

Volume 43 Issue 1



Scan

The journal for educators

Spotlight on
inclusion and
wellbeing

Curriculum
planning for every
student

Eddie Woo on
the relationship
between literacy
and numeracy





Contents

Published by the NSW Department of Education, *Scan* is an open access online journal, delivered quarterly. *Scan* is a leading educational resource that brings innovative change to the lives and learning of 21st century educators and students. *Scan* informs teachers' practice by encouraging engagement with a wide range of articles, including peer reviewed research, to enhance school and student outcomes across NSW, Australia and beyond. The journal aims to leave teachers inspired, equipped and empowered, and students prepared to maximise their individual talents and capabilities.

4 Curriculum planning for every student in every classroom

Carolyn Amat proposes a pathway to an equitable, quality education for every student and introduces resources to support inclusive, culturally responsive curriculum planning practice.

11 Stories that count – how mathematics and literacy enrich each other

Eddie Woo illustrates the relationship between numeracy and literacy by considering the role that mathematical concepts play in the construction of narratives.

13 Building strong foundations – the transformative power of quality music education to improve student outcomes

Matt Hill provides an overview of a pilot in-school program that used music learning to improve the developmental and educational outcomes of children in low socio-economic status schools.

18 Engaging digital citizens with interactive and purposeful online safety lessons

Mona Sidhu explains why students and teachers are embracing the Cybermarvel resources and why age appropriate lessons on eSafety are so important.

22 Recognition days – growing staff, students and community

Christian O'Connor considers the impact of recognising and celebrating significant occasions on learning, teaching and wellbeing across the school community.

27 Perspectives on allyship in schools – supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff

Colleagues in the Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships Directorate (AOPD) explore practical ways teachers can practise allyship and nurture inclusivity in schools.

Want *Scan* delivered to your inbox?

Register for free to be notified when new issues of *Scan* are available. We'll never share your email address and you can opt out at any time.



31 The importance of LGBTQIA+ acceptance, representation and support at school

Brandon L. A. Daley shares insights into the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students at school and offers actionable ideas for strengthening inclusion and allyship.

34 Breaking barriers, fostering inclusion – the transformative power of teacher diversity in education

Jess Moore discusses the findings of a commissioned review of the literature regarding the influence of teacher diversity on student outcomes.

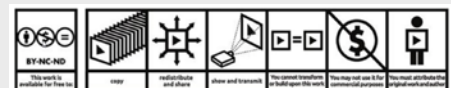
38 Probing perspective through picture books (Stage 5 English)

Dr Cathy Sly highlights ways in which the complexity of picture books provides a springboard for the study of the textual concept of perspective.

45 Writer biographies

Copyright: The material in this publication is subject to copyright under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth), and is owned by or licenced to the State of New South Wales through the Department of Education (the Department). Material published in *Scan* covers and other third party content in *Scan* are reproduced with permission, where applicable. Apart from uses in accordance with the Creative Commons licence (below), permission must be sought from editor.scan@det.nsw.edu.au prior to any (other) use.

Creative Commons: The material in this publication is licensed under CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 and may be printed or downloaded without alteration or abridgment and must retain attribution of the source. The user shall not sell, hire or otherwise derive revenue from copies of the material.



The views expressed in these articles are solely those of the authors and do not represent the views of the NSW Department of Education.

Links to external sites: Links within *Scan* are provided with the intention of increasing the information available to our readers. The NSW Department of Education has no control over linked websites, and is not responsible for the views, opinions, standards or information expressed on linked websites. The provision of a link does not imply that the NSW Department of Education endorses those websites or the people or companies who own them, and vice versa. Please refer to www.nsw.gov.au/disclaimer#links-to-external-sites for a comprehensive description of the NSW Government's policy regarding links to external sites.

The appearance of advertising on, in or in connection with the NSW Department of Education, and the *Scan* publication, does not imply any endorsement of the advertised company or product.

© 2024 State of New South Wales (Department of Education). ISSN 2202-4557. SCIS 1547886.



Image: Our [Reconciliation Action Plan artwork](#) represents community, school, friendship and family. Created by Suzanna, a student from Boggabilla Central School on Gamilaraay Country. Reproduced with permission.

Curriculum planning for every student in every classroom



.....
Carolyn Amat
 Curriculum and Reform Directorate,
 NSW Department of Education

Carolyn Amat proposes a pathway to an equitable, quality education for every student. She provides an overview of professional learning and resources for K–12 teachers, developed by the NSW Department of Education to support inclusive, culturally responsive curriculum planning practice.

Buildings today are designed taking into consideration how everyone can access them and use the amenities. Sometimes, aspects that are essential for some can be useful for all. For example, ramps are used by people in a wheelchair to access buildings and are also used by parents with prams and elderly people with walkers. Similarly, when teachers proactively design inclusive learning environments and experiences, they can optimise learning for every student in every classroom.

In NSW classrooms there is a diverse range of students, including:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students
- high potential and gifted students
- students learning English as an additional language or dialect
- students with disability.

Some students may identify with more than one of these groups, or even all of them!



Figure 1: A school culture which embraces diversity can positively impact the whole school community. (Image: Our [Reconciliation Action Plan artwork](#) represents community, school, friendship and family. Created by Suzanna, a student from Boggabilla Central School on Gamilaraay Country. Reproduced with permission.)

[Celebrating and planning for diversity](#) (2:48 minutes) is a video that celebrates the diversity found in our schools and introduces us to how we can think differently about planning for the full range of students.

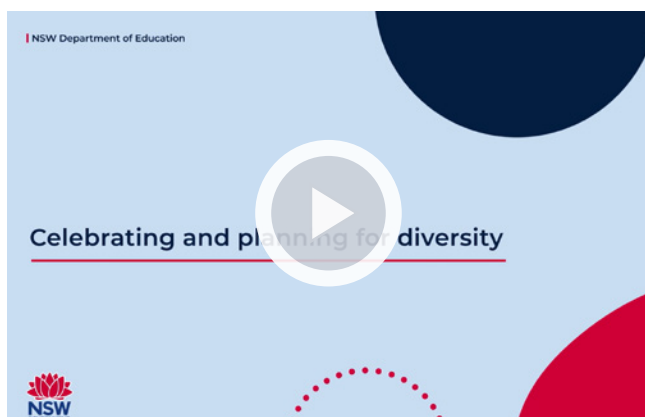


Figure 2: [Celebrating and planning for diversity](#) by NSW Department of Education (2:48 minutes, Brightcove)

Who are we planning for?

The reality is, there is **no average** student. When teachers design learning experiences for the 'average' student, they really **design for no one**.

Acknowledging the full range of learner variability, or planning to the edges of a classroom, means teachers can design effective learning experiences

that are inclusive of every student. By recognising diversity and valuing the cultural capital (experiences, skills, attitudes and knowledge) each student brings to their learning, teachers can plan to optimise learning opportunities for everyone.

When teachers proactively plan teaching and learning experiences, they support all students to access and engage with the curriculum. Embedding appropriate levels of support, while maintaining sufficient intellectual challenge, maximises student engagement in their learning.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum planning, we know that students who are engaged in their learning, able to access and interact with the content, as well as demonstrate their understanding, are successful learners.

The vision articulated in the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration \(2019, PDF 4.93 MB\)](#) is:

'for a world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.'

[Our Plan for NSW Public Education: 2024–2027](#) (NSW Department of Education, 2023) is informed by this national vision and prioritises equity and excellence so that the NSW Department of Education works towards providing an outstanding and equitable education system, whereby ‘every student learns, grows and belongs in an outstanding and equitable education system’ (p 5).

‘... equity means that all students receive an education that enables them to realise their talents and fully participate in society in a way of their choosing’ (Sahlberg, 2022, p 6).

How can we ensure every student receives an outstanding, equitable education?

There are several ways schools can ensure students are educated to realise their potential. For instance:

- School leaders can facilitate professional discussions to identify and better understand equity-related issues that can impact student learning outcomes. Explore [Equitable outcomes for students – evidence base](#) (NSW Department of Education, 2023) for professional learning resources.
- Holding high expectations for every student’s learning progress is critical to enhancing equitable outcomes, empowering students to overcome barriers to their learning and effectively demonstrate their understanding. More information is found in [What Works Best 2020 update \(PDF 1.13 MB\)](#) by Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2020).
- Culturally safe, inclusive learning environments, supported by culturally responsive teaching, contributes to an outstanding, equitable education for all students. More information can be found in [Strong Strides Together \(PDF 9.1 MB\)](#) by Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2022).

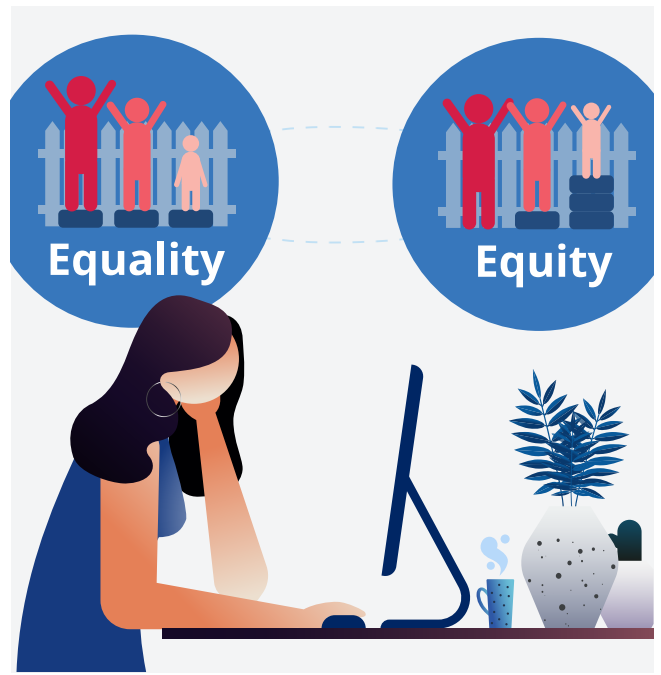


Figure 3: Equality versus equity

- School leaders can facilitate professional discussions to better understand inclusive curriculum planning practice. Explore [Inclusive curriculum planning – evidence base](#) (NSW Department of Education, 2023) for professional learning resources.

‘All students need to be challenged and engaged in order to develop their potential fully. A culture of high expectations needs to be supported by strategies that both challenge and support student learning’ (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020, p 6).

The NSW Department of Education has developed professional learning and online resources to support K–12 teachers to incorporate inclusive, culturally responsive strategies within their curriculum planning practice. These resources are based on the three [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) Guidelines](#) (CAST, 2023).

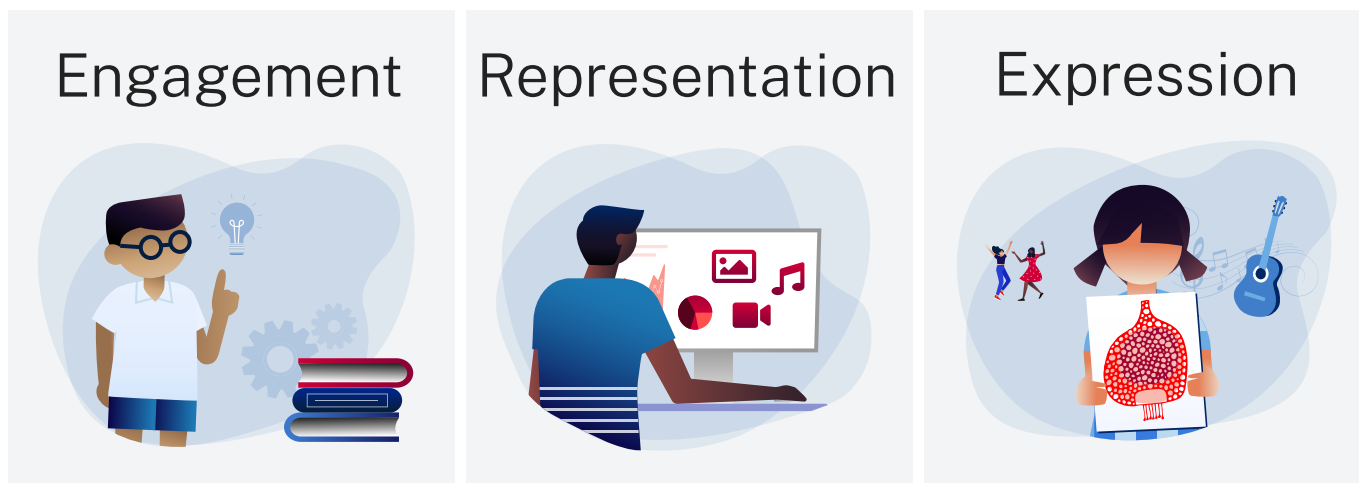


Figure 4: Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

An important aspect of a proactive approach to curriculum planning is that students are given choice in the three areas of engagement, representation and expression: the ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ of learning. Choice in these areas provides students with voice and agency over their learning. As one teacher from Penrith Selective High School observed:

‘Putting the time in at the beginning, you can see that the ceiling just lifts off for them, their enthusiasm is enormous and they feel special, they feel valued, they feel like they want to be there’.

What does curriculum planning for every student look like?

The video, [Curriculum planning for every student – Enact phase](#) (4:41 minutes), is one of three videos that explore inclusive curriculum planning strategies and their implications for teaching and learning in NSW classrooms.

Professional learning to support curriculum planning for every student

[Curriculum planning for every student in every classroom \(AC00180\)](#) is a comprehensive suite of professional learning available through the MyPL platform (staff only). This professional learning uses a strengths-based approach to explore inclusive curriculum planning strategies and provide aligned advice for K–12 teachers. It supports teachers to optimise learning for all by ‘building a teaching culture that focuses on what students can do rather than what they can’t do’, as expressed by a teacher from Warwick Farm Public School.

The professional learning and online resources support K–12 teachers to deepen their understanding of diversity and plan to optimise learning for the full range of students. The resources have been collaboratively developed by these expert teams from within the NSW Department of Education:

- Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships
- Curriculum and Reform (including High Potential and Gifted Education)
- Inclusion and Wellbeing (including Inclusive Education and Disability Strategy)
- Multicultural Education (including English as an additional language or dialect).

In 2023, 25% of all teachers, from over 92% of K–12 public schools in NSW, engaged with the professional learning resources. The course uses the flexible microlearning model to deliver content. Teachers appreciate that the course is ‘simple, clear, succinct and engaging’ and ‘like hearing colleagues talk about their context’.

Teacher confidence in using the Universal Design for Learning framework in curriculum planning is linked to the professional learning they receive about it. Matthew James Capp (2020, p 718) suggests focused, targeted professional learning helps increase teacher confidence to implement the principles of Universal Design for Learning. As a teacher from Bowraville Central School observed, ‘This suite of professional learning is designed to help teachers expand their toolkit of ideas and be flexible in the way that they use them’.

Where can teachers start?

When taking a proactive approach to curriculum planning, consider these 3 questions.

- How will I provide multiple options to engage my students?
- What options will I provide for every student to access relevant and challenging content?
- How will I provide different options for students to respond and express what they have learnt?

These 3 questions can guide the selection of resources and pedagogical decisions teachers make when planning and programming learning experiences for their students.

For instance, one teacher describes planning by suggesting, 'You can liken it to a buffet. You've got these different meals that they can dip into, but essentially the content is the same, the outcome is the same'.

'The resources teachers share with students speak to who we are and what we value.' (Toltz, 2022, p 30)

Planning strategies could include:

- selecting resources that represent a range of voices that include students' lived experiences, cultural backgrounds, perspectives, abilities and interests
- identifying assumed cultural and linguistic knowledge in resources, assessment tasks and learning experiences
- explicitly building background/field knowledge
- ensuring inclusive language and content are used in teaching resources and assessment tasks
- designing multiple options for presenting content and assessing student progress
- opportunities for learning 'on Country' and 'about Country'.

Teaching strategies could include:

- assessing prior knowledge
- incorporating digital technologies to enable students to access content and demonstrate learning
- ensuring inclusive language is used in the delivery of teaching and learning experiences and assessment opportunities
- encouraging students to use their preferred language
- using culturally responsive strategies to create culturally safe learning environments
- providing challenging learning experiences for all students.

Where to next?

Learners receive and process information in different ways, work at different rates, have varied family and cultural backgrounds and bring different knowledge and experiences to their learning.

The NSW Department of Education's High potential and gifted education policy states, 'The department supports differentiated and evidence-based procedures, programs and practices for growth and achievement of all students' ([High potential and gifted education policy, 2022](#)).

It is important for teachers to plan, program, teach and assess using evidence-based practices that cater for the full range of students. Curriculum planning using the Universal Design for Learning framework enables teachers to optimise learning for all students and may lead to more efficient planning, programming and assessing practices. Together we can contribute to UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4 to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2023).

In the words of one teacher, 'It's not more work. It's getting better at what we do'.

Resources to support inclusive curriculum planning

[Curriculum planning for every student in every classroom \(AC000180\) \(staff only\)](#) professional learning in MyPL (NESA accredited).

[Introductory webinars](#) – each of these four webinars highlights strategies to engage specific cohorts of students, such as:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learners
- English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners
- high potential and gifted (HPG) learners
- learners with disability.

[Advice](#) – outlines evidence-based planning and teaching strategies with links to further resources.

[Evidence base](#) – explores a broad range of research articles to develop a deeper understanding of inclusive planning practice and the importance of equitable outcomes for students. Each resource includes links to the research article, key points from the article, with reflection and professional learning prompts.

[Planning learning experiences for every student](#) – 3 schools share curriculum planning insights from their experiences implementing new K–2 syllabuses in 2022.

[Universal Design for Learning](#) – is a proactive planning framework that supports teachers to enable every student in every classroom to access the curriculum and optimise learning for all students.

[Strategies and resources for curriculum planning – engagement](#) – to promote increased student engagement.

[Strategies and resources for curriculum planning – representation](#) – to enhance access to content by providing flexible options for students to interact with content.

[Strategies and planning for curriculum planning – expression](#) – to enable all students to respond to content and demonstrate their new learning.

These resources include questions for reflection and discussion. School leadership teams can use these resources to:

- lead conversations to support the professional growth of staff
- reflect on current curriculum planning practice
- build collective understanding of inclusive, culturally responsive pedagogy.

Copyright

© State of New South Wales (Department of Education), 2024: Education Standards.

Notice – Shutterstock Licence Agreement

Some of the images used in this material may have been copied (and communicated to you) under licence from [Shutterstock.com](#).

Any further reproduction or communication of this material by you may constitute a breach of the terms of the licence agreement with [Shutterstock.com](#).

References

Capp, M. J. (2020). Teacher confidence to implement the principles, guidelines, and checkpoints of universal design for learning. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(7), 706–720. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1482014>

CAST. (2018). [The UDL Guidelines](#).

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. (2020). [What works best 2020 update \(PDF 1.13 MB\)](#). NSW Department of Education.

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. (2022). [Strong strides together: meeting the educational goals for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students \(PDF 9.1 MB\)](#). NSW Department of Education.

Council of Australian Governments Educational Council. (2019). [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#). Education Services Australia.

NSW Department of Education. (2022). [High potential and gifted education policy](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Curriculum planning for every student in every classroom \(AC00180\) \(staff only\)](#). MyPL.

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Equitable outcomes for students – evidence base](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Inclusive curriculum planning – evidence base](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Our plan for NSW public education](#).

Sahlberg, P. (2022). [Understanding equity in education. Part 1: What is equity? \(PDF 6.8 MB\)](#). *Scan*, 41(6), 4–7.

Toltz, R. (2022). [Diversity, inclusion and representation: resourcing the curriculum \(PDF 6.8 MB\)](#). *Scan*, 41(6), 30–34.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. (2023). [Education 2030](#).

How to cite: Amat, C. (2024). Curriculum planning for every student in every classroom. *Scan*, 43(1), 4–10.



Writing for **Scan**

Interested in writing for *Scan*?

Is your school – or someone you know – doing something innovative or inspiring? We're currently sourcing content for *Scan* – standard articles, research, and SPaRKs (Shared Practice and Resource Kits).

How to reach us

Check out the [Writing for *Scan*](#) section on our website to view our writer and research guidelines. Then [email us](#) with your article idea!



Stories that count – how mathematics and literacy enrich each other



.....
Eddie Woo

Mathematics Teacher, Cherrybrook
Technology High School; Leader,
Mathematics Growth, NSW
Department of Education; Professor of
Practice, University of Sydney
.....

Eddie Woo illustrates the relationship between numeracy and literacy by considering the role that mathematical concepts play in the construction of narratives.

In the following [video presentation](#), made originally for members of the School Library Association of New South Wales, Eddie Woo describes and teases out the often-unseen relationship between numeracy and literacy. Specifically, Eddie aims to broaden viewers' perception of mathematics and highlight the ways in which mathematics plays an integral part in the construction of narratives through consideration of patterns, networks, language construction and the geometry of narratives.

With this broadened view of what Eddie terms, the 'wonderful, symbiotic, overlapping relationship, between mathematics and literacy', teachers and teacher librarians hold yet another key to unlock interest and engagement in students and facilitate the development of literacy.

Watch the [video](#) or read the [video transcript](#).

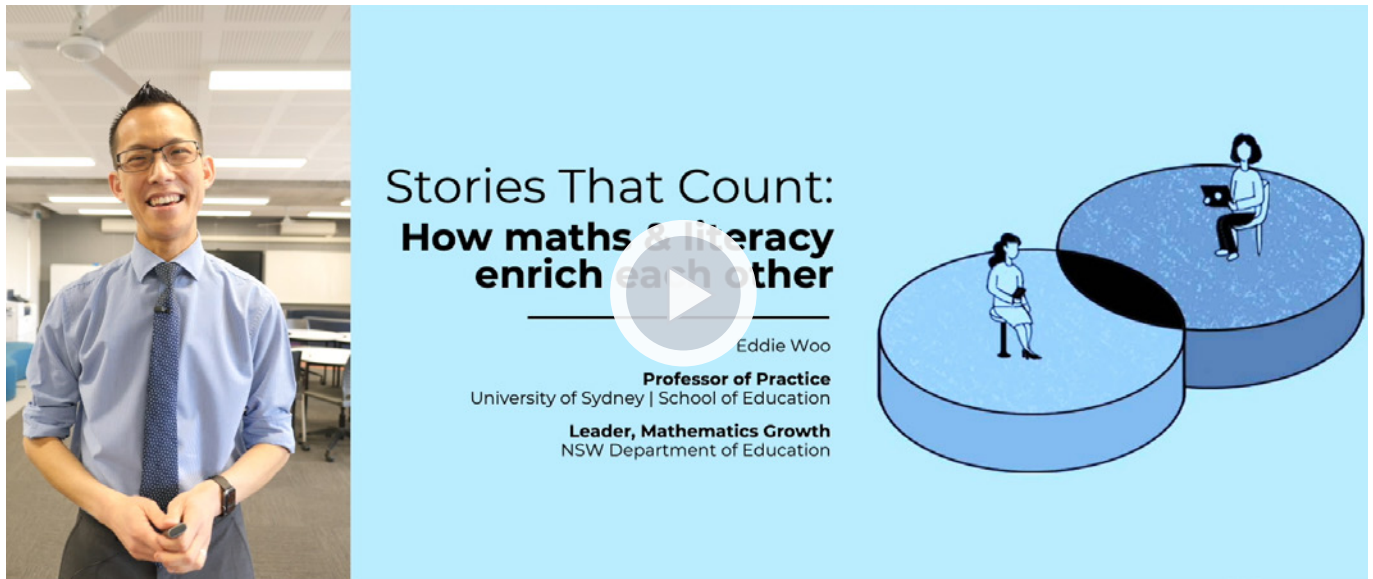


Figure 1: [Stories that count](#) by Eddie Woo (23:32 minutes, Brightcove)

Editor's note

Thanks to Eddie Woo and the School Library Association of New South Wales for permission to reproduce Eddie's video presentation.

References and further reading

Bellos, A. (2010). *Alex's adventures in Numberland*. Bloomsbury.

Fry, H. (2019). *Hello world: being human in the age of algorithms*. W.W. Norton.

Hart, S. (2023). *Once upon a prime: the wondrous connections between mathematics and literature*. Flatiron Books.

Marvel. (2023). [Movies](#).

Orlin, B. (2019). *Change is the only constant: the wisdom of calculus in a madcap world*. Black Dog & Leventhal.

Pittman, P. (2022, Sept. 9). [Kurt Vonnegut graphed the world's most popular stories. Do his diagrams tell us something important about humanity?](#) *The Story*.

Rowling, J. K. (2004). *Harry Potter and the prisoner of Azkaban*. Scholastic.

Shakespeare, W. (n.d.). [Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?](#)

Singh, S. (2013). *The Simpsons and their mathematical secrets*. Bloomsbury USA.

Strogatz, S. (2012). *The joy of X: a guided tour of math, from one to infinity*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Woo, E. (2018). *Woo's wonderful world of maths*. Macmillan Australia.

How to cite: Woo, E. (2024). Stories that count – how mathematics and literacy enrich each other. *Scan*, 43(1), 11–12.



Building strong foundations – the transformative power of quality music education to improve student outcomes



.....
Matt Hill

Creative Arts Advisor K-6,
NSW Department of Education
.....

Matt Hill provides an overview of a pilot in-school program that used music learning to improve the developmental and educational outcomes of children in low socio-economic status (SES) schools.

As educators, we are always looking for opportunities to engage our students in their learning and improve outcomes, and there is no shortage of research into the various ways this might be achieved.

To this end, a [report](#) released by the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO, 2022) into a pilot program and its outcomes highlights the power of quality music education to improve the developmental and educational outcomes of children in a school with relatively low socio-economic advantage.

The [ACO Foundations](#) program was created with two broad aims:

1. To positively impact the developmental and educational outcomes of students in low socio-economic status (SES) public schools.
2. To demonstrate how music learning can be integrated into the core curriculum for the benefit of all students.

The program's results, available in the [ACO Foundations Evaluation Report 2018–2022 \(PDF 2 MB\)](#), are significant. Despite considerable disruptions to the pilot program due to COVID-19, analysis of qualitative and quantitative data shows some very positive outcomes, opening the door to consideration of how the program could be expanded and scaled for a broad and positive impact in a range of contexts.

How it started

ACO Foundations was established in 2018 as a research-based program, pedagogically designed to improve cognitive, emotional, and behavioural development in children through quality music education. The pilot program tracked students at St Marys North Public School (SMNPS) from the start of Year 1 until the end of Year 3 as they participated

in an intensive, structured, classroom-based music program, which included:

- **weekly instruction** with a specialist ACO instrumental teacher,
- **daily practice** sessions with the classroom teacher,
- **ensemble participation** and performance opportunities, and
- **regular visits from ACO musicians**, who practised with the children and inspired their development.

As the name suggests, ACO Foundations prioritises music learning as the base upon which all school learning is built. Music sessions in the program are non-negotiable. Music is prioritised every morning to prime students' brains and prepare them for further learning across all subject areas. Dedicated music spaces are established and resourced. One of the key tenets of ACO Foundations is that quality music education is accessible to all students, regardless of background. The program was designed to be implemented in low SES schools; however, the exceptional impact of the pilot program begs the question: What impact could such a program have if it were applied on a broad scale, with opportunities to adapt to suit individual contexts?



Figure 1: Students from St Mary's North Public School performing as part of the ACO Foundations program

The outcomes

The outcomes of Foundations have been broadly categorised into 5 significant areas:

1. Increased musical skill, including improved auditory processing, pitch awareness and musical literacy

The structured, sequential music lessons, delivered with rigour, resulted in students developing highly transferrable music skills that lead to improved outcomes across all areas of learning and development. In tandem with the benefits to students, teachers undertook a rigorous program of professional development. Participating teachers confirmed that they went from feeling ‘unmusical’ and ‘unable to sing’, to being confident to read music, sing in tune, clap out a rhythm and design music experiences in their classrooms.

2. Improvement in cognitive and academic ability, including verbal and written communication, and mathematical reasoning

Perhaps one of the most significant and striking results of the ACO Foundations program was the improvement of students ‘ability to learn’, as measured by the InCAS measurement of Developed Ability – now known as [Cambridge Primary Insight](#) (see Figure 3). ACO Foundations’ students tested below the comparison group at the start of the year,

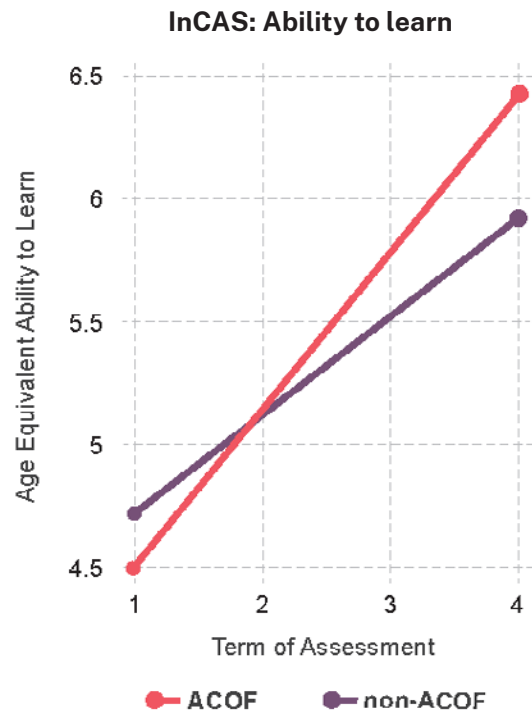


Figure 3: Changes in ability to learn in participating and non-participating students in the ACO Foundations program. Source: ACO Foundations Pilot Program Evaluation (Stevens & Vidal-Fernandez)

with an average ability to learn of 4.5 years of age, but after 1 year in the program, their ability to learn had increased to an average age of 6.5 years – a developmental increase of two years within a 12-month time frame. This placed them, on average, 6 months ahead of their peers in their ability to learn.



Figure 2: St Mary’s North students practising the cello

3. Improved emotional and behavioural development

ACO Foundations students developed better focus and concentration towards tasks, an increasing ability to persist at difficult tasks (grit), and better self-regulation and management of their emotional responses. Through tailoring the program to the needs of students, individuals were able to progress and gain confidence, leading to a reduction in the requirement for individual adaptations. The gains students made in emotional and behaviour development in music lessons can transfer to other areas of learning, as well as life outside of school.

4. Increased engagement and motivation at school

It is often said that the first step to success at school is showing up. Data collected throughout the pilot indicate a notable increase in attendance at SMNPS for students involved in the ACO Foundations program. When paired with an improvement in students' attitude to school, this demonstrates a cohort of students who

were engaged in their learning and enjoying the opportunities that the school is providing. The impact of this outcome is perhaps best summarised in this quote by Jaxson, a student of the 2018 cohort, when talking to SMNPS principal, Lisa Parrello:

'We don't need locked gates Mrs Parrello, who would ever want to leave our school? When I grow up, I am going to teach other kids how to play the violin. I am never leaving.'

5. Improved physical development

In every year of the program, students have made significant, observable improvements to their posture and fine motor skills, demonstrating the ability to play music that previously would have been too hard or simply too long to maintain the correct posture. These gains further resulted in improvements to handwriting and the ability to maintain attention to complex cognitive tasks. Students were observed to be more organised with their own classroom equipment and more aware of leaving space for other students to move past them.



Figure 4: Performance to the school community by students participating in the ACO Foundations program

What next?

There is significant research demonstrating the challenges generalist primary school teachers face in implementing quality, sequential music lessons. One of the key factors is the minimal time music receives in initial teacher education. ACO Foundations has shown how partnerships with organisations, such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra, not only result in improvements to student outcomes, but can also give teachers the knowledge, skills, and (perhaps most importantly) confidence to develop and deliver quality music education.

The ACO Foundations program demonstrates that, with the right support, leadership and resourcing, quality music education can have significant cognitive, emotional and behavioural gains for all students, even those from the most challenging learning environments. The program has opened the door to investigating how music can be placed at the centre of an approach to education that sees the ultimate goal being the development of students as learners. ACO Foundations provides potential for a model of music education that could be scaled and expanded to make real and lasting change in the lives of even the most disadvantaged students. This is just the start of the discussion about how a model such as this can be implemented on a large scale. There is significant work to be done around addressing the logistical challenges and building the support among key stakeholders,

but it is hard to not be excited about the potential for improved student outcomes.

In a future article in *Scan*, the outcomes of ACO Foundations will be examined in further detail, with the focus on exploring the key features of the program to consider how music education can be improved so all students can experience the significant educational gains

References and further reading

Australian Chamber Orchestra. (2023). [ACO Foundations](#).

Australian Chamber Orchestra. (2022). [ACO Foundations – Evaluation Report 2018–2022 \(PDF 2 MB\)](#).

Cambridge University Press and Assessment: Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring. (2023). [Cambridge Primary Insight for ages 5–11](#).

How to cite: Hill, M. (2024). **Building strong foundations – the transformative power of quality music education to improve student outcomes.** *Scan*, 43(1), 13–17.

Advertisement

Did you know that Technology 4 Learning (T4L) has two great resources for you? Find out everything you need at the T4L website.

T4L Kids is for Stages 3-4 in the classroom and takes students through guided cross-curricular challenges.



Magazine.T4L is for classroom teachers and ICT coordinators and is designed to help you build your digital classroom.





Engaging digital citizens with interactive and purposeful online safety lessons



.....
Mona Sidhu

Manager Cyber Security Education and Awareness, NSW Department of Education
.....

Mona Sidhu explains why more than 120,000 students, teachers, parents and carers are embracing the [Cybermarvel](#) resources and why age appropriate lessons on eSafety are so important.

Students are digital natives and although it is somewhat normal for them to think they know best, it is incumbent on schools to set a standard about ways to be responsible online. This is particularly important given that data indicate that almost 60% of students would reach out to a friend or sibling first if something went wrong online (Cyber Safety Project, 2023). The remaining 40% of students, as confirmed in [The digital lives of Aussie teens report \(PDF 437 KB\)](#) by the eSafety Commissioner (2021), look to their schools for advice on keeping safe online.

How the department is addressing concerns

In 2021, the NSW Department of Education collaborated with other state and territory public education departments to create [Cybermarvel](#), an online-safety education program for schools and their communities.

Taking direction from the [eSafety commissioner's best practice framework for online safety education](#) (2021), Cybermarvel is cross-curricular and designed to provide whole-of-school education, including information for parents and carers. After all, since most families have access to digital tools outside school, it is vital for a safe digital journey to be continued at home.

The ever-evolving Cybermarvel program runs year-round, but one thing that has not changed is a focus on Safer Internet Day in February and Cyber Security Awareness Month in October. During these two key events on the calendar, our Cyber team which is part of the Information Technology Directorate, runs special initiatives to raise greater awareness of safe online practices and relationships.

In February 2023, our Safer Internet Day virtual classroom broke previous records and became the largest online classroom session ever!

Over 85 students submitted entries to the Be Cyber Marvellous 2023 Challenge. Students created

Not sure where to start?



Look at these popular Cybermarvel resources:

- [Cyber safe classrooms – Primary schools](#)
- [Cyber safe classrooms – High schools](#)
- [Online safety professional learning](#)
- [Cyber safe parents](#)
- [Cyber playtime](#)

videos, websites and articles on the theme of keeping safe online. One fantastic video showed two students acting out a scenario to show how dangerous it can be to talk to strangers online and how important it is to seek trusted adult help. Our ultimate goal is to help students become responsible digital citizens and keen cyber security wardens, so there is nothing better than seeing our messages get through! In 2024 the [Cybermarvel](#) online safety awareness program celebrated Safer Internet Day on February 6.

<p>Ollie Online Digital Safety & Wellbeing For Years F-2</p>	<p>Be an eSafe Kid</p>	<p>Be Internet Awesome</p>
<p>Years Foundation (K)-2</p> <p>Students join Ollie and Damo to sing, dance and explore what it takes to be safe and healthy online.</p> <p>18 Oct, 10:15 - 10:45 am AEDT</p> <p>19 Oct, 2:15 - 2:45 pm AEDT</p>	<p>Years 3-6</p> <p>A live virtual classroom to guide students to interact safely online.</p> <p>19 Oct, 10:30 - 11:15 am AEDT</p> <p>23 Oct, 2:00 - 2:45 pm AEDT</p>	<p>Years 3-6</p> <p>Be safe, confident explorers of the online world.</p> <p>On-demand</p>

Figure 1: Sample resources from [Cyber safe classrooms](#) for primary students

Cyber skills for Kindergarten to Year 6

While Kindergarten to Year 2 students learn with song and dance about safe and healthy online habits, upper primary students are taught about online privacy and what is safe to share online via engaging and fun modules.

Some of these modules including, [Digital detectives \(Foundation/K-4\)](#), [Make a safe password \(Years 3-4\)](#), [Cyber Security fundamentals \(Years 5-6\)](#) and [Information privacy and security \(Years 5-6\)](#), are available 'on demand' and can be accessed when appropriate within the learning and teaching cycle. Other modules, such as [Be an eSafe kid – gaming with others \(Years 3-4\)](#) and [Be an eSafe kid – gaming positively \(Years 5-6\)](#), were available on designated dates at specified times in October 2023.

The ever-evolving Cybermarvel program runs year-round, but one thing that has not changed is a focus on Safer Internet Day in February and Cyber Security Awareness Month in October.

Cyber skills for high school

High school students are given the opportunity to engage in cyber security challenges to protect a navy captain and solve a cybercrime. They can also use Minecraft Education to build their digital citizenship skills.

There are several modules available for secondary students including:

- [Know your risks \(Years 7-8\)](#)
- [Information privacy and security \(Years 7-8\)](#)
- [Web application security \(Years 7-8\)](#)
- [Cyber Castle Challenge with Minecraft Education \(Years 7-8\)](#)
- [Data encryption and transmission v2.0 \(Years 7-9\)](#)
- [Stay secure online \(Years 7-9\)](#)
- [Digital citizenship with Minecraft Education \(Years 7-10\)](#)
 - [Personal data protection with Minecraft Education \(Years 7-10\)](#)
 - [Digital identity and privacy with Minecraft Education \(Years 7-10\)](#)
 - [Solve a cyber crime \(Years 9-10\)](#)
 - [Network security v2.0 \(Years 9-10\)](#)
 - [Digital forensics \(Years 9-10\)](#)

These modules are all designated 'on demand' and can be accessed as required.

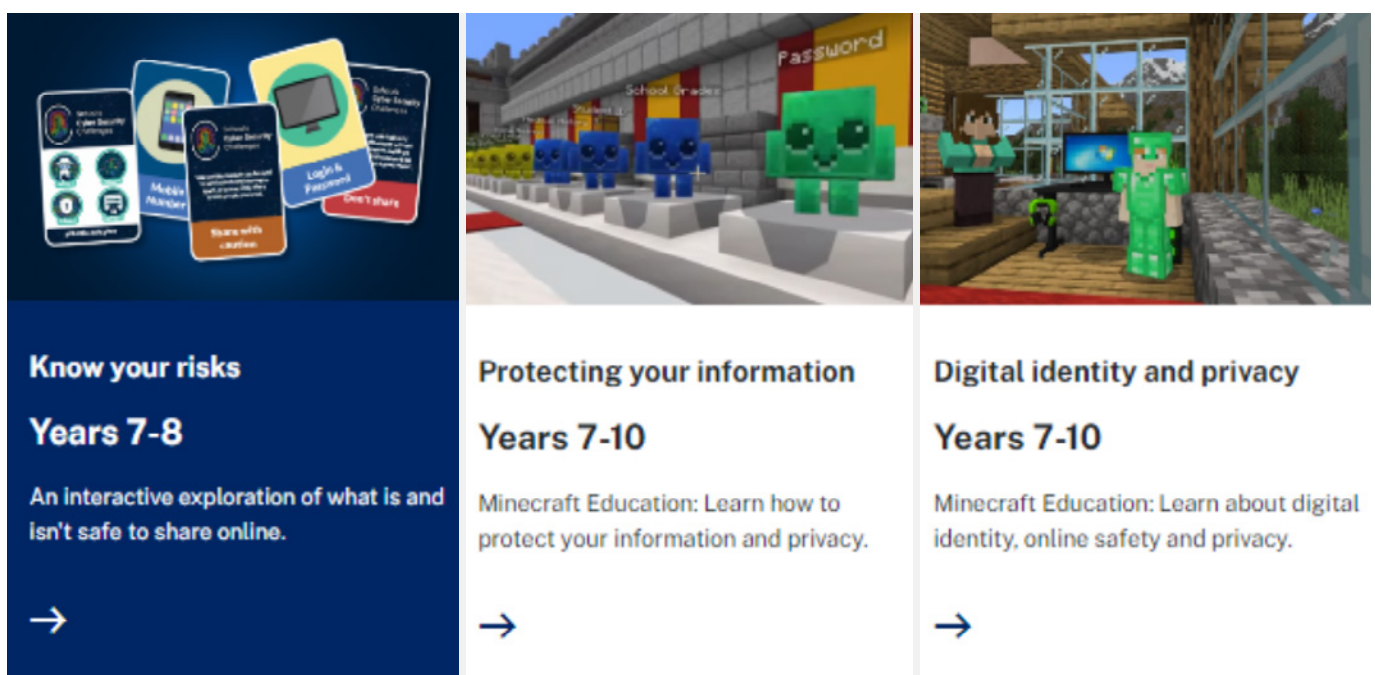


Figure 2: Sample resources from [Cyber safe classrooms](#) for secondary students

Engagement and feedback

Results and feedback from [2021](#) and [2022](#) events show high engagement and interest in the Cybermarvel program.

Teachers commented on the quality of the webinars and resources, and reported positive student engagement:

- ‘Our kids really engaged with the whole thing, very powerful learning for them!’
- ‘Already had high awareness of issues but have gained heaps of new teaching and activity ideas.’
- ‘This was one of the best webinars I have attended; really clear, relevant, useful and practical. Thank you so much.’
- ‘My class absolutely loved the challenges and they learnt a lot through completing them, as did I.’

The 2023 program saw continued demand, with significant numbers of students, parents and staff

interacting with Cybermarvel resources. The feedback was positive, and students learnt valuable skills.

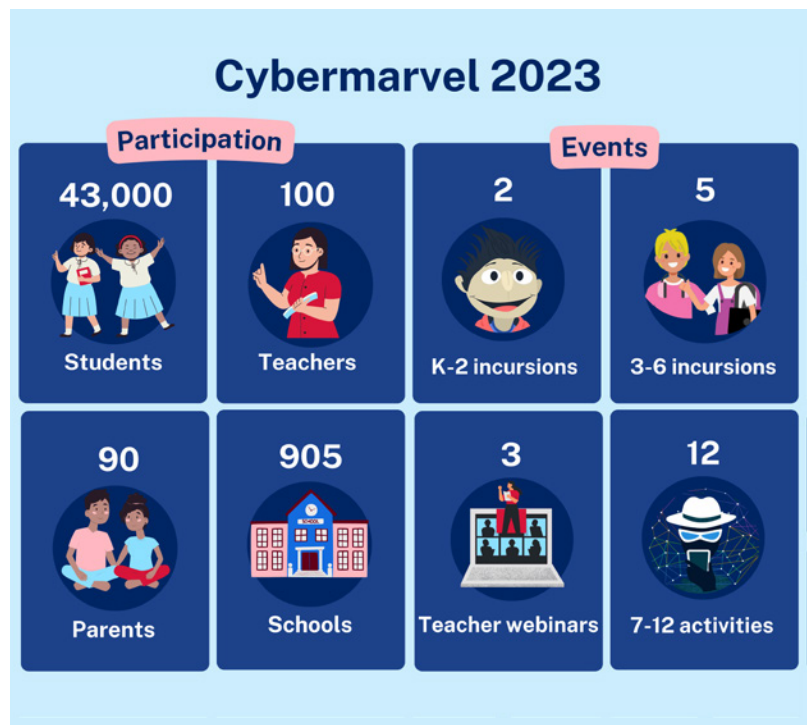


Figure 3: A snapshot of teacher feedback about the 2023 Cybermarvel program

References

Australian Government eSafety Commissioner. (2021). [The digital lives of Aussie teens report \(PDF 451 KB\)](#).

Australian Government eSafety Commissioner. (2021). [eSafety commissioner’s best practice framework for online safety education](#).

Cyber Safety Project. (2023). [2023 Digital habits round up report \(PDF 3.2 MB\)](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Be cyber marvellous 2023 challenge](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Cyber playtime](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Cyber safe classrooms – High schools](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Cyber safe classrooms – Primary schools](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Cyber safe parents](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Cybermarvel](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Online safety professional learning](#).

How to cite: Sidhu, M. (2024). Engaging digital citizens with interactive and purposeful online safety lessons. Scan, 43(1), 18–21.



Recognition days – growing staff, students and community



.....
Christian O'Connor

Lead, Diversity and Inclusion,
NSW Department of Education
.....

Christian O'Connor considers the impact of recognising and celebrating significant occasions on learning, teaching and wellbeing across the school community.

In the dynamic landscape of education, schools play a pivotal role in shaping not only the minds of future generations but also fostering a sense of community and belonging. One powerful way to achieve this is through the acknowledgment, recognition and celebration of days of significance. These 'recognition days', whether dedicated to education, self-discovery, or workforce initiatives, can bring about immediate and lasting benefits for staff, students, and the community at large.

Educational benefits

The primary purpose of schools is education, and dedicating days to specific themes or subjects amplifies the learning experience. These days provide a platform for students to delve into topics they might not encounter in their regular curriculum.

For instance, a day dedicated to [environmental awareness \(staff only\)](#) might educate students about [sustainability](#), climate change, and the importance of conservation. This expanded knowledge not only enriches their academic experience but also equips them with a broader perspective on global issues.

Moreover, recognition days allow educators to showcase their creativity and engage students in innovative ways. Whether through interactive workshops, guest speakers, or hands-on activities, these events make learning memorable and enjoyable. Consequently, students are more likely to retain the information and develop a passion for continuous learning.

Self-discovery and visibility

School is not only a place for academic growth but also a crucible for personal development. Recognition days offer students and staff an opportunity for self-discovery through shared experiences. As in literature ([Sims Bishop, 1990, PDF 762 KB](#)), when individuals see themselves reflected in the themes or narratives of these special days, a sense of identity and belonging is fostered.

Students, in particular, benefit from recognition days that address diverse perspectives and experiences. In association with teaching and learning programs, such days 'develop intercultural understanding, promote positive relationships and enable all students to participate as active Australian and global citizens' ([NSW Department of Education, 2023, para. 7](#)). This process of self-discovery goes beyond the classroom, therefore, contributing to the development of well-rounded individuals prepared for a diverse and interconnected world.

... when individuals see themselves reflected in the themes or narratives of these special days, a sense of identity and belonging is fostered.

Bridging the school-to-work divide

By acknowledging and celebrating days of significance related to workforce themes within schools' careers-based programs, such as the [School to Work Program](#) (NSW Department of Education, 2023), schools can bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world skills. For example, a career exploration day can expose students to various professions, providing insights into potential career paths and fostering a sense of purpose.

Additionally, workforce-related recognition days empower students to envision their future roles in society. They demystify the transition from school to the workforce, making it a more tangible and less daunting prospect, and prepare students for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter in their professional lives.

Community engagement

Schools are not isolated entities; they are integral parts of the community. Recognising and celebrating days of significance extends the reach of educational initiatives far beyond the classroom walls. When students participate in events centred



Figure 1: Group of high school students in traditional dress

around significant days, they carry the conversations home, sparking discussions that resonate throughout the community. Thus, families become active participants in the learning process, creating a symbiotic relationship between schools and the broader community whereby schools become hubs of community engagement with a sense of shared responsibility for the education and wellbeing of future generations.

Official acceptance

Acknowledging and celebrating [days of significance](#) sends a powerful message of official acceptance. When educational institutions dedicate time and resources to recognising specific themes or groups, they communicate inclusivity and diversity. This official acknowledgment is particularly crucial for groups that may have historically been marginalised or underrepresented.

For instance, dedicating a day to celebrate [cultural diversity](#) not only educates students about different cultures but also communicates that individuals from these cultures are valued and embraced within the school community. This official acceptance promotes a sense of belonging, contributing to

When individuals feel acknowledged and celebrated, they experience a sense of validation and purpose, positively impacting their mental health.

a positive school climate where everyone feels respected and included.

Allyship and allies

Recognition days serve as catalysts for fostering [allyship](#). When schools actively celebrate days dedicated to topics such as [anti-bullying](#), [mental health awareness](#), or [LGBTQIA+ inclusion](#), they encourage and empower students and staff to become allies and advocates for each other.

By creating an environment in which standing up against discrimination and supporting others is not only encouraged but celebrated, recognition days contribute to the development of a strong sense of community. This empowerment translates into actions beyond the school setting, as students become advocates for positive change in the broader society.



Figure 2: Supporters of the NSW Department of Education's inaugural float in the Sydney Mardi Gras

Wellbeing

The link between belonging, acceptance, and wellbeing is well established. Recognition days contribute significantly to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of students and staff. When individuals feel acknowledged and celebrated, they experience a sense of validation and purpose, positively impacting their mental health.

Moreover, participation in events related to recognition days fosters a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. Whether it's a sports day, a cultural festival, or a day dedicated to mental health awareness, the collective engagement enhances the overall wellbeing of the school community.

We know that celebrating the diversity of our workforce and creating inclusive school environments will have a flow-on effect for students. A literature review completed during the development of the [Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-2026 \(PDF 6.08 MB\)](#) found that 'the presence of diverse teachers who feel included within school workforces has been associated with improved student outcomes, including academic achievement, reduced exclusions and dropout rates, and higher aspirations for continued study' ([NSW Department of Education, 2023, para. 2](#)).

Recognition days: an example

In 2023, to recognise Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD), the NSW Department of Education held its inaugural [Disability Recognition Month – DRM \(staff only\)](#), which was strategically organised for optimal engagement and awareness of the challenges and victories for people with disability in the education system. All communications promoted the [DRM Digital Celebration Kit \(DOCX 78 KB\)](#), a simple but comprehensive suite of content equipping leaders with ways to acknowledge and encourage participation within their teams and school environments.

The event – purposefully labelled as a recognition month – aimed to empower rather than mandate

Key events and recognition days 2024 - diversity and inclusion



Term 1

- **International Day of Women and Girls in Science** (11 February)
- **Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras** (16 February–3 March)
- **Neurodiversity Celebration Week** (18–24 March)
- **International Women's Day** (8 March)
- **National Close the Gap Day** (21 March)
- **Harmony Week** (18–24 March)

Term 2

- **Anzac Day** (25 April)
- **Global Accessibility Awareness Day** (16 May)
- **International Day Against LGBTQIA+ Discrimination** (17 May)
- **National Sorry Day** (26 May) and **National Reconciliation Week** (27 May–3 June)
- **NAIDOC Week** (7-14 July)

Term 3

- **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day** (4 August)
- **National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence** (16 August)
- **Wear it Purple Day** (30 August)
- **Indigenous Literacy Day** (4 September)
- **International Day of Sign Languages** (23 September)

Term 4

- **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** (25 November)
- **International Day of People with Disability** (3 December)
- **Human Rights Day** (10 December)

participation. Each day featured activities and resources, with some, such as the [Word Cloud](#), [Neurodivergence Network Podcast Series](#) and [Disability Champion Spotlights](#), proving popular. The commonality in these activities was that staff were able to actively contribute to, or consume, something created by fellow employees.

The second week of DRM, themed [Alternative Communication Week \(staff only\)](#), explored diverse communication styles. As well as the previously mentioned resources, information on Proloquo2go, an application designed to assist students with speech difficulties, was distributed to teaching and non-teaching staff. To shine a light on experiences in the school environment, one of the podcast guests, who uses an augmentative communication device, discussed what it feels like to be understood or misunderstood in their school and professional

lives. Staff networks also hosted community discussion threads to foster intersectional perspectives.

Conclusion

The acknowledgment, recognition, and celebration of days of significance in school settings is not a mere formality but a powerful tool for achieving immediate and long-term benefits. From enhancing education and fostering self-discovery to impacting workforce initiatives, engaging the community, promoting official acceptance, encouraging allyship and contributing to overall wellbeing, the positive ripple effects are extensive. By actively embracing these special occasions, schools become not only centres of learning, but also nurturing environments that prepare students for a diverse and interconnected world.

References and further reading

Australian Human Rights Commission. (2022). [Being an ally](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Calendar for cultural diversity](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Disability Recognition Month: week 2](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Diversity and inclusion](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-2026 \(PDF 6.08 MB\)](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia \(International Day Against LGBTQIA+ Discrimination\)](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [World Environment Day – 5 June \(staff only\)](#).

NSW Department of Education. (n.d.). [Key dates](#).

NSW Department of Education. (n.d.). [Mental Health Month – Oct](#).

NSW Department of Education. (n.d.). [National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence – 18 Aug](#).

NSW Department of Education. (n.d.). [Sustainability](#).

Sims Bishop, R. (1990). [Mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors \(PDF 762 KB\)](#).

How to cite: O'Connor, C. (2024). Recognition Days – growing staff, students and community. Scan, 43(1), 22–26.

Perspectives on allyship in schools – supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff

.....

Monique Eldridge

Secondary Education Initiatives Advisor, AOPD

David Ella

P-12 Advisor, AOPD

Dr Hywel Ellis

R/Manager Evaluation & Insights, AOPD

Troy Freeburn

Senior Research Officer, AOPD

Simon French

Senior Strategic Projects Officer, AOPD

Lucy Koh

Strategic Data Analyst, AOPD

Sally Kubiak

Director, Aboriginal Education Strategy, AOPD

Penny Marriott

Principal Evaluator, AOPD

Sandra Simmons

Executive Assistant, AOPD

Dimiti Trudgett

R/Leader Strategic Initiatives, AOPD

.....



Colleagues in the Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships Directorate (AOPD) explore practical ways teachers can practise allyship and nurture inclusivity in schools.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we learn, work, and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present for their knowledge sharing.

Aboriginal perspectives on allyship in schools

What did we do?

The Evaluation and Insights team in the Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships Directorate (AOPD) sought out Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander knowledge and expertise on what allyship means and what it looks like in practice.

We conducted a yarning session with 5 colleagues within our directorate (AOPD) who identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and had experience working in or with schools.

We had a yarn, broadly guided by the following two questions:

1. What does allyship mean to you?
2. Can you describe an example of when you experienced or were an ally to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students?

The session was conducted online over Microsoft Teams™ in November 2023 and lasted 35 minutes. Microsoft Teams™ was also used to record and transcribe the yarn.

What did we hear?

When asked what allyship means, Aboriginal colleagues spoke of the idea of **walking together and working together** from the [Partnership Agreement between the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc and the NSW Department of Education \(PDF 4.7 MB\)](#).

I suppose allyship to me is – and I thought straight away, particularly with us in education – is that walking and working together. What our partnership agreement is ... really having those non-Aboriginal people walking with us because we can't do it alone, it has to be all together ... standing shoulder to shoulder. (Dimiti)

As in the literature (which follows), Aboriginal colleagues identified **providing support** (for example, reaching out to check in on someone)

As in the literature ... Aboriginal colleagues identified providing support (for example, reaching out to check in on someone) and taking action (for example, providing students impacted by disadvantage with opportunities) as key ways to practise allyship.

When considering how peers could be allies to Aboriginal students, Aboriginal colleagues spoke about the importance of promoting acceptance, inclusivity, and pride in one's culture among students.

and **taking action** (for example, providing students impacted by disadvantage with opportunities) as key ways to practise allyship.

It's about their support. It's about their action. So, you know, you can support somebody, but are you willing to also take action up? (Dimiti)

They also spoke about the importance of **listening before speaking** and **not speaking on behalf of Aboriginal people**.

Listening first before you're speaking; you're not speaking on behalf of someone. (Monique)

We do have a lot of people that do, they think of themselves as allies, but ... they haven't listened like Monique was saying and then what they're saying is inaccurate ... I know they have got the best intentions at heart. But have you really listened? Are we speaking collectively? Are you supporting me or is this just your views? (Dimiti)

How schools can nurture allyship among students

When considering how peers could be allies to Aboriginal students, Aboriginal colleagues spoke about the importance of **promoting acceptance, inclusivity, and pride in one's culture** among students.

When I drop Stevie off to school for NAIDOC celebrations, she gets all dressed up with her Koori headbands and little bag and [is] that proud. And, her friends come up and they are inclusive and encouraging, like, I never see any of her peers giving her a hard time about being proud. (Monique)

They explained that allyship could be practically nurtured in schools by **including non-Aboriginal students in Aboriginal cultural programs** or other practices that also involve the **sharing and learning of Aboriginal perspectives, histories and cultures**. Colleagues also reflected on how they would have liked this during their own schooling experiences.

As long as it's all good by Elders and community that kids that aren't Wiradjuri, they can be taught languages ... go out on Country with some of our kids or be invited to different celebrations and stuff like that to show that allyship. (Monique)

We didn't always get to share our Culture. (Dimiti)

How school staff can practise allyship

Aboriginal colleagues also spoke about how school staff could practise allyship by **being genuine, building relationships with Aboriginal students, and making them feel heard, safe, and valued**.

We need to show that we're invested and show that we're being real 'cause we can't afford to be gammon [*interpreted; fake, pretend, joking*]. (Troy)

Just from spending that time building a relationship where the kids know: 'I'm confident that I can come to you and at least just have a yarn. And I know I'm going to be heard. I know I'm going to feel safe. I'm going to feel valued ... They're gonna see me and believe me, believe who I am and believe the best in me. (Troy)

... allyship could be practically nurtured in schools by including non-Aboriginal students in Aboriginal cultural programs or other practices that also involve the sharing and learning of Aboriginal perspectives, histories and cultures.

Results from a scan of the literature on allyship

What is allyship?

The idea of allies and allyship are thought about in various ways; two are outlined below:

- Allies are those who support groups of people who are disadvantaged by systemic inequity, even though they are not a part of that group themselves (Edwards, 2020).
- Allies are those 'who espouse egalitarian ideals and who are motivated not only to avoid responding with prejudice themselves but also to confront others' prejudicial remarks and discriminatory behaviour and to be a source of support for targets of discrimination' (Ashburn-Nardo, 2018, p 373).

How can we practise allyship?

Allyship is practised by taking action to address systemic inequity, rather than assigning responsibility for inequities to the groups disadvantaged by that inequity (Edwards, 2020; Sumerau, 2021). Effective allies recognise and learn that social inequity is produced and maintained by systems that advantage certain social groups over others (Sumerau, 2021).

Another way to practise allyship is by speaking up when hearing or seeing 'prejudicial remarks and/or discriminatory behaviour' (Ashburn-Nardo, 2018). This is a skill that can be practised (Paluck and Green, 2009).

Other tips from the literature on allyship, particularly Kluttz et al. (2019), include:

- Being okay with making mistakes. Allies will not always get it right, but they can always be open to learning from their mistakes.
 - Engaging in constant critical reflection.
 - Learning from others who are further along in this journey.
 - Having 'respect for Indigenous epistemology [ways of knowing] and the direction it provides for social action even if it is not aligned with our own beliefs, ways of seeing the world, and the ways we would necessarily take action' (Kluttz et al., 2019, p 63).

Some things to watch out for

A criticism of allyship is that it can promote the ally's voice instead of the voice of the individual or group experiencing social disadvantage (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2012). Given this, allies should be mindful of who gets to speak, what they really know of the experiences of those they are supporting, and their motivations for being an ally (Selvanathan et al., 2020).

Alternatives to allyship

An alternative to allyship is the idea of solidarity, which shifts the focus from the individual (for example, the ally) to the social justice movement (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2012). Solidarity is defined as (a) an implied relationship among people; (b) a commitment to an idea related to human rights

and/or oppression; and (c) a sense of obligation to actions intended to rectify injustice (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2012).

Call to action

In summary, we would like to leave you with a few questions to reflect on:

- Considering all that you have read, can you, in your educational practice, consider yourself an ally?
- What would you change about your practice to ensure your ongoing allyship?

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank and acknowledge colleagues in the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation Library Services who have contributed their time and expertise to this project.

References

Ashburn-Nardo, L. (2018). What can allies do? In A. J. Colella & E. B. King (Eds.). *Oxford Handbook of workplace discrimination* (pp 373–386). Oxford University Press.

Edwards, S. (2020). Building solidarity with religious minorities: a reflective practice for aspiring allies, accomplices, and coconspirators. *Religion & Education*, 48(3), 284-304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2020.1815933>

Gaztambide-Fernandez, R. A. (2012), [Decolonization and the pedagogy of solidarity](#). *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 41–67.

Kluttz, J., Walker, J. & Walter, P. (2019). Unsettling allyship, unlearning and learning towards decolonising solidarity. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 52(1), 49-66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2019.1654591>

NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc & NSW Department of Education. (2020). [Walking together, working together. Partnership agreement between the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative](#)

[Group Inc and the NSW Department of Education: 2020–2030 \(PDF 4.7 MB\)](#).

Paluck, E. L. & Green, D. P. (2009). Prejudice reduction: what works? A review and assessment of research and practice. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 339-367. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163607>

Selvanathan, H. P., Lickel, B. & Dasgupta, N. (2020). An integrative framework on the impact of allies: how identity-based needs influence intergroup solidarity and social movements. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 50(6), 1344-1361. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2697>

Sumerau, J. E., Forbes, T. D., Denise, E. J. & Mathers, L. A. B. (2021). Constructing allyship and the persistence of inequality. *Social Problems*, 68(2), 358-373. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaa003>

How to cite: Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships. (2024). Perspectives on allyship in schools – supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff. *Scan*, 43(1), 27–30.



Image: © Sophie Saville, 2023. Reproduced with permission.

The importance of LGBTQIA+ acceptance, representation and support at school



.....
Brandon L. A. Daley

Arts and culture lead, Youth Action Council, Wear it Purple
.....

Brandon L. A. Daley shares insights into the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students at school and offers actionable ideas for strengthening inclusion and allyship.

Please note: programs, events or activities which are in addition to mandatory curriculum that could be considered controversial must be undertaken in consultation with the school's principal under the [Controversial issues in schools policy](#). All materials to be referenced or distributed to students that include controversial issues are to be reviewed and approved by the principal in advance.

Why do acceptance and inclusion matter?

Given that students spend a major part of their day, week and life at school, it's crucial that they feel accepted and recognised in this environment. Unfortunately, research indicates that this is not consistently the case for many learners, with consequences for both academic achievement and overall wellbeing.

For instance, the [Free2Be... Yet?](#) study conducted by Western Sydney University (Ullman, 2021) found

that 93% of students reported having heard homophobic language in their school; 37% reported experiencing this daily. The study also illustrated an inherent link between having inconsistent support within the school environment and overall school wellbeing.

Using inclusive language ... is a simple but effective way to actively make your school environment a safer place.

In settings where homophobic language was more common and students reported less positive teacher intervention, students described feeling:

- substantially less connected to school
- less confident in their teachers' capacity to deal with bullying and ensure safety
- less certain that their teachers were personally committed to them and their academic performance.

In contrast, in schools which were considered positive and inclusive toward gender diversity, students reported a stronger sense of school connection, greater academic self-concept, higher attendance and significantly higher intentions to pursue university study.

These compelling findings illustrate the importance of the language we use – and the skill and sensitivity with which we intervene when homophobic or transphobic language is observed – to ensure all students feel safe and respected.

What can you do?

Believe it or not, you're already making a start just by reading this article. We highly encourage you to continue to engage in professional reading and learn from lived experience perspectives to develop skills associated with using inclusive language and being an active ally.

... in schools which were considered positive and inclusive toward gender diversity, students reported a stronger sense of school connection, greater academic self-concept, higher attendance and significantly higher intentions to pursue university study.

Inclusive language

Using inclusive language in your daily interactions is a simple but effective way to actively make your school environment a safer place. An example could be a teacher introducing themselves by stating their name and pronoun, and/or requesting that students privately provide pronoun preferences, if they choose to volunteer this information. Staff could also include their pronouns in their email signatures to support inclusion; see the department's [Pronoun guidance \(staff only\)](#).

Active allyship

Being an active ally doesn't just mean being an active listener, though that is a great starting point. It involves taking action and learning from those with lived experience.

Here are some great examples of active allyship:

- **Promote the establishment of a gender and sexuality alliance (GSA)** to provide a supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ students and straight allies. If already established, see how you can help facilitate conversations in the wider school community. In both instances, [GSA Connect](#) and [Wear it Purple](#) provide practical resources to support such groups and make schools safer and more inclusive.
- **Place posters around the classroom** that communicate to all students, and specifically to your LGBTQIA+ students, that this classroom is an inclusive environment. Posters are available through Twenty10 and other LGBTQIA+ organisations.
- **Ask your school to add [Wear it Purple Day](#) to the calendar** to support LGBTQIA+ young people in Australia and help demonstrate that they are not alone.

- **Practise and use inclusive language** wherever possible. For example, using someone's preferred [pronouns \(PDF 1 MB\)](#), when requested, is a simple way to show your respect for gender identity.
- **Wear a pin, such as a rainbow or something that shows your pronouns**, to show LGBTQIA+ students that you're a safe person to talk to.

Small acts of inclusion like these provide consistent opportunities to show support and acceptance, to stand up to discrimination, and to help LGBTQIA+ students thrive.

Being an active ally doesn't just mean being an active listener, though that is a great starting point. It involves taking action and learning from those with lived experience.

About Wear it Purple

Wear it Purple strives to foster supportive, safe, empowering and inclusive environments for rainbow young people.

Wear it Purple was founded in 2010 in response to global stories of real teenagers, real heartache and their very real responses to the bullying and harassment they experienced for simply being queer. We are known for our day of significance, [Wear it Purple Day](#), on the last Friday of August. However, we are a not-for-profit organisation doing volunteer work 365 days a year to make change.

Since 2010, Wear it Purple has developed into an international movement with schools, universities, community groups, families and workplaces. New generations continue to be dedicated to promoting this annual day of expression in support of rainbow young people.

Wear it Purple Day will be celebrated on Friday 30 August 2024. For further information, visit [Wear it Purple](#) or email Contact@wearitpurple.org.

References and further reading

Doherty, L. (2023, August 25). [Write your story on Wear it Purple Day](#). NSW Department of Education.

[GSA Connect](#). (n.d.).

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Pronouns guidance \(staff only\)](#).

NSW Department of Education. (2023, February 20). [Staff ready to march with Pride](#).

Ullman, J. (2021). *Free2Be... Yet?: the second national study of Australian high school students who identify as gender and sexuality diverse*. Centre for Educational Research, School of Education, Western Sydney University. <https://doi.org/10.26183/3pym-2t07>

Wear it Purple. (2021). [Misgendering + pronouns: a guide to using inclusive language when speaking languages other than English \(PDF 1 MB\)](#).

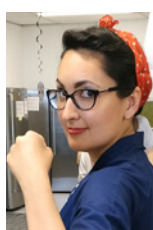
Wear it Purple. (2023). [Celebrating Wear it Purple Day](#).

Wear it Purple. (2023). [Resources](#).

How to cite: Daley, B. L. A. (2024). The importance of LGBTQIA+ acceptance, representation and support at school. *Scan*, 43(1), 31–33.



Breaking barriers, fostering inclusion – the transformative power of teacher diversity in education



.....
Jess Moore

Manager Diversity and Inclusion,
NSW Department of Education
.....

Jess Moore discusses the findings of a commissioned review of the literature regarding the influence of teacher diversity on student outcomes.

The influence of teacher diversity on student outcomes has become an increasingly crucial focal point in the ever-evolving educational landscape. To support the [Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-26](#) (NSW Department of Education), launched in September 2023, the department commissioned a [literature review \(PDF 641 KB\)](#) to examine the influence of teacher diversity. The review delves into the multifaceted relationship between diverse teachers and improved student achievements, reduced exclusion rates and heightened aspirations for continued study. However, these positive associations are accompanied by barriers facing

diverse educators, ranging from discrimination to the additional workload of representing their cultural backgrounds. This article aims to expound on the findings of the literature review, encapsulated in five key themes, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities in creating a more inclusive educational environment.

The homogenous teaching workforce and the growing disconnect

The literature review unearths an incongruity within the teaching workforce — while student populations are becoming increasingly diverse, the teaching profession remains largely homogenous and monocultural. This dissonance has tangible consequences, leading to a possible disconnect between teachers and students. Evidence suggests that this lack of understanding of students' cultural contexts creates barriers to meaningful engagement, hindering the learning experience for diverse student populations.

In an era where cultural diversity is on the rise, the need for the teaching profession to reflect this diversity becomes imperative. The literature review emphasises that educational institutions must recognise this disconnection and actively work towards recruiting and retaining teachers from varied backgrounds. Addressing this misalignment is a fundamental step in fostering an inclusive environment where students feel seen, understood and supported.

Unveiling cultural expectations: a barrier to diversity

The review highlights the prevalence of cultural expectations within the teaching profession, often manifesting as an idealised image of a white, middle-class, female teacher. These deeply ingrained

The review delves into the multifaceted relationship between diverse teachers and improved student achievements, reduced exclusion rates and heightened aspirations for continued study.

expectations create unspoken and hidden barriers that impede the full engagement of teachers from diverse backgrounds. This not only hampers the career trajectories of diverse educators but also contributes to fatigue and intentions to leave the profession.

Teachers from diverse backgrounds often find themselves burdened with additional responsibilities, such as being de facto ambassadors for inclusion. This burden of representation, coupled with the unspoken cultural expectations, exacerbates attrition rates within this demographic. The literature review underlines the need for educational institutions to challenge and dismantle these cultural norms, fostering an environment where diversity is not just tolerated but celebrated.

Teacher-student cultural alignment and improved outcomes

A standout revelation from the literature review is the positive impact of cultural alignment between teachers and students on academic outcomes. Students from diverse backgrounds, when taught by teachers who share similar cultural contexts, consistently exhibit better academic performance, lower rates of suspension and expulsion, and higher aspirations for post-school education.

This phenomenon of alignment extends across various identity dimensions, including ethnicity, gender and disability. For instance, male students with male teachers and students of a particular ethnicity with teachers from the same background consistently demonstrate improved outcomes. This correlation underscores the importance of representation within the teaching workforce as a powerful catalyst for academic success and positive educational experiences.

The literature review underlines the need for educational institutions to challenge and dismantle these cultural norms, fostering an environment where diversity is not just tolerated but celebrated.

The power of specific diversity training

Diversity training emerges as a potent tool in bridging the gap between teachers and students from diverse backgrounds. The literature review emphasises the transformative impact of targeted diversity training programs that prompt participants to reflect on their positions within a diverse workforce and consider the effects of their actions on others.

Diversity training not only enhances teachers' understanding of their students but also fosters improved relationships with colleagues. By cultivating empathy and awareness, such training becomes instrumental in reducing the mental load experienced by teachers from diverse backgrounds. It promotes an environment where educators are better equipped to navigate the complexities of diverse classrooms, ultimately resulting in enhanced educational outcomes.

Leadership's crucial role in fostering inclusion

The literature review underscores the pivotal role of school and departmental leadership in fostering a culture of inclusion. Effective leadership practices, including organisational culture and climate, are identified as key determinants of successful inclusion efforts. Instances where inclusive practices are championed by school leaders demonstrated a significant reduction in staff turnover.

Inclusive leadership becomes a key factor in breaking down barriers to participation for diverse teachers. The literature review highlights the need for proactive efforts from leadership to drive a cultural shift within educational institutions. By prioritising inclusivity, schools can create an environment where diverse teachers not only feel welcome but thrive, contributing to a positive and enriching educational experience for all.

By fostering an environment where diversity is not only acknowledged but embraced, leaders can set the tone for a more inclusive educational institution.

Strategies for building inclusive schools

Beyond the identification of barriers, the literature review proposes actionable strategies to enhance teacher diversity and reduce the mental load on educators.

Leadership practices

Schools and departments must critically assess their leadership practices, including organisational culture and climate, to ensure that inclusivity permeates the entire workforce. By fostering an environment where diversity is not only acknowledged but embraced, leaders can set the tone for a more inclusive educational institution.

Celebrating diversity

Acknowledging and celebrating the value of diverse staff in school communities is vital. Recognition fosters a sense of belonging and appreciation, mitigating the challenges faced by teachers from diverse backgrounds. Schools can organise events, initiatives, or cultural celebrations that highlight the richness of diversity within the teaching workforce.

Mitigating additional load

Steps must be taken to alleviate the extra burden on diverse teachers. This includes educational programs for the entire staff about inclusive education strategies and the incorporation of inclusive pedagogical approaches into the curriculum. By equipping all educators with the tools to create inclusive classrooms, the workload of diverse teachers can be significantly reduced.

Peer support networks

Creating spaces for teachers from diverse backgrounds to connect with one another fosters peer support and knowledge sharing. Peer networks can serve as vital resources for navigating the unique challenges faced by diverse educators. To this end, schools can facilitate regular meetings, workshops or online forums where teachers can share experiences, insights and strategies for success.



Figure 1: Members of the department's Diversity and Inclusion team and Staff Diversity Network representatives with Murat Dizdar (Secretary of the NSW Department of Education) at the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-26 launch.

Diversity, inclusion and belonging within the department

The department's [Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-2026](#) builds on the themes of community, capability and commitment to grow, retain and celebrate a diverse and representative teaching workforce. Through leadership capability development, system enhancement, staff networks and community celebration, the strategy aims to build a department where everyone belongs, and where identity, experience and background are no longer barriers to inclusion.

In conclusion, the literature review highlights the undeniable impact of teacher diversity on student outcomes and the broader educational experience. While barriers to participation for diverse teachers are significant, the identified strategies provide a comprehensive roadmap for fostering inclusivity and reducing the mental load on educators. The department and its leaders will continue to work towards an environment where diversity is not just a goal but a celebrated and integrated reality within

the fabric of the teaching profession. Only through these concerted efforts can we unlock the full potential of both teachers and students in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

References and further reading

Acton, R. & Hennessy, M. (2023). [NSW Education Diversity and inclusion in teacher workforces: literature review](#) (PDF 641 KB). PeopleBench.

NSW Department of Education. (2023). [Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-26](#) (PDF 6.1 MB).

How to cite: Moore, J. (2024). Breaking barriers, fostering inclusion – the transformative power of teacher diversity in education. *Scan*, 43(1), 34–37.

SPaRK

Shared Practice and Research Kit

Probing perspective through picture books (Stage 5 English)



.....
Dr Cathy Sly

Researcher and writer
.....

In this Shared Practice and Resource Kit (SPaRK), Dr Cathy Sly highlights ways in which the complexity of picture books provides a springboard for the study of the textual concept of perspective in English.

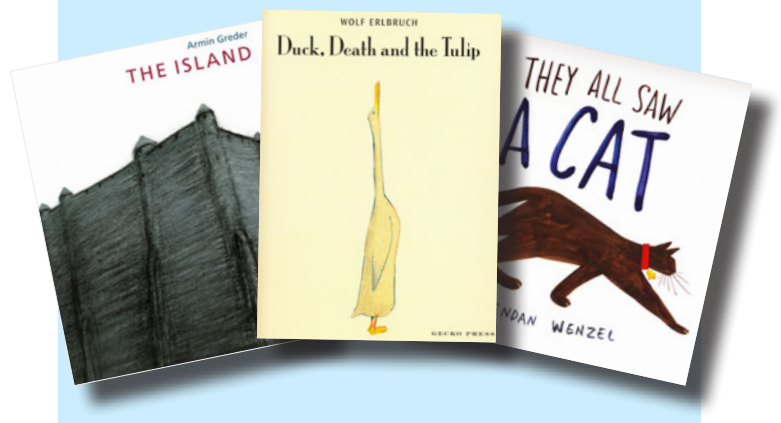
Picture books in the secondary classroom

Regardless of their apparent simplicity, picture books should not be forsaken in secondary English classes. When explored by older readers, picture books can cultivate incisive and creative analysis, promote deep thinking, stimulate philosophical discussions, and even operate as springboards for more investigative research.

Resource overview

Focus resources for this SPaRK include three picture books. The strategies outlined offer a guide to how these picture books can be used when exploring the notion of perspective. Teachers may adopt or adapt these strategies to investigate perspective using other appropriate picture books. The [National Centre for Australian Children's Literature \(NCACL\)](#) has a useful [database of picture books for older readers](#) and is a treasure trove of quality titles with each offering links to resources for teachers.

The focus books for this SPaRK include *They All Saw a Cat* by Brendan Wenzel, a useful introductory text that demonstrates in simple terms what is meant by 'perspective'. Wolf Erlbruch's picture book, *Duck, Death and the Tulip* questions one's perspective through a conceptual lens, and *The Island* by Armin Greder shows how narrow, misinformed perspectives can quickly lead to prejudice and ostracism of others.



Like poetry, picture books distil complex ideas into a compact format. Their aesthetic appeal, conciseness and unpretentious modesty invite and encourage readers of all abilities to probe their depths.

This SPaRK offers practical ideas and examples of ways to use picture books to engage readers cognitively and emotionally and enable them to understand an author/illustrator's perspective and evaluate it in terms of how it affirms, challenges, or shapes a reader's own perspective.

Educational significance

While picture books can provide the impetus for several different studies, delving deeply into the notion of perspective is the prime focus here. As explained in the [English Textual Concepts](#) resource, 'Perspective is a lens through which we learn to see the world; it shapes what we see and the way we see it' (para. 1). In other words, perspective encapsulates the values that both the creator and the reader bring to a text. Thus, when engaging with literary works, perspective is a two-way process that operates between the composer and the responder.

The creator of a text contributes their own perspective on the subject(s) being presented and readers, with their individual perceptions, interact with the text to extract meaning which is informed by their own perspectives. The author's perspective encourages readers to interpret things in particular ways, but since a reader's own background affects their understanding, the intended meaning of a text may be altered by a reader's perspective. To understand how texts shape perspective, readers need to unpack and critique the techniques used. Readers can also implement an alternative or 'resistant' reading whereby they choose a theoretical lens, such as feminist, post-colonial, psychoanalytic and so on, through which to examine the text.

**Picture books distil complex ideas. ...
Their aesthetic appeal, conciseness and
unpretentious modesty invite and encourage
readers of all abilities to probe their depths.**

Syllabus links

According to the [NSW English K-10 Syllabus – Outcomes Stage 5](#), a student:

- analyses how meaning is created through the use and interpretation of increasingly complex language forms, features and structures (EN5-URA-01)
- evaluates how texts represent ideas and experiences, and how they can affirm or challenge values and attitudes (EN5-URB-01)
- crafts personal, creative and critical texts for a range of audiences by experimenting with and controlling language forms and features to shape meaning (EN5-ECA).

Textual Concepts and learning progressions

In Stage 5, students learn to understand that perspective provides a frame through which we learn to see the world, and that:

- the world and texts may be seen through particular frames,
- views of the world may be exploited for particular purposes, and
- readers and viewers may be positioned to accept particular views.

Suggestions for using the resources

The information, activities and strategies that follow indicate some of the ways teachers can encourage their students to dig more deeply into each of the chosen texts. Picture books often require reading and rereading(s) prior to analysis. Allow students time to read and think about what is being conveyed through the interaction of words and images. Reading may be done individually, in pairs or in small groups.

Teaching activities

Teachers should revise and extend their students' understanding of perspective in literary works.

To assist teachers, short videos, information and related links on perspective are available at [Understanding perspective](#) and [English Textual Concepts: related syllabus content Stage 5 \(PDF 390 KB\)](#) (Perspective, pp 18-19).

While maintaining an overarching focus on perspective, each picture book here is considered separately. It is important to be aware that in picture books, perspective is a product of the interconnection between words and images, so investigation needs to be informed through knowledge of both verbal and visual literary techniques. To this end, [Visual techniques](#) and [Representation in picture books](#) are useful online references for refreshing understanding of the codes and conventions associated with visual literacy.

They All Saw a Cat by Brendan Wenzel

On the back of this book is the question – When you see a cat, what do you see? This is a useful starting point for a class to consider before they are even introduced to the book. A whiteboard summary of student responses should indicate an array of different perceptions. Teachers could also ask some students why they would see a cat in the way they have suggested and what experiences may have shaped their perspective.

Through further discussion, students can explore various experiences that have shaped their perspectives on broader issues, such as animal rights, human cloning, gun control, cosmetic surgery, drugs in sports, and so on.

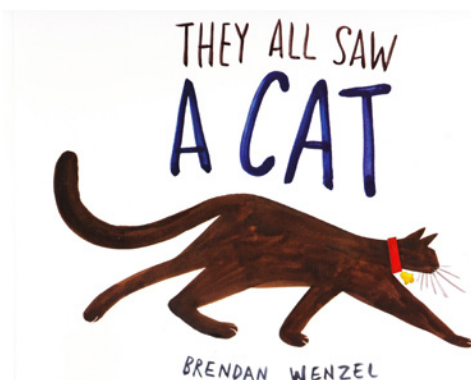


Figure 1: *They All Saw a Cat* by Brendan Wenzel (2016, Chronicle Books)

Students can read (and reread) the picture book and, as a class or in small groups, respond to the following questions through discussion and individual or group activities:

- What perspective is the author/illustrator intending to convey to the reader?
- What is it that alters the way the cat is envisaged by each of the onlookers?
- If considered in an allegorical or metaphorical sense, what might the child and the various creatures in the book represent?
- The cat becomes the object of each onlooker's 'gaze'. Facial expressions and gestures express the feelings, attitude or nature of the onlooker. Select an example from the book and describe in writing, orally and/or through a visual representation what a particular onlooker sees. Students' different perceptions can be shared and discussed in small groups or as a class. They should consider similarities and differences between their observations and ask 'why' this is the case.
- In some instances, the cat looks back at its viewer. Select an example from the book and describe orally, in writing and/or through a visual representation what the cat sees. Students' different perceptions can be shared and discussed in small groups or as a class.
- Consider the ways the author/illustrator uses specific visual and verbal techniques to convey his own perspective.
- How and why do you think individual perspectives differ? (Consider the way social, cultural, gender, age, beliefs, or values may impact perspective.)
- Do any of the various creatures' perspectives impact the cat's perspective of itself? If so, how and why?
- Do you think the way people 'see' other people affects the subject of their 'gaze'? How? (More information on 'the gaze' is provided in the Experimenting section which follows.)

Duck, Death and the Tulip by Wolf Erlbruch

This delightful picture book presents the notion of death from an unusual perspective. A teacher could introduce the text by asking students to consider the cover and predict what this multimodal narrative might be about, or why the cover is rather vague and perhaps difficult to decipher.

After reading (and rereading) the picture book individually, as a class or in small groups, the following questions can be used to encourage students to probe the notion of perspective:

- What is Duck's initial reaction to meeting Death? Explain how the words and the image convey Duck's reaction and why Duck would react in this manner.
- What is it about Death that alters Duck's initial perspective?
- In response to the story, what perspective does the author/illustrator present on Death? Give two examples (verbal and/or visual) to confirm your response.
- Ask students whether, at some stage in their life, they have changed their perspective. For example, on how they perceive a person, event, or way of thinking. What precipitated this change?
- Consider, discuss and create an individual or group mind map on things that influence the formation of one's perspective.
- Discuss the ways this picture book may affect a reader's perspective on death. Explain what medium-specific codes and conventions the author/illustrator employs to challenge accepted ways of thinking.

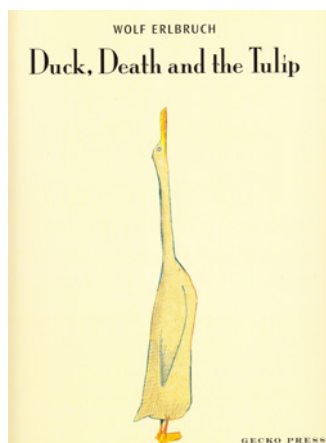


Figure 2: *Duck, Death and the Tulip* by Wolf Erlbruch (2008, Gecko Press)

The Island by Armin Greder

Presented in a more detailed and complex style than the two previous books, *The Island* indicates how perspectives can impact others in a savage, merciless manner. Teachers can begin by asking students to offer literal and metaphorical meanings for 'island' as a concept; for example, 'isolation', 'security', 'independence', 'loneliness', and so on. These could be collected on a mind map and classified as positive, negative, or neutral. This activity can be followed up with predictions about the story evoked by the cover.

With these predictive ideas in mind, students can read (and reread) the picture book individually, as a class or in small groups. The following questions can then be used for discussion or individual/group activities:

- What perspective on this situation is presented by the author/illustrator? (Cite visual/verbal evidence from the text to support these theories.)
- Why might the Islanders' perceptions of the 'foreigner' be as they are?
- Who amongst the Islanders has a different perspective on the situation? Why?
- How do the Islanders treat the foreigner? Why?
- The verbal track of the story is succinct but is greatly enhanced by the visuals. Select a double page from the book and explain how the images elaborate the written script and the information conveyed when verbal and visual clues are taken into account.
- Discuss the ways this picture book may affect a reader's perspective.

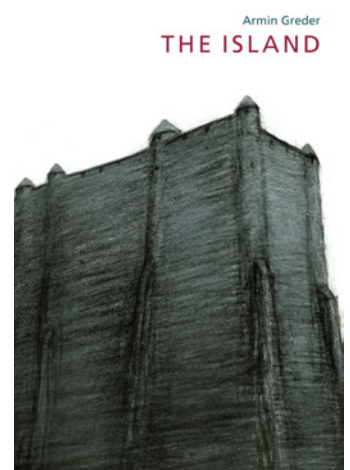


Figure 3: *The Island* by Armin Greder (2007, A&U Children's)

Experimenting

As suggested in the introduction, picture books can operate as springboards to trigger deeper contemplation and further research. This section offers additional ideas for activities on each of the focus texts and can be used to suit particular interests and stages of learning.

In picture books, perspective is a product of the interconnection between words and images, so investigation needs to be informed through knowledge of both verbal and visual literary techniques.

They All Saw a Cat

They All Saw a Cat offers a useful introduction to the way perspective may differ from person to person, group to group, or culture to culture. Students can explore these ideas further through any of the following activities:

- Find a news article or advertisement that appears to contradict your own perception of an issue, event, or product. Investigate why it is tendering this perspective. Make a copy or reference the piece you are using. Write a Letter to the Editor from your own perspective, challenging the original piece.
- Until the end of the book, the cat is the object of the 'others' who see it. This 'subject-object' contrast is sometimes referred to as 'the gaze'. Read [The Power of the Gaze](#) and [What is the 'Gaze' in Art?](#) to better understand this theory and write a theoretical response to the text using 'the gaze' as a lens through which the book can be critiqued.
- Towards the end of the book, on a double page is an illustration of the cat that is made up of all the previous perspectives. Further on, the cat perceives itself in a pool. Consider what 'identity' or 'selfhood' means and how they are determined. See [Self and Identity](#) for an introduction to a philosophical analysis of this issue.
- Debate the following statement: The cat is none of the perceptions presented.

Duck, Death and the Tulip

Duck, Death and the Tulip tackles an interesting concept: death. It is one that we have no first-hand experience with and thus rely on

impressions, presumptions and speculations. The following activities challenge students to dig more deeply into the ideas presented in this picture book.

- Writers, especially poets, have often been concerned with the mystery of death. Read the following examples and select one to represent in a different type of text. Create an adaptation that captures the essence of the source text.
 - [Appointment in Samarra](#) (attributed to William Somerset Maugham)
 - [I heard a Fly buzz - when I died](#) by Emily Dickenson
 - [Do not go gentle into that good night](#) by Dylan Thomas
 - [Death, be not proud](#) by John Donne
- Death arrives carrying a tulip that disappears through the course of the story but reappears towards the end. Research the floral symbolism of the tulip and create a blog post for a literary website giving your observations on how and why the author/illustrator includes a tulip in the title and segments of the story.
- Using your knowledge of verbal and visual techniques, critique *Duck, Death and the Tulip* with a focus on how the author/illustrator uses the picture book medium to affect (create an emotional response in) the reader.
- Research cultural perspectives on death. [Death: I. Cultural Perspectives](#) provides a useful albeit detailed overview. Create a multimodal work showing death through different lenses. This may be presented as a poster, audio-visual presentation or suite of poems.

The Island

The Island is a complex picture book created for older readers. It offers links to several sociocultural issues and can be viewed through various lenses. The following activities aim to encourage students to probe this text from the perspective of prejudice and discrimination.

- One theme represented in *The Island* is that of prejudice and discrimination. Read [Prejudice vs. Discrimination in Psychology](#) to understand the difference between the two. Provide three visual or verbal instances of prejudice and three visual or verbal instances of discrimination.
- Imagine you are a psychologist, sociologist or anthropologist and write a report on the Islanders' behaviour towards the 'foreigner'. A selection of these reports could be read aloud in class with students playing the role of learned colleagues and supporting or refuting report findings.
- Prejudice leads to a perspective that sees a division between self and other, in-group and out-group, or normal and strange. This division often results in the discriminatory act of 'othering':

Othering is a process whereby individuals and groups are treated and marked as different and inferior from the dominant social group. Disenfranchised groups such as women, people of divergent ethnic backgrounds, working-class people, homosexuals, or migrants may all be othered and, in consequence, suffer discrimination. ([A Dictionary of Gender Studies](#))

List and explain ten aspects of visual design that Greder employs to create the sense of othering in *The Island*.

The Islanders are fearful of the foreigner. Make a note of things that create and feed this fear. Select a recent media article in print, audiovisual, digital or social media that you think may intensify public fears about something (keep a copy or reference

to your selected article). Analyse the medium-specific techniques that are used by the author(s) to increase fear. Present your findings in an opinion piece like an Op-ed style article. Suggestions offered at [Ten tips to write an opinion piece people read](#) may help you prepare your writing.

Synthesis and expansion of ideas gathered in this picture books and perspective study

Although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing (John Berger –artist and critic, 1972).

With John Berger's comment in mind, students can be asked to work individually, in pairs or in small groups, to create a miniature major work using what they have discovered about perspective during this study. Presentation ideas can include a short story, poetry, critical response, audiovisual presentation, drama script (and performance) or a Q&A panel of 'experts' speaking about the concept of perspective (live or podcast).

In conclusion, 'perspective' is a tricky concept for students. Picture books provide a succinct format for investigating the notion of perspective. This SPaRK provides some actionable learning and teaching options for the use of picture books when studying perspective in Stage 5 English.

References and further reading

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Climate Extremes (2023). [Ten tips to write an opinion piece people read](#).

Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of seeing*. Penguin Books.

Dickinson, E. (1896). [I heard a Fly buzz - when I died](#). Poetry Foundation.

Donne, J. (1633). [Holy sonnets: Death, be not proud](#). Poetry Foundation.

Encyclopedia.com. (n. d.). [Death: I. cultural perspectives](#).

Erlbruch, W. (2008). *Duck, death and the tulip*. Gecko Press.

Geczy, A. (2021). [What is the 'gaze' in art?](#) its(t) artswithadam.

Greder, A. (2007). *The island*. A&U Children's.

McAdams, D. P. (2023). [Self and identity](#). Diener Education Fund.

McLeod, S. (2023). [Prejudice vs. discrimination in psychology](#). Simply Psychology.

Maugham, W. S. (1933). [Appointment in Samarra](#). The Story Telling Resource Centre.

NSW Department of Education & English Teachers' Association of NSW. (2017). [English Textual Concepts: related syllabus content Stage 5 \(PDF 390 KB\)](#).

NSW Department of Education & English Teachers' Association of NSW. (2017). [English K-12: core concepts – perspective](#).

NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales. (2022). [English K-10 Syllabus – Outcomes](#).

Sales, [unknown]. (n.d.). [Visual literacy](#).

Thomas, D. (1951). [Do not go gentle into that good night](#). Poetry Foundation.

Visual Witnessing. (n.d.). [The power of the gaze](#).

Wenzel, B. (2016). *They all saw a cat*. Chronicle Books.

How to cite: Sly, C. (2024). SPARK: Probing perspective through picture books (Stage 5 English). *Scan*, 43(1), 38–44.

Advertisement

Foster a love of reading in the classroom with The School Magazine

- a wide variety of high-quality text types for ages 7 to 12+
- syllabus-aligned learning resources and audio recordings
- affordable print and digital subscription options

Learn more at theschoolmagazine.com.au


The School Magazine
A world of words since 1916

Writer biographies



Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships Directorate

The role of the Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships Directorate (AOPD) is to advance education for Aboriginal students in public schools across NSW. To achieve this, the directorate works closely with partners, including the Connected Communities Directorate and the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated. The writing group for this article comes from various teams within AOPD, including Aboriginal Education Strategy, Schools and Transitions, and Commissioning and Partnerships. Many of us have teaching backgrounds; all of us are committed to equity and excellence in education.



Carolyn Amat

Carolyn Amat is currently a Disability Support Advisor at the NSW Department of Education. At the time of writing, Carolyn worked in the Curriculum and Reform Directorate, developing resources to support K-12 teachers in enhancing their inclusive curriculum planning practice. With a master's degree in Inclusive Education and extensive teaching experience, Carolyn is passionate about the provision of inclusive teaching programs that optimise learning for every student. In 2023, she was selected as a finalist in the Diversity and Inclusion Champion category for the NSW Department of Education Secretary's Awards.



Brandon L. A. Daley

Brandon L. A. Daley (he/him) is a 19-year-old queer Gumbaynggirr activist. Brandon is an active member in his communities and in the intersections in which he sits, spending most of his time volunteering for organisations such as Wear It Purple and OneMob Radio. He was recently awarded two highly commended awards at the first annual Coffs Coast Youth Worker & Engagement Awards 2023, where he was the youngest nominee and finalist. Brandon continually strives to make the spaces he is present in more vibrant, diverse and welcoming to all.

Writer biographies



Matt Hill

.....

Matt Hill is the K-6 Creative Arts Advisor with the NSW Department of Education. Matt is passionate about providing students with opportunities to explore creativity and learn about different ways of expressing themselves. He believes that creative arts and wellbeing are intrinsically linked and is dedicated to improving wellbeing by making the arts accessible to all students. When the work shoes come off, Matt is kept busy with the daily struggle of making sure the mountains of clean and dirty washing never meet.



Jess Moore

.....

Jess (she/her) is a second-generation public servant who believes wholeheartedly in the transformative power of education, and the importance of inclusion. She lives on Dharawal land with her partner and teenager and two cats. Jess is the Manager, Diversity and Inclusion for the NSW Department of Education, and can't imagine a better job. Jess's goal is to make the world a kinder place.



Christian O'Connor

.....

Christian O'Connor (he/him) is a young professional with experience in various NSW Public Sector agencies since 2014, with a specific focus on incorporating LGBTQIA+ inclusion into Diversity and Inclusion frameworks and operations. Christian was nominated for the Premier's Anthea Kerr award in 2020 and won an eHealth NSW award in 2021 for his efforts in D&I. His proudest recent professional achievement was leading the pride network through its successful application and coordination of NSW Education's first ever Mardi Gras float.

Writer biographies



Mona Sidhu

Mona Sidhu is Manager Cyber Security Education and Awareness at the NSW Department of Education. Mona leads the Cybermarvel program of work for schools in Australia with a passion to improve young people's ability to keep safe online.



Dr Cathy Sly

Cathy Sly is an independent researcher and writer. After teaching English in NSW Department of Education high schools for many years, she completed a PhD in Media, Communications and Creative Arts at Deakin University. Cathy has a keen interest in visual literacy and multimodal literature for readers of all ages. She has presented at academic conferences and contributed to scholarly publications both in Australia and overseas.



Eddie Woo

Eddie Woo teaches mathematics at Cherrybrook Technology High School. His YouTube channel of everyday classroom lessons has more than 1.7 million subscribers and 160 million views. Within the NSW Department of Education, Eddie leads the Mathematics Growth Team, a statewide instructional leadership program. He is a Professor of Practice at the University of Sydney, working with preservice teachers in the School of Education and Social Work.

**Want more
innovative ideas
and inspiration
for learning and
teaching?**

Browse our past
[issues](#) – a compendium
of educational ideas to
enhance your teaching
practice.

