's linguistic awareness, and then work out from this data the starting point of instruction.

To my mind, no tool, no program, nothing beats teacher instruction and teacher judgment in differentiating for students. My job is building the capabilities of teachers in identifying what a student needs and how to differentiate for that student, so they succeed in their learning.

KC: Students need explicit teaching of spelling patterns – vowel digraphs such as 'ea' in 'beach' and 'oa' as in 'boat'. I use the rhyme 'When 2 vowels go walking, the first one does the talking.' Decodable texts can be used to practise these spelling patterns. Teachers can also use texts such as quality predictable and simple texts to find examples of these spelling patterns and add them to a word chart. As the K-2 English syllabus highlights, you build phonic knowledge at the same time as building vocabulary, reading fluency and spelling. It is message abundancy! Students need

to see, hear, read and write the target vocabulary or spelling pattern in context to develop a deep understanding and be able to apply their learning in a range of contexts.

AB: This has been fantastic. I've profited from speaking to you, Shinaz and Kerry.

SS: I want to see progress and ensure equity, as most of us who work in public education do. My focus is to make sure that all students are learning and meeting the syllabus outcomes.

KC: I would like to reiterate, if the purpose of the reading session is to practise and consolidate blending and segmenting of taught letter sounds relationships, one tool is quality decodable texts. The challenge for some EAL/D learners with decodable texts is that some of the language is contrived and the words are nonsensical, but our EAL/D students don't know this.

Teachers also need to expose students to a wide range of words, sentence and text structures. Two tools teachers can use are quality texts and predictable texts which allow students to develop a range of reading skills. To develop reading skills, teachers also need to implement strategies such as frontloading, modelling skilled reading, activities to build comprehension and inferencing skills and vocabulary.

Taming the dragon before reading

Joanne Rossbridge
Language and literacy consultant

Joanne Rossbridge explores ways dragons in literature can be used as a motif to engage EAL/D students from many cultural backgrounds.

If you ignore the dragon, it will eat you. If you defy the dragon it will overpower you. But if you ride the dragon, you will take advantage of its strength and power. Chinese proverb.

Many teachers, particularly teachers of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), think deeply about the topics or subject matter that will not only engage their readers but also make content and texts accessible both linguistically and culturally. Engaging with and comprehending texts is critical for EAL/D students to be successful at school. The act of reading builds new knowledge and language as well as providing access to other worlds and cultures. By drawing on text-based and intercultural approaches to teaching English (Harper and Feez, pp 9-12) students can be engaged in meaningful conversations around texts through the lens of their own stories and the use of all languages in the classroom to respond to texts.

In teaching English, the choice of texts is critical if we are to have inclusive classrooms. One way to begin designing a teaching and learning program is to start with cross cultural characters or symbols. The **dragon** is a clear example of a figure that is salient throughout history, cultures, and texts, from complex mythical creatures to personified adorable characters. There is a range of texts, traditional and contemporary, that we can choose to share with students based on the cultural knowledge and experience they bring to the classroom, their linguistic strengths and needs as well as their age. When choosing texts for EAL/D learners, Pauline Gibbons (2015) makes several points including the need to engage students with cumulative stories to allow a focus on meaning without contrived text, the need for texts to contain universal themes, illustrations to support meaning and importantly the selection of texts to extend, rather than limit, knowledge of language and reading. In this article, a focus will be placed on preparing students for reading, before reading, and through engagement with texts but by using oral language to make connections between representations in texts and cultural knowledge on the topic of dragons.

Taming the dragon through teacher knowledge

Dragons is an engaging topic for EAL/D students, in fact, all students. The dragon is a universal symbol and plays various roles in children's literature both historically and in contemporary times. While the notion of universal themes is relevant, opportunities exist for considering cross cultural meanings and perspectives, providing a context for students to draw upon their own cultural experiences and understandings. The role and value or status of the dragon have not only evolved over time but differ across cultures, making this physical and symbolic representation a great catalyst for intercultural classroom conversations.

To provide students with deep understanding about the role of dragons, particularly in literature, their history and symbolism across cultures needs to be investigated. This may require in-depth teacher investigation of the topic. Stories of dragons have evolved from myths to fantasy with origins in mythology, religion, and beliefs in societies across the world.

The great Maurice Saxby, when discussing myths stated:

> **Not only is a close encounter with traditional literature a cross-cultural experience, it also provides an historical, cultural, aesthetic and spiritual perspective. (1991, p 122)**

These stories have developed into works of literature and pop culture. Dragons can be traced back to Ancient Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman mythology and folklore. For Western cultures, familiarity with the dragon has evolved from European and particularly English folklore and literature, where dragons tend to be stereotyped as fire breathing symbols of power and evil. Dragons in classics such as a range of Shakespearean texts, *Beowulf*, *The Hobbit* and the Harry Potter books are used not only as symbols but as vehicles for constructing characters and portraying their values and often downfalls (Buys, 2022). Frequently, the dragon is to be slain by the hero of the story. This representation in folklore takes an interesting shift when dragons are viewed in contemporary children's literature, where we might observe the 'sanitisation' or even 'Disneyfication' of dragon characters.

East Asian societies have also had the dragon as an integral presence within their cultures, however, unlike Western dragons, they are worshipped as auspicious and lucky. The 'long' or Chinese dragon is seen as kind and generous and associated with water and is representative of power and prosperity brought about by their influence with rain, drought and flood. They are mostly generous and considered guardians of life. Chinese dragons tend not to breathe fire and are still present in everyday life as one of the 12 animals of the zodiac and one of the 4 creatures of the constellations.

In addition to symbolism and qualities, Western and Eastern dragons also have different appearances. Chinese dragons are wingless, serpentine creatures that can magically fly. They are also a combination of animals including body parts from the snake, deer, tiger and ox amongst others. Western dragons have large claws and

leathery wings with more lizard like features such as scales and spikes. [What dragons reveal about East/West thinking](#) (China Simplified, 2014), provides a helpful infographic that could be shared with students to summarise the difference between Eastern and Western dragons. Other countries such as Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines also have dragons with similar qualities and features.

The terms 'dragon' and 'serpent' are sometimes used interchangeably. Both are mythical beasts and from a Western perspective, the dragon can be classified as the largest serpent (McShane, n.d.). A well-known serpent is the Rainbow Serpent of many different Aboriginal cultural groups across Australia. Like other cultures and their serpents or dragons, Aboriginal culture is also rich with symbolism with many variations in representation and meanings across communities. Like the South East Asian dragons, the Rainbow Serpent is also associated with the creation of life and the resource of water as well as the rainbow which is a connection between water and the sky. Different Aboriginal language groups have varying interpretations of the Rainbow Serpent.

As a protector of life, it can also be associated with danger and punishment.

> **It features as an important creator figure, guardian of sacred places, bringer of monsoonal rains and storms, bestower of powers upon healers and rainmakers, or a dangerous creature that punishes people who violate laws, or dwells in waterholes threatening to swallow unwary passers-by, to name just a few incarnations. (Konishi, 2021)**

In recent times the Rainbow Serpent has been interpreted by some as a symbol of unity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians (Konishi, 2021).

Dragons can be found across world cultures including the Middle East, South America and Africa. The article [12 legends that prove the whole world is obsessed with dragons](#) (The Week, 2015), gives a helpful overview of dragons from many locations including Iran, India, Peru, Wales and West Africa. Dragons, linked to students' backgrounds can be investigated further. With a quick search, it is possible to find a range of websites and blogs sharing information on the history of stories

Figure 1: Sample floorstorm

containing dragons. Clearly, dragons are universal. However, they differ both across and within cultures. The perception of dragons and their importance to specific cultures can change over time. Thus, they offer an insight into the philosophy of different cultures.

Taming the dragon with students

To orientate students to reading texts on dragons, select a range of images of dragons and in small groups carry out a 'floorstorm' in which students label images with vocabulary based on what they see or interpret from the images (Figure 1). There are no incorrect responses, and all ideas as a single word or phrase written on a sticky note are welcomed. Students should also be encouraged to record in languages other than English to create a culture of inclusivity and to support beginning English language learners.

Images can be removed, and students can then categorise the vocabulary. Responses will vary across groups, but a range of vocabulary can be developed quickly based on student knowledge and experience.

Before engaging with books that have dragons as characters, students can also be provided with

Figure 2: Translations of 'dragon' using Immersive Reader

a range of translations of the word 'dragon' in multiple languages using [Microsoft's Immersive Reader](#) (see Figure 2). Complete texts or vocabulary can be typed into Immersive Reader and then read aloud to students in English, or translated into multiple languages. Students may recognise or hear the word in languages other than English and be able to make connections based on their own linguistic and cultural knowledge. Students can then draw their version of a dragon. As students engage with a range of texts, drawings can be compared to the features of dragons across cultures, with discussions on how their own experiences have influenced their dragon image.

Dr Ernest Drake's (2003) *Dragonology: the complete book of dragons* is a fascinating, interactive book blurring the world of legend and fact as a fictive dragonologist reveals an abundance of 'facts' about dragons. Share the cover of the book to predict the content and purpose. The title on the front cover is translated into 'dragon language'. On the first double page, 'Dragons of the world' are located on a world map. A class world map can be displayed, and students can pin the names of dragons using languages from their own background and experience as well as those used in Immersive Reader. Throughout, they can also attach word origins and place names around the world.

The etymology of words is always worth investigating with students as it focuses attention on how meanings are derived and leads to discussion on the history and culture associated with meanings. The word 'dragon' can be traced back to the ancient Greek δράκων (*drakon*), meaning 'dragon' or more generally 'serpent.' This is derived from a verb, δέρκεσθαι, meaning 'to see clearly'.

> **A dragon may evoke fiery breath and taloned wings, but the origin of the word *dragon* conjures up a different feature: eyes. As etymologist Walter Skeat glosses it, δράκων literally means 'sharp-sighted.' (Kelly, 2015)**

Students can look closely at dragon eyes in a range of texts and describe how the visual choices relate to the etymology.

Etymology can be further discussed by comparing the English alphabetic system and its phonological and orthographic changes over time with the non-phonetic Chinese language. Being a non-phonetic language, etymology involves tracking the evolution of characters' meanings and forms over time. Some students may be able to provide more detail on the use of Chinese characters and share their knowledge with others.

Long / loong / lung (English translation of dragon)
龙 (simplified character)
龍 (traditional character)

The Rainbow Serpent has many different names and is relevant to many Aboriginal cultural groups across Australia. Clearly, the name 'Rainbow Serpent' came from early European interaction, possibly from anthropologists who interacted with local people. As there are many variations of the Rainbow Serpent, it is named in different languages. For example, Yingarna, whose story is told by Kunwinjku-speaking people from Western Arnhem Land and in Noongar language the Waugal, who created the Swan River (Konishi, 2021).

> **Not uncommonly the rainbow serpent assumes an anthropomorphic cast as 'a great father' or 'mother of all', leading observers earlier in the century to debate whether 'high gods' or 'sky gods' in Aboriginal religion are indigenous or merely the products of missionary influence. The consensus of expert opinion now is that they are truly precolonial. (Horton, p 938)**

Before students interact with texts on dragons, shared or modelled reading or viewing can be a useful tool for building knowledge on the topic and again tapping into what may also be known in the classroom. As mentioned, this article focuses on orientating students to the dragon topic in texts and pre-reading strategies. Depending on the texts ultimately used with students, a range of 'think alouds' (Fisher et al., 2011) can be developed during modelled reading by the teacher. Think alouds make explicit strategies for interacting with text such as making connections between existing knowledge and text. For example: 'I notice the different animal parts of this dragon. It reminds me of the Chinese dragon.'

The Illustrated Stories of Dragons (2020) provides a great selection of dragon stories from across the world, including stories of Chinese dragons and St George and the Dragon. *The Race for the Chinese Zodiac* (Wang et al., 2012) is an adaption of a traditional myth showing the origins of the Chinese Zodiac in which the dragon has a very important role. Gabrielle Wang is the Australian Children's Laureate for 2022–23.

To build knowledge and engage students with varied stories of the Rainbow Serpent the following are useful:
- *Two Snakes, Mervyn Street* [video 3:16 minutes] in which Gooniyandi Elder, Mervyn Street, shares his grandmother's and mother's songline story of 2 serpents from the Kimberley region of Western Australia.
- *Rainbow and Rainbow Serpent in Tiwi* [podcast 7 minutes] is a podcast where Malcolm from the Tiwi Islands shares his language and teaches about his family totem ampiji (the Rainbow Serpent).
- *Who is Garranga'rreli?* [video 1:17 minutes] is a short video explaining the Rainbow Serpent at Ubirr in the Northern Territory.

The dragon and the fantasy setting

Part of learning English is to learn not only the language but also the language of the subject of English (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). This may include terms and concepts such as setting, image, symbolism and themes.

Many novels featuring dragons fall into the fantasy genre. Often, they have maps at the beginning of the book depicting not only the setting in terms of place but often time. For instance, at the beginning of *Dragonkeeper* (Wilkinson, 2003) the map is titled 'Han Empire at the time of the Dragonkeeper'. The map shows mountain ranges, rivers and the ocean with specific labelling of the Yellow River and Great Wall. Places are also named including Tai Shan, Fengjing, Huangling Mountain and Mung Yang Lodge. Places can be researched and located using Google Maps and/or Google Earth to establish if they are real or imaginary. Google Maps can show the names using English and

Chinese characters which can be discussed with students. The title is also important as it places the novel in a particular setting of time, the Han Empire. This sets up connections to be made to dragon folklore of the time. McDonald (2018, p 19) outlines conventions of fantasy including journey or quest stories often drawing on myths or medieval traditions and set in fictional places or countries with their own history, geography and myths. Often these settings have drawn on actual places and times as inspiration and can be seen in Table 1.

Text	Setting of place	Setting of time
Dragonkeeper (Wilkinson, 2003)	South East China	Han Empire
How to Train your Dragon (Cowell, 2010)	Island of Berk	Viking world

Table 1: Settings in fantasy texts

These texts are the first books in their series. Changes in the maps at the beginning of each book can be tracked across books as the stories develop. They can be useful for predicting and oral storytelling based solely on the stories conveyed through the maps.

Questions to discuss with students might include:
- How can we tell the time and place from the map?
- What can we tell or what questions do we have about the historical and cultural setting of the novel?
- Is there a way to find out more information about the place and time and if it is based on reality or fantasy?
- Is the setting of time and place part of your experience? (That is, from other books, movies, or stories told in your culture.)
- Could there be a cross-over between the past and the present?
- What characteristics might the dragon/s have in the text?
- What language/s might the characters speak?

Cultural and historical features of dragons

Based on existing knowledge and texts read and listened to, students can either draw, or use their first language or English to list features (see Table 2). Additional columns can be added if students have identified another dragon from a particular culture. The infographic from What dragons reveal about East/West thinking (China Simplified, 2014), provides some information about Eastern and Western Dragons that could be given to students to also categorise in the table.

Also, engaging and accessible for EAL/D learners is the incorporation of graphic novels into reading

Western dragon	Eastern dragon	Rainbow Serpent	Other dragons

Table 2: Cultural and historical features of dragons

programs. However, it can't be assumed that students know how to read graphic novels so modelled reading may be required. Although not often used and valued in classrooms, graphic novels can reduce anxiety and improve reading comprehension (Altalhab, 2020).

The following graphic novels contain dragons and can be analysed in terms of the features of different cultural representations in Table 2.
- *City of Dragons: the awakening storm* by Jaimal Yogis (2022)
- *Dragon Girl: the secret valley* by Jeff Weigel (2017)
- *Nimona* by Noelle Stevenson (2015)

After reading and viewing many texts, students can be asked to return to their original drawings of dragons and note whether they see the influence of dragons from other cultures. For example, they might note that they have drawn large wings that would indicate the influence of the Western dragon.

The 'fluffy' and 'tame' dragon in picture books

Just as fairy tales have been 'sanitized' in contemporary times, the dragon has also gone through changes, particularly in literature for young readers (Midkiff, 2019 and Hanlon, 2003). Midkiff describes a range of ways the dragon has become 'fluffy' (p 41), while Hanlon refers to 'tame and timid dragons' and notes that the significance of the dragon's historical and cultural role is diminished and characters may as well be represented by animals:

> Books like these deprive dragons of their legendary power, reducing them to comical dupes and playthings. (Hanlon, 2003, p 19)

The following texts could be used with young students, but they can also be used with older students to challenge the representation of dragons. All the texts listed are aimed at young children and feature 'imaginary' dragons. They give children the message that dragons are imaginary and supportive in their everyday lives until they are no longer needed:
- *I Don't Believe in Dragons* by Anna Walker (2010)
- *Ellie's Dragon* by Bob Graham (2020)
- *The Truth About Dragons* by Jaime Zollars (2020)

When reading these books, students can group the following statements as true or false. This requires students to read and respond in a critical way and by drawing on their cultural knowledge of dragons.
- Dragons are always caring and friendly.
- The dragon/s have Eastern Dragon features.
- The images of dragons have many features that soften their character.
- Dragons are invisible because we shouldn't believe in dragons.
- The dragon/s represent historical and cultural stories.
- The dragon/s are true representations of what dragons should be in stories.
- The stories and images are accurate reflections of the origins of dragons across cultures.

The recommended texts and strategies above can give EAL/D students access to engaging content and texts in accessible ways, particularly by focusing on tasks before reading entire texts or more complex texts, independently. Whilst looking at various representations of dragons across texts and cultures students will develop conversations not only on the topic of dragon characters but be able to connect to universal themes and consider symbolism. Oral language will be key to developing responses to texts and with this comes development of English vocabulary and structures, accompanied by discussion and acknowledgement of cultures and languages beyond English. After analysing such texts, students can redraw and label their ideal dragon and explain their choices to others. They are also now ready to engage in further reading of the texts mentioned or other texts depending on their age, linguistic and cultural background.

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Analysing perspective in the Stage 6 history classroom

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Rebecca Langham explains steps in the process of teaching Stage 6 history students to analyse sources in terms of perspective.

Analysing sources is an imperative component of historical inquiry in both the ancient and modern history syllabuses in New South Wales. Year 11 and Year 12 outcomes require students to analyse and interpret different types of sources for evidence to support a historical account or argument, while also emphasising the significance of accounting for differences of perspective of individuals and groups. In Year 12, students must not only 'account for' perspectives, but also 'analyse' them.

A gradual release of responsibility instructional framework

As the use and analysis of sources often feature in Stage 6 lessons, students could benefit from the implementation of a gradual release of responsibility instructional framework to enhance their capacity to address HSC (Higher School Certificate) examination

questions that explicitly target such analysis. This model provides a structure for teachers to move from assuming 'all the responsibility for performing a task ... to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility' (Duke and Pearson, 2004, p 211).

The gradual release of responsibility instructional framework sees teachers support students in the clear communication of logical arguments around sources and perspective via the use of an 'I do, we do, you do' sequence. As Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (2013b) argue, 'explanation alone is insufficient, students need to see it for themselves. Good teachers incorporate demonstration into their instruction' (p 3). However, this explanation and demonstration must be accompanied by an opportunity for students to apply the model themselves because 'application is critical ... it allows students to see how much they understand as well as what they don't know yet' (Fisher and Frey, 2013b, p 4; see also Fisher and Frey, 2013a). This process, involving modelling, collaboration and independent application need not be linear. Students can move between the components as they work towards proficiency.

This article provides teachers with models that can be used in the Stage 6 history classroom to enhance student achievement of the outcomes, while simultaneously scaffolding answers to prospective HSC examination questions. The focus here will be on accounting for and analysing perspective in sources.

Perspective

Perspective is distinct from interpretation and must be treated as such in the ancient or modern history classroom. Perspective in history, as outlined by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA, 2017a, 2017b), means a point of view from which historical events, problems and issues can be analysed and represented. This involves entering the world of the past from the point of view of a particular individual or group from that time (such as 'the conquered' versus 'the conqueror'), including an appreciation of the circumstances they faced, and the motivations, values and attitudes behind their actions.

When employing the gradual release of responsibility instructional framework, students can be provided with explicit guidance around what is required when exploring perspective in

sources. This can include a discussion of potential HSC questions and a collaborative analysis of what success for those questions could look like.

Examples

The following examples may be of use in this key phase of the framework and as such, they are directed at students for ease of implementation. The examples are followed by suggested terms to identify the perspective of a source.

Common examination and/or assessment questions related to perspective include:

Account for the perspective of Source A

When you are asked to 'account for' you must provide reasons. **Why would** the person or group who made the source express the point of view being presented?

Reasons could include:
- The **zeitgeist** – spirit of the times; the atmosphere of the era.
- The **writer** – their political beliefs, purpose, personal background, experiences and education.
- The **events** – what was happening at the time the source was made? Specific developments and events (such as a battle, the death of a major leader and so on) can influence perspective.

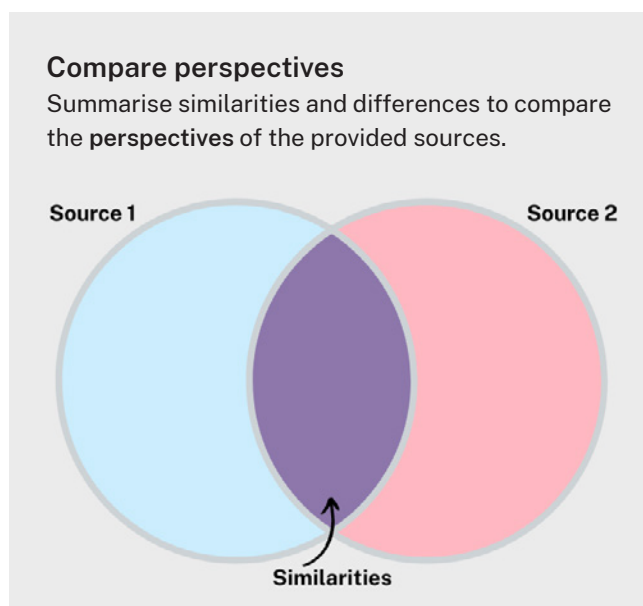### *Compare* the perspectives provided by Source 1 and Source 2.

Figure 1: How to compare the perspectives of 2 sources.

When asked to 'compare the perspectives', students need to highlight similarities and differences between the perspectives offered by sources. Students need to demonstrate an understanding of how perspectives from the past may differ from or relate to each other.

Perspectives may be similar and/or different for reasons including:

The author
- personal profile, incorporating gender, age, life experiences, political beliefs and so on
- context and social standing. Where and when did they compose the source? What position did they hold in society and how does this position relate to the theme of the source?

The source
- text type, for instance, is one source a political cartoon and the other a personal letter? How does the different type of text influence the perspective, if at all?
- audience and purpose. Consider why the source was created. Does the purpose of the source impact the perspective so that it is similar to or different from the other source/s being examined?

Sample questions
Let us consider some examples that demonstrate the skill of accounting for perspectives, which is the foundation of both styles of questions.

Sample Question 1
Account for the perspective provided by Source A on the initial consolidation of Nazi power 1933–1934.

Source A
Joseph Goebbels, *The New Year 1934*, speech delivered to the German public on 31 December 1933.

There were probably only a few last 30 January, when the great transformation began, who imagined that a new era of German history was beginning, and that within a year the revolution would be over. Remember 21 March, 1 May, the unforgettable days in Nuremberg, 1 October, and 12 November. A wonderful transformation unified the nation, one that future generations will scarcely be able to comprehend. They will judge the year 1933. It will go down in history as the year the German nation finally broke free of its two thousand years of misery.

What an astonishing collection of significant political, cultural and economic events mark this year of German awakening! It finally destroyed the Marxist nonsense that had tortured the German people for six decades, condemning them to political impotence. Only a year ago it threatened the Reich, ready at any moment to seize power. Today we know of it only through stories. It was replaced by the idea of a true community of the people that was not the empty theory of a meeting hall, but rather step by step and piece by piece became a total and happy reality. The socialism that we preached for years found its living expression in the active participation of all Germans, perhaps the most wonderful and exciting event of the past year…

To answer this question, students need to:
- Identify the nature of the source: what we know of its origins. What is it? Who made it? When did they make it?
- Explicitly identify the perspective of the source. What point of view does the source present in relation to the topic? Point this out early.
- Give specific reasons for the perspective. Why does the source have this point of view? Make links between the point of view in the source and the origins of the source. This is where you highlight your understanding of the topic, bringing in your own knowledge of the broader topic to 'account for'.
- Dip into the source. Refer to specific details from the source that illustrate your points.
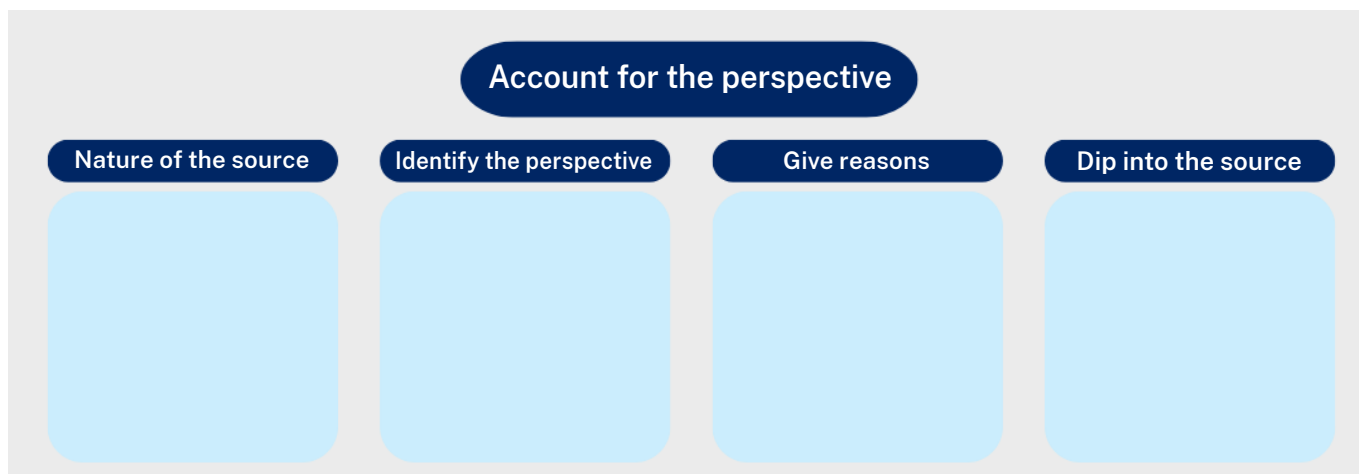
Figure 2: Account for the perspective scaffold for note making.

Sample answer

Source A comes from a New Year's speech by Joseph Goebbels and provides an example of a pro-Nazi perspective on the initial consolidation of Nazi power. He refers to the first year of Nazi control as 'the great transformation' that led to a 'German awakening'. The congratulatory perspective of this source stems from the author's political views and authority, the purpose of the source, as well as the German zeitgeist of 1933. Goebbels credits the Nazi acquisition of power as the catalyst for a 'wonderful transformation [that] unified the nation…'. As the Reich Minister of Propaganda, Goebbels had responsibility for promoting the ideology, popularity and authority of the Nazi party. As such, he would not publicly condemn Nazi actions, highlight their failings or atrocities, or comment on the negative impact of their regime. As such his political views and responsibilities, reiterated by the nature of this source as a speech that would have been widely broadcast via radio, account for his perspective. Similarly, the German zeitgeist of late 1933 and 1934 was partly characterised by a sense of hope, as Germans were widely frustrated with previous governments. Goebbels capitalised upon this frustration and hoped to suggest the Nazis had fostered 'a true community of the people' through the 'active participation of all Germans'. He aimed to increase his party's popularity through these selective and one-sided interpretations of events such as the 1933 abolition of 'Marxist' trade unions, the introduction of the Enabling Act and the destruction of democracy through the creation of a one-party state. Therefore, the anti-left wing and pro-Nazi perspectives of the source are clearly the result of the author's political experiences, beliefs and goals.

Sample Question 2

Account for the perspective offered by Source B on Spartan women.

Source B
Aristotle, *The Politics*: Book 2, circa 335–323 BCE.

Again, the license of the Lacedaemonian women defeats the intention of the Spartan constitution, and is adverse to the happiness of the state … Even in regard to courage, which is of no use in daily life, and is needed only in war, the influence of the Lacedaemonian women has been most mischievous. The evil showed itself in the Theban invasion, when, unlike the women of other cities, they were utterly useless and caused more confusion than the enemy. This license of the Lacedaemonian women existed from the earliest times, and was only what might be expected. For, during the wars of the Lacedaemonians … the men were long away from home, and, on the return of peace, they gave themselves into the legislator's hand, already prepared by the discipline of a soldier's life (in which there are many elements of virtue), to receive his enactments. But, when Lycurgus, as tradition says, wanted to bring the women under his laws, they resisted, and he gave up the attempt …

Sample answer

Source B is an extract from a book written by Athenian politician and philosopher, Aristotle. In this source, the 'license' of Spartan women is blamed for the failure of Sparta's constitution as set by Lycurgus. Aristotle claims that the 'mischievous' behaviour of women caused unhappiness in the state, as well as bringing about confusion during battles. He tells us that women in Sparta refused to follow the laws of the state. This scathing and negative perspective of women has been shaped by the time in which Aristotle was writing, his purpose in writing the book, and the nature of his political beliefs. Aristotle's purpose was to examine political systems, comparing them to Athens to highlight the strength and superiority of the Athenian system. Writing at a time when Sparta had fallen into obscurity, he was likely looking for flaws in their social and political systems to account for the decline of such a powerful city-state. Aristotle was shaped by the society in which he lived, one which discouraged women from being involved in public life. As such, the unique roles and status of Spartan women would have shocked Aristotle, as they were an affront to his cultural and political experiences.

Next steps

Having deconstructed key ideas and requirements with students and providing sample answers the – 'I do' phase, the models would then become a basis for students to adopt more responsibility – the 'we do' phase. This could be via a collaborative task requiring students to work with their peers to construct an answer to a similar perspective-based question. Alternatively, teachers could provide a partially completed response where students fill in gaps such as key terms to identify perspective or add missing historical details. In the final stage – the 'you do' phase, responsibility would be released further, with students working towards full independence in the analysis of perspective in sources.

Fisher and Frey (2013b) remind us that these instructional processes are much like dances, they need not be executed in the same order or same variety, but 'Like choreographers, educators need a common vocabulary for discussing practice … dancers are choreographed using a unique combination of steps' (p 3). The gradual release of responsibility model can be applied in a 10-minute period of a lesson, or across multiple lessons. It can be employed in full or in part, repeated or not. Context, as always, is everything.

Terms to describe perspective

Positive	Neutral	Negative
• Appreciative	• Considered	• Scathing
• Glowing	• Measured	• Judgmental
• Optimistic	• Romanticised	• Harsh
• Enthusiastic	(can be positive/	• Derisive
• Rose-coloured	negative)	• Mocking
• Approving	• Impartial	• Satirical
• Flattering	• Unbiased	• Belittling
• Accepting	• Detached	• Disapproving
• Celebratory	• Even-handed	• Hypercritical
• Admiring	• Innocuous	• Pitiless
• Commending	• Noncommittal	• Intolerant
• Sympathetic	• Objective	• Defamatory
• Congratulatory	• Indifferent	• Disparaging

Figure 3: Terms to describe perspective.

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Learning connected beyond the classroom – introducing the Authentic Connected Engaged (ACE) Framework for educators

Teacher education academics and researchers from Western Sydney University consider the impact of an authentic and connected curriculum on teaching and learning.

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Abstract

Educators are seeking innovative curriculum and pedagogical approaches to address declining engagement and academic achievement in

students and to support aspirations and build transferable capabilities. We propose the Authentic Connected Engaged (ACE) Framework: a practical framework for educators, curriculum writers, and industry stakeholders to enable deep learning that is relevant for contemporary students.

The ACE Framework emerged from a body of work connecting educators with industry partners to leverage authentic contexts for learning in Australia. Inquiry-based learning was the driving pedagogical approach to connect curriculum with authentic contexts, thereby promoting student engagement, broadening aspirations, and developing transferable capabilities such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.

Drawing on case studies involving teachers, students, and industry partners, we argue that the ACE Framework provides an architecture for the development of innovative curriculum and pedagogical approaches to enhance a range of key student outcomes. The case studies discussed in this paper provide emerging evidence for the positioning of schools and industries as partners in education.

Introduction

Student disengagement in learning during the school years can have negative consequences for school and life outcomes. Disengagement can be the result of a variety of factors, including the perceived lack of relevance of the curriculum to student lives. For example, in mathematics, this lack of relevance manifests in poor student attitudes (Brown et al., 2008) and a lack of interest in mathematics-based careers (Fitzmaurice et al., 2021). Similarly, a lack of relevance has been identified as an issue in science (Taylor, 2023) and integrated STEM (Falloon et al., 2020). However, there are recognised benefits for student learning when STEM curricula are linked to students' local contexts, including increases in enjoyment of STEM, improvements in learning, more positive STEM career aspirations, and development of transferable skills (Holmes et al., 2021).

> ... the ACE Framework provides an architecture for the development of innovative curriculum and pedagogical approaches to enhance a range of key student outcomes.

Contextualised learning, designed to increase relevance, is supported by a range of educational research, theories, and approaches. Models of effective pedagogy consistently emphasise the value of curriculum, teaching and learning that is personally relevant to students, including, for example, the NSW Quality Teaching Model (NSW Department of Education, 2023) and the Science Capital Teaching Approach (Godec et al., 2017) from the UK.

Theories from the field of educational psychology, including Expectancy-Value Theory, link student achievement to the degree to which students are interested in and value school subjects and their expectancies of success (Rosenzweig et al., 2019; Wigfield and Eccles, 2000). There is also evidence that student interest in school subjects can be increased by helping them to see its value for their current or future lives (Hulleman and Harackiewicz, 2009).

Curriculum frameworks increasingly highlight the need for school education to develop transferable skills, sometimes referred to as 21st century skills, competencies, or general capabilities. In addition, there is a body of evidence linking student aspirations to school achievement and continued participation in education (Gutman and Schoon, 2012; Holmes et al., 2018), highlighting the importance of supporting and broadening student aspirations as they consider a range of possibilities for their futures. Also, student engagement in school has been found to be linked to future aspirations in some fields, for example, mathematics and science (Watt et al., 2019). While many studies of student aspirations focus on individual student attributes, there is also recognition that teachers can play a vital role in their development (van den Broeck et al., 2020).

The Authentic Connected Engaged (ACE) Learning Framework

Given the potential benefits of contextualised learning, we argue that a framework is needed to guide teachers, schools, and external partners in its effective implementation. We propose the Authentic Connected Engaged (ACE) Learning Framework, a multifaceted approach to enacting contextualised learning in schools.

The ACE Learning Framework incorporates 4 key elements: curriculum, pedagogies, connections, and outcomes (see Figure 1). The first 3 elements represent directly actionable practices, controllable by the teacher. The final element describes the student-centred outcomes that the framework is designed to enhance. In recognition that these outcomes also feed into the pedagogy, connections, and curriculum enacted in classrooms, we also conceptualise the relationship between the outcomes and other ACE Learning Framework elements as being bidirectional.

The ACE Learning Framework arose from our industry collaborations on educational programs. The programs were designed to improve student engagement in learning, broaden aspirations for contemporary careers and ultimately, improve student learning outcomes. From these programs, the ACE Learning Framework emerged; a practical guide for educators to use when linking with industry and community partners to incorporate contemporary knowledge and approaches into their learning programs.

We begin by presenting 2 case studies describing educational programs designed to link teachers to 'industry' experts outside of the classroom, to inform the development of current and relevant curriculum experiences for students. Then we describe each of the ACE elements, their enablers, and the connections between them. Throughout we offer illustrations of the ACE Learning Framework elements in practice.
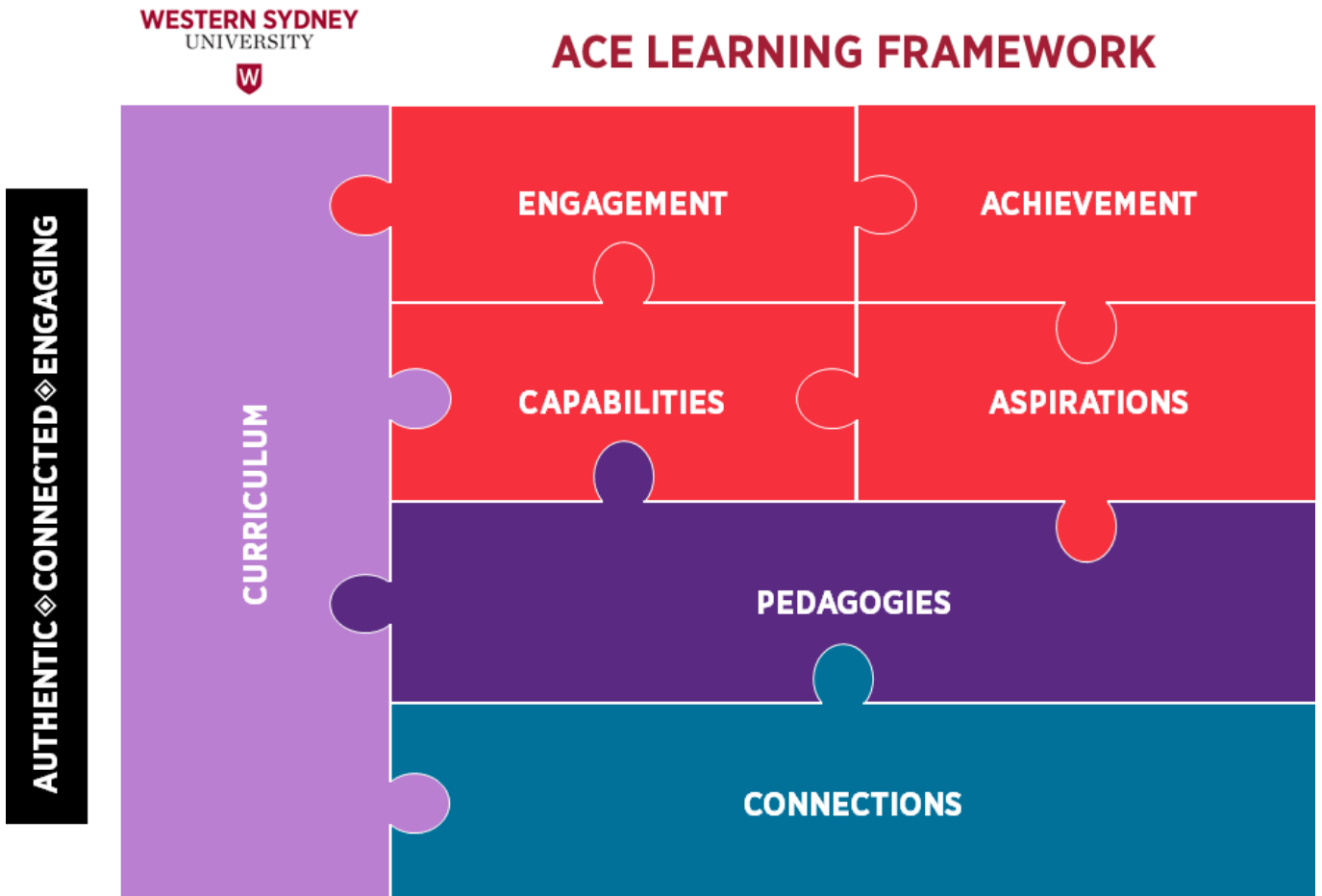

Figure 1: The ACE Learning Framework

Case study 1: educating about local natural disasters

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley (HNV) in outer-western Sydney represents the highest flood risk in Australia, due to its sprawling urbanised population and distinctive geographical features. Flooding in HNV has been significant in recent years, inducing high submersion levels, causing rapid increases in riverine levels, isolating communities, and requiring intense evacuation of approximately 152,000 people who live and work in this area.

During 2021-2022, there were 3 moderate flood events in the HNV resulting in one fatality, 18,000 people evacuated, 300 flood rescues, 11,000 calls for emergency assistance, and the closure of 130 schools. It is predicted that by 2041 around 46,000 people may fail to evacuate in a major flood event. However, recent studies into community attitudes and flood awareness within the HNV indicate that while people are remotely conscious of flood risk, they do not perceive this as a significant risk to their life or property, despite flood events occurring in living memory (Infrastructure NSW, 2017). Given the substantial flood risk and current community attitudes, there was an imperative to increase community awareness and preparedness to enhance community resilience.

In response to this authentic local flooding risk, a contextualised curriculum was jointly created by teachers, industry experts and educators for secondary students aged 11-14 years. Teachers and educators, guided by expert discipline knowledge, designed and piloted curricular tasks and inquiries for a range of diverse secondary students. This collaborative iterative curriculum design process resulted in the development of student-centred curricula comprising geographical inquiry, fieldwork, and cross curriculum perspectives via applied numeracy, science, and literacy tasks. The curriculum resources were supported by customised professional learning for educators. The pedagogic agency of teachers and educators was enabled in the form of an innovative curriculum architecture.

Data reported for this case study include surveys and focus groups with teachers, students, and community stakeholders. Participants included students aged 12-14 years (n = 332) and teachers (n = 5) from 5 schools. The purpose was to gather information about the participants' experiences when engaging with authentic and connected curriculum. In particular, the research explored students' learning within the domains of geography, numeracy, and literacy, the development of students' transferable capabilities, students' engagement in community issues, and the enactment of local citizenship.

In response to this authentic local flooding risk, a contextualised curriculum was jointly created by teachers, industry experts and educators for secondary students aged 11-14 years.

Case study 2: Inquiry-based learning with large infrastructure projects

Sydney is the most populous city in the country, with 5.3 million people living in the conurbation of Greater Sydney (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Extensive population growth in the past 20 years has placed considerable pressure on Greater Sydney's public transport system. More locally, the commercial area of Parramatta, located 24 kilometres west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, has experienced significant high-rise development and major businesses relocating to the area have created 'Sydney's second central business district [CBD]' (Attard et al., 2021, p 4). In response to these challenges, the NSW Government is constructing the Sydney Metro mass rapid transport system, akin to the London Underground, and reintroducing light rail lines in places like Parramatta. These projects involve extensive infrastructure engineering projects across Greater Sydney.

In 2017, Sydney Metro called for expressions of interest for a university partner to develop an education program. The School of Education at Western Sydney University proposed a program that focused on teacher professional learning in student-centred pedagogies. The program involved upskilling teachers in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of inquiry-based learning, which used the Sydney Metro project as a context for inquiry.

Sydney Metro was particularly interested in this approach as it created a legacy of skilled teachers who could apply their knowledge and skills to other contexts beyond one infrastructure project.

Following the initial success of the Sydney Metro education program, Transport for NSW commissioned Western Sydney University to establish a similar inquiry-based learning program based around the Parramatta Light Rail. The professional development programs commenced in 2018 and have since been delivered to a total of 151 primary and secondary teachers. Each course commenced with a full-day session at Western Sydney University where teachers were introduced to the infrastructure project by industry experts and the various curriculum areas inherent to the development of a major infrastructure project.

Teacher education academics introduced inquiry-based learning and the development of curriculum-relevant inquiry questions using the infrastructure project. Each course concluded with another full-day session at the university, where teachers presented on their projects and reflected on their learning and the impact on student outcomes. Between the 2 bookend sessions, 2 or 3 after-school video conferences were held periodically to support teachers as they developed and delivered their units of work.

In addition to ongoing collaboration with teacher education academics, teachers had access to a range of industry experts working on some aspect of the Sydney Metro and the Parramatta Light Rail. For example, architects involved in the redevelopment of the historical Sydney Central Station, engineers responsible for boring tunnels underneath Sydney Harbour, and environmental officers responsible for minimising environmental impacts, amongst many others.

> In addition to ongoing collaboration with teacher education academics, teachers had access to a range of industry experts ...

The University's high-rise campus in Parramatta is serviced by a new light rail stop and participants could observe construction from the elevated position of the classroom where professional learning was delivered. Construction engineers also led teachers on a site walk through the CBD. Experts presented at course sessions but were also available for events at schools or as guides during site visits. Students were able to engage with the experts by posing questions relevant to their inquiry, receiving feedback on their projects, and presenting the final products from their inquiries to this external audience. Schools frequently held open events where students showcased their learning to parents/carers, university academics, industry experts, and other members of the community.

Data reported for this case study were combined across the Sydney Metro and Parramatta Light Rail projects. The research involved qualitative surveys of students (n = 157), classroom observations (n = 8), focus groups with students (n = 11), and interviews with teachers (n = 61). Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim before inductive and deductive coding for emergent themes.

In the following sections we explore the elements of the ACE Learning Framework using illustrative data from the 2 case studies. We will examine the 3 'inputs' detailed in the framework: curriculum, pedagogies, and connections, detailing how these inputs manifest in desired student outcomes: aspirations, capabilities, engagement and achievement.

Curriculum

The curriculum element of the ACE Learning Framework recognises the integral role of curriculum in constructing authentic, purposeful learning experiences that align to the current and future oriented curriculum design used in Australia.

The curriculum construct in the ACE Learning Framework is based on the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2020) and informs the student learning outcomes for all schools and systems across Australia, including in NSW through the NSW Education Standards

Authority (NESA) syllabus documents. The curriculum is locally operationalised via state and territory education authorities and negotiated by teachers in classrooms. The ACARA curriculum framework is based on 'glocalisation' (Bautista et al., 2021; Bonk et al., 2020). Glocalisation recognises the global context for learning and intended student academic outcomes and transferable capabilities but enables relevant local or state-based curriculum-makers or bodies to provide aligned and relevant options for student learning.

Glocalisation is embedded in the ACE Learning Framework through authentic contextualised curriculum opportunities. The ACE Learning Framework recognises 'a three-dimensional curriculum that recognises the central importance of disciplinary knowledge, skills and understanding, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities' (ACARA, n.d., para. 3). The framework positions the learner both globally and locally to engage fully with the intent of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2022 (PDF 4.93 MB), which aims to develop creative, critical, culturally responsive, ethically aware, technologically fluent, literate, and numerate young Australians who possess discipline knowledge in 8 core learning areas identified in the Australian and NSW Curriculum: English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities, Arts, Languages, Health and Physical Education and Technologies.

> **You could … look at what was actually happening closer to where we are … they could actually do work on a graph with a reason, it wasn't just some arbitrary thing that you do … for no apparent reason. (Teacher, case study 1)**

Furthermore, the ACE framework embeds the cross-curriculum priorities (CCP) of the Australian Curriculum and implemented in NSW through NESA syllabuses. These cross-curriculum priorities focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and sustainability. These CCP provide an authentic context to situate the learning across the 8 core learning areas. This is

The curriculum element of the ACE Learning Framework recognises the integral role of curriculum in constructing authentic, purposeful learning experiences that align to the current and future oriented curriculum design used in Australia.

evident in the ACE framework that provides a multi-dimensional context for learning.

The General Capabilities (ACARA, n.d.) within the Australian Curriculum are defined as an 'integrated and interconnected set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that apply across subject-based content and equip students to be lifelong learners and be able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich, globalised world' (para. 5). The general capabilities comprise transferable skills and capacity in 7 domains: Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, and Intercultural Understanding.

The transferable capabilities leverage discipline knowledge embedded in the core learning areas to promote students' abilities and openness to solve or understand complex and global priorities. They can be described as flexible, adaptive stances that young people can optimise for learning, social participation, and employability beyond the 21st century (Gilbert, 2019). The capabilities are applicable to a range of diverse contexts and domains and recognise that young people require deep understanding, cognitive agility, innovation, and cultural and ethical capacity to successfully negotiate their immediate and future worlds. The capabilities are the structural foundations for student academic achievement, provide opportunities to connect to authentic contexts in a global society, promote student-centred and inquiry approaches to learning and can be seen as instrumental in the cultivation and actualisation of student aspiration for future learning and work. The general capabilities are fundamental to the ACE Learning Framework.

Pedagogies

Pedagogies that provide opportunities for real world, meaningful and student-centred learning are pivotal to the ACE Learning Framework. Pedagogy informs the choices that teachers make in the classroom and enables the learning experiences to be connected, student-centred, and open-ended. Pedagogical decisions are also made in selecting appropriate technologies and resources to facilitate the learning.

Inquiry-based learning is one student-centred pedagogical approach that enables learners to construct their understanding throughout the process of learning (Attard et al., 2021). Learners uncover understandings about subjects, their environment, and themselves by asking questions, investigating problems, and drawing evidence-based conclusions while collaborating with others (Melville, 2015).

Research suggests that inquiry-based approaches can support student achievement and engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). While some scholars argue that inquiry is a less effective method of teaching in comparison to direct instruction (Kirschner et al., 2006), others highlight that well-designed inquiry integrates direct instruction to support student engagement, problem-solving ability, higher-order thinking, and socio-emotional skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Multiple meta-analyses indicate that inquiry-based learning is most successful when teachers provide guidance that is matched with the student inquiry experience, individual learning needs, and prior knowledge (Lazonder and Harmsen, 2016).

There are several models of inquiry-based learning that allow teachers to tailor the levels of teacher control and student agency. Fichtman-Dana et al. (2011) describe a range of models, from structured inquiry, where the teacher controls all elements of the inquiry, through to free inquiry, where students construct their own question and design their own assessments to demonstrate learning.

> **I found the engagement of students was a lot more with inquiry-based learning, because suddenly we're dealing with something in your backyard. (Teacher, case study 1)**

While inquiry-based learning was the approach undertaken in the case studies, it is by no means the only pedagogical approach that can draw together the elements of the ACE Learning Framework. The important factor in choice of pedagogy is supporting the creation of authentic connections.

Connections

The connections element of the framework incorporates the types of connections that are likely to support contextualised learning in schools. Connections facilitate contextualised learning in several ways, supporting teachers to make learning authentic and relevant while enhancing learning through provision of expert knowledge and resources. Further to this, connections can facilitate contextualised learning implementation through the relationships between teachers, school leaders, and other schools; supporting teachers to transform their pedagogy and sustain these transformations.

> **If it's completely arbitrary to them [the students], if you're talking about something overseas, they look and then go "I don't really need to know this" or "I don't really want to learn about this." But with this, they really got into it and they really, really enjoyed looking at flooding ... it was dynamic and engaging and fun. (Teacher, case study 1)**

Connections between teachers

Collaboration between teachers, both within and between schools, can support the implementation of contextualised learning, given that teacher collaboration can lead to professional growth through the sharing of knowledge and skills (Liu and Benoliel, 2022). Aspects such as teacher buy-in and commitment are key to the implementation of any educational innovation (Redding et al., 2017) and these are more likely in settings in which teachers collaborate with one another.

The important factor in choice of pedagogy is supporting the creation of authentic connections.

Collaboration between teachers can also support implementation of contextualised learning through a reduction in workload for individual teachers, professional dialogue to critique and enhance learning experiences, and enabling the inclusion of multiple perspectives and skills into the pedagogical design (Vangrieken et al., 2015).

> **And collaboration was the key for kids, for the community, for us as teachers. And we collaborated as a whole school to develop our program, which then gave everyone access and expertise from different people, and I guess it allows for continued learning from each other. (Teacher, case study 2)**

Collaboration is a critical element in secondary schools, where teachers tend to be single subject experts, as it facilitates the development and implementation of integrated and cross-curricular learning experiences. Whole school implementation is another strategy that can increase the effectiveness of contextualised learning (Holmes et al., 2021), further highlighting the importance of teacher collaboration. Professional dialogue between teachers from different schools may not be standard practice, but providing the time and opportunity for teachers to share their experiences with teachers from other schools is likely to have a range of benefits, enabling the creation of learning communities for positive change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

> **We went with a geography and STEM integration, it's not something that we've ever done before – but if we can see an authentic connection between KLAs, obviously we want to really enhance that and foster that in a way where it doesn't feel forced. (Teacher, case study 2)**

Connections with the local community

The inclusion of parents and other community members in school-based learning experiences is associated with a myriad of positive outcomes for students, including increased achievement and attendance (Michael et al., 2007). In the case of contextualised learning, community connections offer opportunities to strengthen the relevance of school- based learning to students'

lives. Community connections can take various forms, including invitations to families and community organisations to view and provide feedback on student work, students collecting data from community members, and community organisations providing specialised information and resources to support student projects. Students can also be afforded the opportunity to practise transferable skills (for example, communication skills) in a realistic environment by including community members to view and provide feedback on student work.

> **It allowed [students] freedom to choose, and explore, and bring elements of the world to the classroom and their doorstep. (Teacher, case study 2)**

Connections with universities and professional development providers

A significant aspect of the connections component of the ACE Learning Framework is the inclusion of connections with universities and other professional development providers that have the expertise to provide professional development around innovative pedagogies while leveraging connections with industry. Universities, along with other organisations, are particularly well-placed to act as intermediaries between schools and industry, particularly for larger scale, multi school projects (Torii, 2018). Universities and other professional development providers need to carefully consider the design of professional development to ensure this is effective: practices such as having a content focus, use of modelling, opportunities for collaboration, and delivery over an extended timeframe with ongoing support and feedback can assist to ensure professional development efficacy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

> **I really appreciated it being run at Western Sydney University, where you're able to directly talk to the academics involved with the program, but also the liaisons with Metro. It added some more validity to the research that they're basing the findings off, and felt like I got more information out of it compared to just seeing an online lecture or an online discussion. (Teacher, case study 2)**

Connections with external partners

External partners may include industry, government organisations, businesses, and other stakeholders. Connections with these groups are a critical enabler of contextualised learning because they can provide information and experiences to students that are situated within their local area. In many cases, external partners can also demonstrate to students the different career and educational pathways that are available to them, increasing the relevance of their learning experiences. When schools connect with industry, there is the potential for students to become more aware of the transferable skills and capabilities that are needed in various professions: and opportunities for students to practise these skills should be encouraged via these partnerships (Torii, 2018).

> We had a lot more professionals coming into our school and teaching us about it. For other projects, we just either watch a documentary, and then that's where all our knowledge comes from, so yeah. (Student, case study 2)

There are also significant benefits of these connections for the external partners. These include increasing the exposure of the business or project to a wider audience, addressing longer term workforce needs through educating students about future employment options, and opportunities to fulfil their corporate social responsibility (Torii, 2018). Despite clear benefits of schools connecting with external partners, there is rarely systematic support available to establish these connections (Holmes et al., 2021).

> The students are actually talking to a real person. They're actually not just diving into a website and finding facts and Googling it. They've actually got the opportunity to talk to someone who has worked within it. ... They're talking to an engineer. They're talking to someone who is involved in the signaling of the train. And they can talk about what their job actually is and what their difficulties and what their experience has been like. And that's really powerful for those students. (Teacher, case study 2)

Outcomes

The outcomes described by the ACE Learning Framework (aspirations, capabilities, engagement, and achievement) are familiar to every teacher. Engagement is best defined as a student's meaningful participation in learning, rather than simply being 'on task' (Attard et al., 2021). Ideally, engaged students are actively participating in their learning, deeply processing information, and genuinely valuing what they're learning (Munns and Martin, 2005). In the case studies, we found that learning through local contexts was viewed by teachers and students as highly engaging.

> I like that instead of the teacher telling us what we do we got to choose the path and topic. (Student, case study 2)

> They [students] were feeding off each other constantly ... once again linking back to the whole idea of critical thinking and getting them to really come up with solutions, potential solutions. It stimulated a lot of debate and discussions throughout. (Teacher, case study 1)

> Because it is so engaging, there's the entry point for that student to connect to the curriculum. Often, that has a flow-on effect to their other learning areas, and it can create a student who starts to enjoy education. They like to come to school, they like to come to class, and they like to get there on time. I'm talking about students that might have a high rate of truancy or partial truancy. It's very motivating to the students. (Teacher, case study 2)

Many students see what they learn at school as decontextualised from the real world (Holmes et al., 2021). As such, reconnecting learning to contexts has a positive impact on a range of outcomes like aspirations, engagement, and achievement (Attard et al., 2021; Holmes et al., 2021). Students reflected on how their development of transferable capabilities connected to future education and work.

> These are great skills to apply in a workplace situation. (Student, case study 2)

> **Having teamwork and time management is vital for university and high school, so it is good to develop these skills at a young age. (Student, case study 2)**

Students were exposed to industry experts in both case studies, leading to greater awareness of potential career paths emerging in their local contexts. Expectancy-Value theory details how student achievement is related to the degree students value the work that they are doing (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000). While we did not directly measure changes in student achievement in our case studies, we found ample evidence of increased student engagement and valuing of learning.

Conclusion

The ACE Learning Framework was developed from an ongoing program of work designed to improve a range of student outcomes by increasing the relevance of the curriculum. This is achieved by connecting teachers with other teachers, their communities, and university and industry experts, and using student-centred pedagogical approaches. This approach was found to positively impact on student engagement, aspirations, and capabilities in the 2 case studies detailed in this article. We propose that the ACE Learning Framework can guide teachers towards the delivery of curriculum that is purposeful, engaging, and forward-looking, by making connections beyond the classroom so that students see the importance of education for their futures.

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Creativity, tech and problem-solving – engaging students in purposeful digital challenges with *T4L Kids*

Yvette Poshoglian and the Technology 4 Learning team

Yvette Poshoglian and the Technology 4 Learning (T4L) team explore *T4L Kids*, an engaging, curriculum-linked magazine for Stage 3 and Stage 4 classes.

T4L Kids magazine is a cross-curricular resource created by teachers for students. Designed as a self-paced independent learning resource for students in Stages 3 and 4, it is also a valuable addition to your programming and can assist teaching and learning by supporting you with curriculum outcomes across subject areas. The magazine aims to provide students with purposeful challenges that engage them in creating content and enhance their problem-solving skills using technology. No fancy tech or equipment is needed – every single challenge highlighted in each issue of *T4L Kids* can be completed on school devices.

What's inside this magazine?

Each issue contains:

- feature articles and interviews with inspirational people (and sometimes, animals)
- short news-focused articles with links to further articles and resources to encourage student investigation
- 3-4 step-by-step challenges with links to short videos on how to unpack the tech, guiding students towards task completion
- challenges which follow the design thinking process
- comprehensive teachers' notes to support you in the classroom via practical guides to the tech and lesson ideas
- career links to the subject area.

The Sports Issue – out now

One of the latest issues is all about the technology of sport. It explores concepts around sportsmanship and games prototyping, and includes exciting challenges relating to sport, performance and creativity to engage students in their learning. It also contains:

- a feature interview with Madison de Rozario, a wheelchair racing champion, Paralympic gold medallist and world record holder
- a double-page feature examining the tech behind wheelchair racing (Figure 1)
- 4 challenges with links across the curriculum, including to English, PDHPE, science, mathematics, HSIE, and design and technology – and so much more.

Unpacking the challenges in the Sports Issue

Challenge 1 – improve your performance

Students explore the concept of self-improvement in terms of technique and performance using marginal gains theory and self-assessment or group tasks. Students can use stopwatches, timers and cameras to

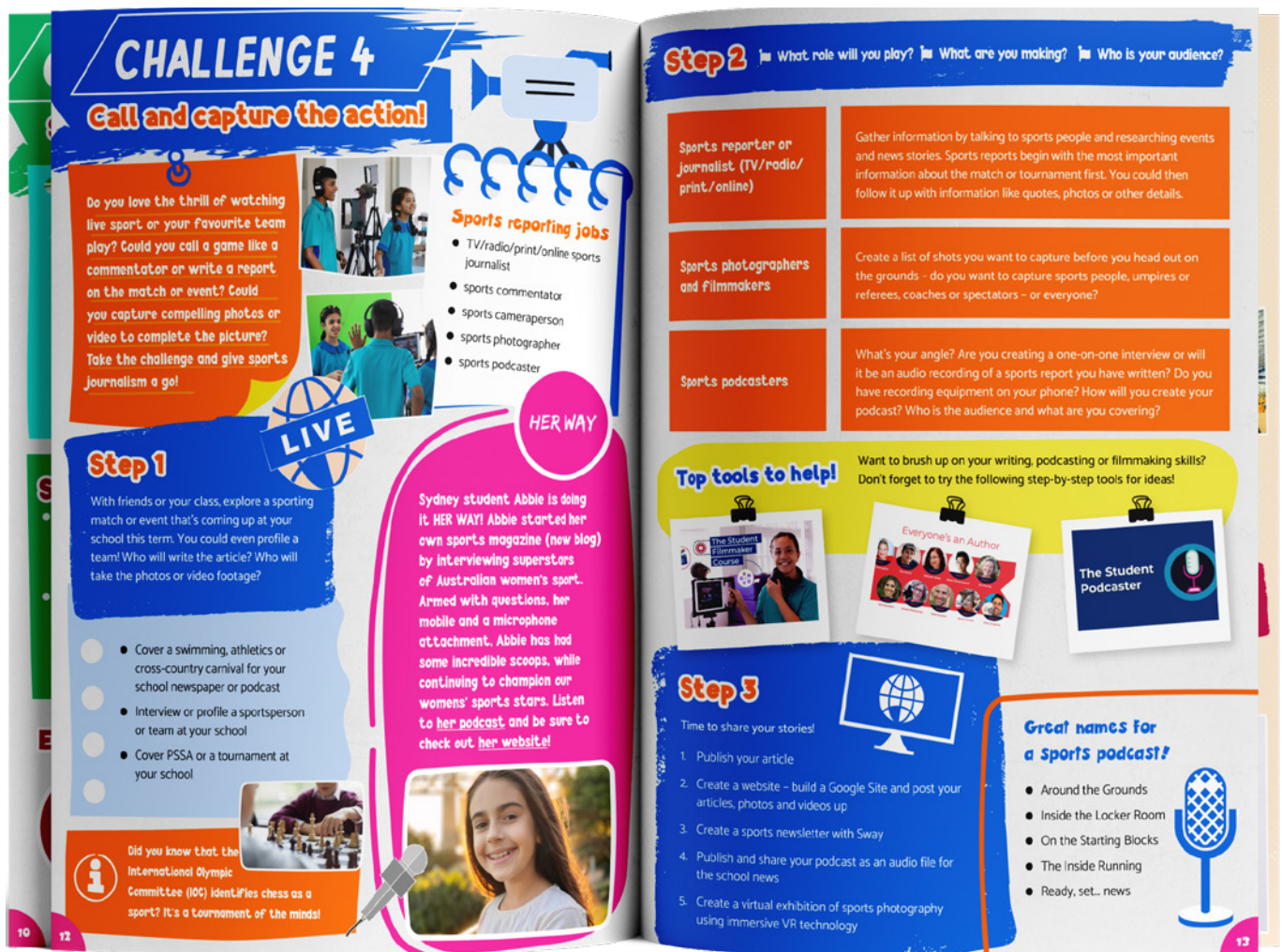**Figure 1: Understanding the technology behind wheelchair racing**

Figure 2: Challenge 4 – call and capture the sporting action

record and capture their progress, and are encouraged to chart their progress by building datasets to analyse improvements in their performance.

Challenge 2 – start an esports club

This challenge explores the idea of setting up an esports club or tournament – with practical applications for other kinds of staged competitions. Students can investigate and create in the linked Minecraft Education challenges, while also exploring larger ideas of where esports fit into the sporting world today.

Challenge 3 – design your own sport or game

Students can cross-pollinate their own games and sports to come up with a new creation! This challenge comes with practical advice on how to work as a team (get it?) to devise a sport with rules and winners. Links to the new Olympic sports are coming soon.

Challenge 4 – call and capture the action

Students can channel their sports broadcasting dreams with this comprehensive challenge around calling a game (see Figure 2). Students explore roles in sports reporting, from interviewing, writing, podcasting, photographing and filming to publishing their creations for their class or school. Inspired by NSW student, Abbie of HER WAY!

Explore how this fantastic resource connects with teaching and learning! You can also check out the complete archive of _T4L Kids_ magazines or visit the T4L website to read more about the resources the T4L team provide, as well as the latest innovations in tech.

How to cite: Poshoglian, Y. & the Technology 4 Learning team (2023). Creativity, tech and problem-solving – engaging students in purposeful digital challenges with T4L Kids. _Scan, 42_(2), 52–54.

Artwork: [Matt Ottley]. [© The Children's Book Council of Australia], 2023

Beyond comprehension – the child reader as critic

Gail Erskine
President, CBCA NSW Branch Committee
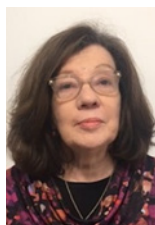
Vivienne Nicoll-Hatton
Member, CBCA NSW Branch Committee

Gail Erskine and Vivienne Nicoll-Hatton explain the [Sun Project: Shadow Judging], a project of the [Children's Book Council of Australia] (CBCA) in which young readers 'shadow' the CBCA Awards judges by reading and responding to books on the CBCA Shortlist.

Every August, schools and public libraries all over Australia celebrate Children's Book Week® with author and illustrator visits, special literature activities and book dress-up parades. The week always commences with the announcement of the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Book of the Year Award winners, selected by panels of judges chosen for their expertise in the field of children's literature and drawing on a specific set of criteria.

Since 2022, there has been a new special event to close Children's Book Week – the announcement of the Shadow Judges' Choice Awards. Initiated with a grant from the Federal government and involving partnerships with other organisations, the Sun Project: Shadow Judging reflects the CBCA purpose of enriching young lives through Australian stories.

How shadow judging works

The Shadow Judging Project is a program that invites young readers to give voice to their opinions of the 6 short-listed titles in any one of the CBCA Book of the Year Award categories: CBCA Book of the Year: Older Readers; CBCA Book of the Year: Younger Readers; CBCA Book of the Year: Early Childhood; CBCA Picture Book of the Year; Eve Pownall Award and CBCA Award for New Illustrator. With guidance from a facilitator, groups of children read each title closely using the same criteria as the CBCA adult judges. Over the duration of their reading, they are truly active readers, thinking, enquiring, exploring, questioning, and considering (Joy, 2019). Finally, they must compare, deliberate, and together reach consensus on a single winner, justifying their opinions with evidence from within the text and illustrations of the books, if applicable.

Figure 1: [2023 CBCA Sun Project: Shadow Judging Program](#) by Children's Book Council of Australia [4:07 minutes, YouTube]

The Shadow Judging program's need for close, purposeful reading goes well beyond typical school-reading comprehension activities that

> **Through comparing texts, child critics grow in their understanding of literary concepts and devices ...**

ask students to respond to questions with brief written answers, or to choose answers from a range of multiple-choice statements. The program also plays a different role to the teacher's use of short model texts as examples of quality writing, since Shadow Judges need to consider the whole text and interrogate the author's development of setting, characters, plot and mood.

Through comparing texts, child critics grow in their understanding of literary concepts and devices and consider the questions: What difference does it make to the reader if the story is told in the first person? Is a present tense narrative particularly effective in keeping the reader engaged? What choices do illustrators make to elaborate upon a simple narrative for very young readers? Do novels told in verse require a different reading approach than the more usual story told in prose?

While there is a need for an adult facilitator, the program's aim is for the young critics to be as much in control of the judging process as possible. Their opinions may well be influenced by what their fellow 'shadowers' say in discussion, but this occurs with guidance rather than explicit direction. Their major tool is **talk**; it is through stating opinions, comparing them with others and going back to the text for evidence, that shadowers become critical readers. In this process, the shadowers are also learning to listen, and be able to respectfully disagree with another's opinion.

Guidance from the facilitator takes the form of open-ended questions. One model of guided book talk that might be used is the 'Tell Me' framework created by the respected British author Aiden Chambers (2011), whereby the adult enabling the discussion asks young readers to 'tell' their

responses to Chambers' 4 basic questions:

- Was there anything you liked about this book?
- Was there anything you disliked?
- Was there anything that puzzled you or you thought strange?
- Were there any patterns — any connections — that you noticed?

Chambers (2011) also developed several 'special' questions that facilitators can use as, and when, shadowers delve into aspects of a story. These questions often focus in a non-judgmental way on the way the story is constructed, largely without using literary terminology, although they lead into it. The questions are wonderful stepping stones to the introduction of the CBCA criteria, either as they are worded, or in a modified form. Of course, such discussion is enhanced when the facilitator is familiar with the book being discussed. The facilitator is also best placed to ask the young critic to seek evidence in the text to justify a particular opinion.

In practice, a group shadow judging a book in the 'Early Childhood', 'Picture Book' or 'Eve Pownall' categories may be able to all read and discuss a single title together over one or two sessions. The group could be an entire class or a smaller group. Shadowing the novels in the Younger and Older Reader categories makes different reading demands and is best suited to the book club model or literature circle, with one or more groups of around 6 fluent readers. Students will most likely be reading different titles at the same time, so in their discussion sessions, they will need to 'avoid spoilers,' until 2 readers or more have read the same title and can spend part of the group time in breakouts. The use of reading journals and mini post-it notes can assist them to keep track of their thoughts.

Teacher librarians are well placed to build shadow judging into their programs without creating very much extra work for themselves. They can extend avid readers with a lunchtime book club, develop a class unit exploring the relationship between picture and text, or ask upper primary students to share the Early Childhood Shortlist with their Kindergarten buddies. Facilitators might also team with class or subject teachers to embed shadow judging into the existing curriculum for English or Art.

Creative responses

Talk is not the only way for Shadow Judges to respond to the titles they read. Each group can be asked to come up with their own response to the ideas in the titles they have read. It is entirely their own choice and can take many forms – individually or in combination – that might include writing, making, drawing, painting, dramatising and/or using technology. Students may focus on the theme, characters and their relationships, the setting, or the media of the illustrations: the scope is enormous. Some readers may create on their own, others may choose to collaborate. Creating a response encourages young readers to consolidate and articulate the knowledge they have gained through their engagement with a text. This aspect of the Shadow Judging project places it theoretically within the reader-response view of reading (see Sipe, 2007). The CBCA encourages participating groups to share photos of their responses on the national Shadow Judging website.

Engaging with a creative, online or in person

A goal of the Shadow Judging program is to have our young readers discuss their opinions with a published author or illustrator who can share face-to-face insights into the way they create a book for young readers and to clarify some of the literary concepts embedded in the criteria before the shadow judges choose their winner. These purposeful and focused visits, some as online events, while not always easy to organise and fund, add to the unique nature of shadowing.

Shadow judging in NSW 2022

In 2022, 120 groups across Australia embraced the opportunity to become shadow judges and demonstrated the flexibility of the program — from pre-school teachers sharing the shortlist in the

Creating a response encourages young readers to consolidate and articulate the knowledge they have gained through their engagement with a text.

'Early Childhood' category to junior primary students sharing the 'Early Childhood', 'Picture Books' and 'Eve Pownall' Shortlists. Upper primary, middle grade and junior secondary student groups shadowed the novels in the 'Younger Reader' category and English and library staff involved classes or smaller groups in shadowing the titles in the 'Older Readers' category. Some groups were funded by the Sun Project grant, but many others took it on without funding.

Reports from the Shadow Judging facilitators of the 2022 program showed that the enthusiasm and engagement of the readers was most rewarding for facilitators. For example:

Shadow judging at McCallums Hill Public School

The students in Stage 3 participated in the 'Early Childhood' shadow judging as part of their weekly library lessons with Teacher Librarian, Cathy Drury. The judging and creative responses combined to make a brilliant learning program as students critically evaluated the books using the judging criteria and differentiated the program by focusing their responses on their areas of interest. Some students used Minecraft to recreate illustrations from their selected book (see Figure 2), others completed artwork based on the stories and some conducted interviews with their grandmothers and were able to discover information that they didn't previously know. The program was so successful that students from other classes requested to participate after they saw the creative responses or heard other students talking about them in the playground.

Figure 2: A student's re-creation in Minecraft of their reviewed book

A Community Group

Picture book author Victoria Mackinlay acted as Shadow Judging Facilitator for a small group of Year 3 students. She says it was empowering for the young readers to not just voice their opinions but see them count: 'The Sun Project built a strong community among the kids around reading. As we met up at our local library, the children also signed up for their own library cards to further empower them in their individual reading choices.'

As an author, Mackinlay learned a lot from the young readers through the process: 'It was such a fun and joyful experience. … I was able to share some behind-the-scenes anecdotes about picture book creation with the girls, but I imparted far more knowledge from them. Their likes and dislikes were sometimes surprising, but humour in the books was the big winner. Humour is so important to children and a fantastic vessel to deliver a serious message.'

Kooloora Preschool in Toukley

The Kooloora Preschool used grant funds from the CBCA to purchase shortlisted 'Early Childhood' category books and organised a visit from children's author, Ashleigh Barton. During the visit, Barton sparked valuable conversations with the preschoolers about her picture book, *What Do You Call Your Grandma?* by using a collection of props from a Story Basket to represent characters and special moments from the story. Preschool Director, Sharon Buck (ABC, n.d.) notes, 'Re-reading and re-telling the stories helped us explore the key components of literature with children on a deeper level, developing important early language and literacy skills.'

The Nicho Book Club: Younger Readers category

Seven Year 5 students at a small public school in Sydney squeezed Shadow Judging meetings into their busy lunchtime schedule, along with dance club, debating and senior choir. One of the girls acted as organiser and kept the 2 sets of short-listed titles circulating, while classroom teacher, Daniel Lee, acted as facilitator.

Award winning author Lisa Shanahan, who had read all the Shortlist beforehand, visited the school and took the group through a most challenging and absorbing roundtable discussion focusing on the roles of setting,

character, plot, and language as doorways to a good book. The young critics and their facilitator held 2 breakfast sessions at a local café before school to argue and finally reach consensus on their winner. The students, all avid readers, were certainly extended as the short-listed titles were not the sort of books they usually chose. They also enjoyed immensely the process and the gravity of their task as judges.

Shadow Judging at Kiama High School

Teacher Librarian, Aveen Beedles, worked with 2 enthusiastic Year 9 English classes and their teachers to shadow judge the 'Picture Book' category as part of their English unit on creating their own picture book. The students worked in small groups of 5 or 6 and there were 3 or 4 copies of each of the books available. The students were able to dive deeply into the books, analysing them against the criteria, and then create their own judging booklet. Consequently, they had a greater understanding of what makes an outstanding picture book before writing their own. The Shadow Judging program fitted perfectly into the Year 9 English curriculum.

The students' creative responses ranged from poetry, song-lists, postcards and artwork, to iMovies and spoken and written commentaries. The Shadow Judges reported that they loved working with their peers in the small groups, having their voice heard in an authentic setting (voting) and responding with their own ideas and in their own way.

The Year 9 classes were visited by author Sue Whiting, who led them through her book, *Beware the Deep Dark Forest*, whose detail and use of literary devices impressed students and teachers alike. Whiting's session was extremely valuable, and students and staff are keen to reference the content in the future.

Academic input

In 2022, The Primary English Teachers' Association of Australia (PETAA) partnered with the CBCA to publish *A Literature Companion for Teachers* by Lorraine McDonald. The text is an excellent resource for facilitators to aid understanding of the concepts embraced in the judging criteria and how to unpack these with young readers.

This term, Professor Alyson Simpson has been presenting Australian Children's Literature – a series

of 4 online lectures and workshops developed by the CBCA in partnership with the University of Sydney. Open to anyone interested in unpacking what makes great Australian children's literature, this online course was a useful partner program for Shadow Judging mentors and facilitators; indeed for anyone interested in using talk to delve deeply into quality literature. The course may run again in future.

By incorporating aspects of the 5 key components of the NSW Department of Education's recently developed Information Fluency Framework (PDF 910 KB), the Shadow Judging program is the perfect vehicle for teacher librarians to incorporate into their library programs (see Figure 3):

Social
- interpersonal
- social knowledge skills
- collaborative
- building a reading culture

Literate
- quality Australian books
- focus on quality language
- increased reading repertoire
- author/illustrator visit

Innovative
- creative response to texts
- collaborative process
- use of multi media
- flexible format

Critical
- pose questions
- connect/combine ideas
- compare texts
- evaluate against criteria
- listen to diverse opinion
- reflect on ideas

Ethical
- equitable-open to all
- welcoming
- supportive environment
- empathic
- authentic learning situation

Figure 3: Elements of the Shadow Judging program in the context of the Information Fluency Framework

In conclusion, the CBCA has renewed its purpose to enrich young lives through Australian stories and to see a thriving creative world embracing the transformational power of stories across generations. Australian children's literature plays a unique role in our culture and has the power to shine a light on our world, speaking directly to young people.

We invite young voices from across Australia to join the conversation about the books on the 2023 Book of the Year Shortlist. At the end of Children's Book Week, at the Shadowers' Choice Awards on 25th August, the winners chosen by our groups of young judges will be announced. Children's Book Week, since 1946, has been an opportunity to celebrate reading for pleasure and the Shadow Judging program presents young people with an opportunity to have their opinions heard. More information and the option to register can be found on the Shadow Judging website.

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Writer biographies

Margaret Turnbull

Margaret Turnbull is currently undertaking doctoral research at the University of Wollongong. In her current position as Principal Policy Analyst in the NSW Department of Education, she has initiated literacy and EAL/D research and has worked on the development of the ACARA National Literacy Learning Progressions. During her career as teacher, Instructional Leader, regional consultant and statewide coordinator she has worked primarily in EAL/D education, leading teacher learning in EAL/D pedagogy and assessment practices and leading the development of EAL/D curriculum, policy and research projects.

Cindy Valdez

Cindy Valdez is a highly experienced (EAL/D) teacher. She has worked as a New Arrivals Program teacher, mentor and EAL/D Assistant Principal. She is passionate about inclusion, developing others as leaders in the EAL/D space, and catering for the academic needs and well-being of EAL/D learners. Cindy has facilitated action learning projects as a Refugee Support Leader. She is currently an EAL/D Education Leader at the NSW Department of Education and President of the Association for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ATESOL) NSW.

Dr Gill Pennington

Dr Gill Pennington was a primary school teacher and EAL/D policy officer in the ACT. She later worked for the NSW Department of Education as a primary Multicultural/ESL consultant in south-western Sydney. Gill is an EAL/D consultant and researcher and recently worked with the NSW Department of Education on research into EAL/D effective school practices. Her current research interests include the use of home languages in the classroom and multilingual ecologies which support English language learning.

Writer biographies

Anette Bremer

Anette Bremer has worked in EAL/D and refugee education for many years. She has been an EAL/D specialist teacher in south-west Sydney and currently is an EAL/D education advisor, literacy and numeracy with Multicultural Education for the NSW Department of Education.

Joanne Rossbridge

Joanne Rossbridge is an independent language and literacy consultant working in both primary and secondary schools and with teachers across Australia. Her expertise, and much of her experience, is in working with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Joanne is particularly interested in educational equity as well as student and teacher talk, and how talk about language can assist the development of language and literacy.

Rebecca Langham

Rebecca Langham is a Modern History Curriculum Advisor with the NSW Department of Education. Her qualifications include English, history, gender studies and education from the University of New England. She has fifteen years of experience in classrooms across Western Sydney. Rebecca is also a published author of young adult fiction and a book reviewer.

Writer biographies

D/Prof Kathryn Holmes

Distinguished Professor Kathryn Holmes is the Director of the Centre for Educational Research in the School of Education, Western Sydney University. Her research focuses on understanding student engagement and participation in STEM subjects in secondary school, aspirations for STEM careers and effective models of professional learning for teachers.

Dr Nathan Berger

Dr Nathan Berger is a Senior Lecturer in Secondary Education in the School of Education, Western Sydney University. He has degrees in information technology, secondary teaching in the social sciences, and quantitative educational research. His PhD examined young people's career and education aspirations and was awarded by the University of Newcastle. His teaching and research interests include secondary education, motivation, and various aspects of STEM education, particularly in the technologies area.

Dr Erin Mackenzie

Dr Erin Mackenzie is a Senior Lecturer in Educational Psychology and STEM in the School of Education, Director of Academic Program of the Postgraduate Specialist Studies program, and a researcher in the Centre for Educational Research at Western Sydney University. She lectures in educational psychology, secondary science pedagogy, and STEM education, working with both pre- and in-service secondary teachers. Erin's research interests include adolescent online interactions, coping, and the role of psychological and social factors in adolescent girls' participation in STEM.

Writer biographies

Dr Kay Carroll

Dr Kay Carroll is a Senior Lecturer in Education and the Director of the Secondary Teaching Program, Western Sydney University. Her current research and teaching interests are curriculum and pedagogy. Kay has published texts and journals in global education, inquiry and pedagogy. She is the Co-Lead for Writing in Secondary – Academic Partner (2021-2022) with the NSW Department of Education and Project Lead – Flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley: School Geography Resource (2018-2020). In 2019, she received the Western Sydney University Women's Fellowship.

Prof Catherine Attard

Professor Catherine Attard is Professor of Mathematics Education and Deputy Director of the Centre for Educational Research at Western Sydney University. Catherine is currently researching student and teacher engagement with mathematics and pedagogies involving digital resources in mathematics education. She also has an interest in the use of inquiry-based learning to improve student, teacher, and industry engagement with education. Catherine is the author of the popular education blog, engagingmaths.com.

Technology 4 Learning team

The Technology 4 Learning (T4L) team operates out of the NSW Department of Education's Information Technology Directorate (ITD). The team is composed of innovators, ICT experts, teachers and other specialists to support teachers, students and schools with the best technology and advice to create engaging digital classrooms. Yvette Poshoglian is the Editor of T4L Kids, an English teacher and a children's author. She is committed to creating digital resources that allow our learners and their teachers to develop digital skills through authentic learning experiences.

Writer biographies

Gail Erskine

Gail is a former primary school teacher, teacher-librarian, mentor to practising teachers and a university tutor in Children's Literature. She is passionate about the rights of all children to access quality literature, be inspired by authors and illustrators and be informed by qualified teacher-librarians. She is convinced of the transformative power of children's books and the importance of connecting kids and books. Gail is the 2022-23 Lady Cutler Award recipient and current Children's Book Council NSW Branch Inc President.

Vivienne Nicoll-Hatton

Vivienne Nicoll-Hatton is a member of the CBCA NSW Branch Inc. Committee. Vivienne is now retired, but has a background in primary teaching, teacher-librarianship, teacher education and professional development. Vivienne is a recipient of the Lady Cutler Award for Distinguished Service to Children's Literature in NSW and is a Life Member of PETAA. She believes in this era of technology it is more important than ever that we help teacher-librarians and teachers of literacy to bring to every child the benefits of reading quality literature.

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