

# Updated



## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- ECU's Skeletal Central officially launches in WA
- Building wellbeing literacy through everyday self-care
- AI Might Interfere with the Acquisition of Writing Skills



## FEATURED ARTICLES

- New earn as you learn teaching pathway for career changers and high achievers at ECU
- Does it matter if students do tests on computers or on paper?
- ECU Wins Innovator Award



# From the Executive Dean

It is my pleasure to share the final edition of UpdatED 2024 with you.



**Professor Caroline Mansfield**,  
Executive Dean, School of Education.

This edition features some resources for teachers including the digitally immersive Skeletal Central ([page 3](#)) and a new book about Fostering Children's Growth Mindset ([page 9](#)). There are opportunities to get involved with our research in wellbeing ([page 5](#)), children's literature ([page 7](#)) and links to professional learning and our upcoming production of "I'm With Her" ([page 16](#)). Also highlighted are the amazing achievements of staff and alumni through recent awards and engagement.

Best wishes for peace and joy over the upcoming break!

Welcome to our final edition of Updated for 2024!

It's been an exciting couple of months in the School of Education. We are thrilled to be the only university in WA to offer a High Achieving Teachers (HAT@ECU) program through the Commonwealth HAT initiative. This employment based pathway combines study and employment, as well as financial support through a scholarship for prospective early childhood, primary and secondary teachers ([read more on page 12](#)). We also received news that 40 ECU education students have been recipients of the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship Scheme this year, and this financial support we hope will have a big impact on student success.

We are also pleased to be launching a new course at our South West campus in 2025, Bachelor of Education (Primary, 1-10), which will enable graduates to teaching in Primary schools and up to year 10 in one learning area ([see page 16](#)).

Our new short course, Sounds of Country, will also be available in 2025 and immersive and engaging practices to model culturally responsive pedagogy and practices for teaching ([see page 18](#)).

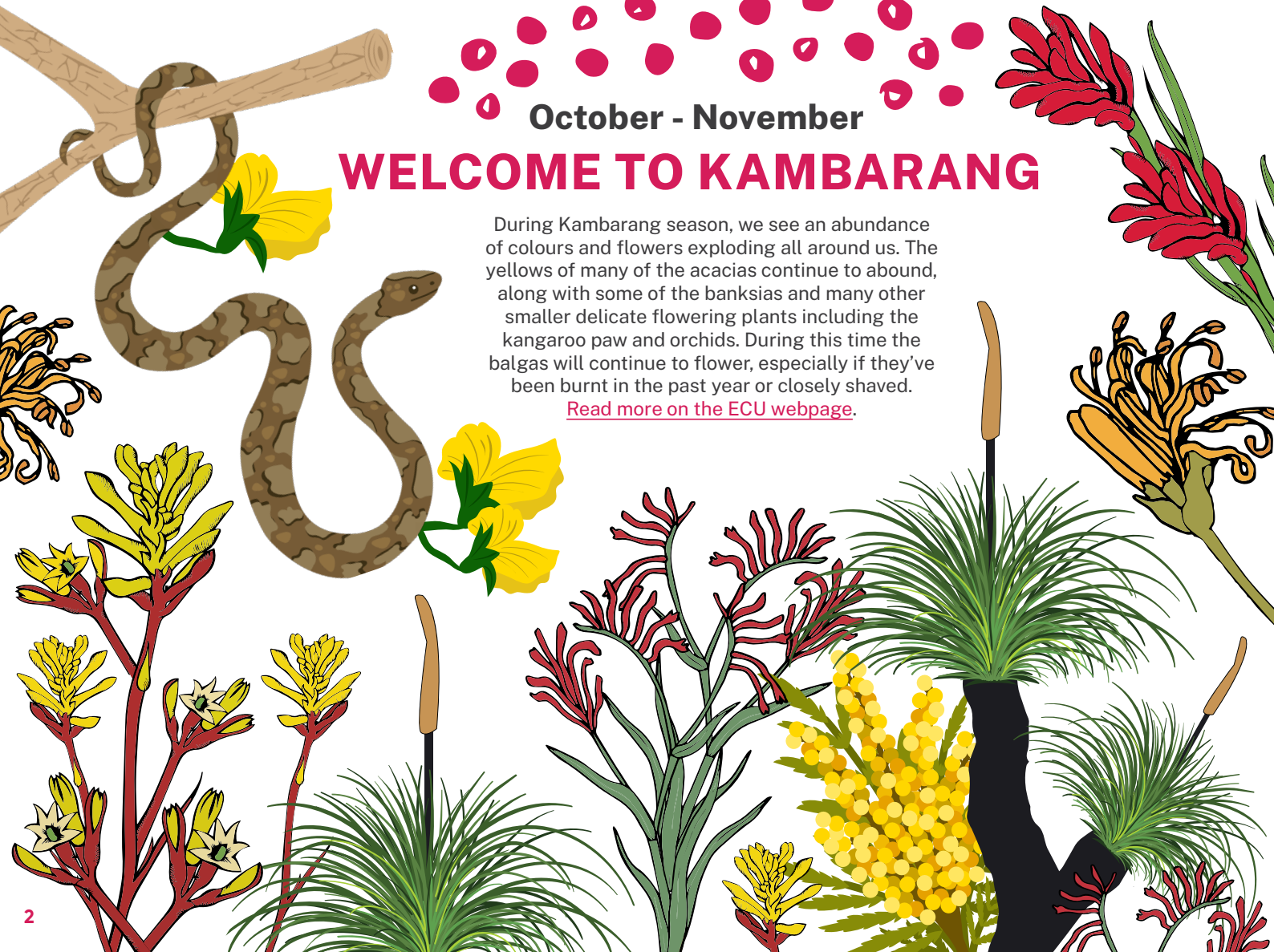


October - November

## WELCOME TO KAMBARANG

During Kambarang season, we see an abundance of colours and flowers exploding all around us. The yellows of many of the acacias continue to abound, along with some of the banksias and many other smaller delicate flowering plants including the kangaroo paw and orchids. During this time the balgas will continue to flower, especially if they've been burnt in the past year or closely shaved.

[Read more on the ECU webpage.](#)



# ECU's Skeletal Central officially launches in WA



Dr Julie Boston, Director, Partnerships and Engagement, School of Education and Professor Amanda Devine, Associate Dean, School of Medical and Health Sciences.

**Developed by ECU researchers, Skeletal Central, has launched empowering educators and school students with essential bone health knowledge.**

Edith Cowan University (ECU) researchers Professor Amanda Devine and Dr Julie Boston, in collaboration with Arthritis and Osteoporosis WA and Singular Health Group, have officially launched Skeletal Central.

The educational online hub is designed for educators and high school aged children to promote awareness of bone health literacy.

"We are aiming to build awareness, knowledge, and motivate behaviour change to promote bone and joint health during formative years," ECU Professor Amanda Devine said.

"Additionally, these resources serve as professional development tools, empowering educators with essential bone health knowledge."

## Digitally immersive education

Skeletal Central hosts a suite of curriculum-aligned, evidence-based, digitally immersive educational resources targeting key bone and joint health concepts for learners.

Designed for students in Years 7-11, the resources are mapped to various curriculum areas.

During a recent pilot in a Perth school, ECU researchers measured changes in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and confidence about bone and joint health after students interacted with the game.

Surveys conducted before and after the 20-minute gameplay session with 89 high school students revealed significant improvements in bone health literacy and attitudes towards weight-bearing exercise and avoiding vaping and smoking.

Confidence in adopting healthy behaviours also increased significantly. Over 70% of students found the game engaging and enjoyable, with more than half indicating they would play it frequently.

"We found that teachers appreciated the individualised feedback on student learning provided by the game," Dr Julie Boston said.

"These outcomes highlight the success and potential of Skeletal Central as a learning tool."

"By integrating the game, curriculum resources, and videos into various learning areas, educators can enhance students' knowledge and promote healthy behaviours for better bone and joint health," she added.

## Education for prevention

The Skeletal Central educational tool kit also includes a range of animations, 3D anatomy viewers and twenty different classroom learning activities that align with the Australian Curriculum, making it easier for teachers to incorporate into their lessons.

"Building strong bones during childhood and teenage years is one of the best ways to prevent osteoporosis later in life," ECU's Professor Amanda Devine said.

"Skeletal Central is a tool that not only helps students make healthier choices for their future but also supports teachers with engaging, evidence-based materials that fit seamlessly into the classroom."

The launch of Skeletal Central aligns with World Osteoporosis Day, 20 October 2024, emphasising the importance of early education in preventing osteoporosis and promoting lifelong bone health.

Head to the website to learn more about [Skeletal Central](#).

This article is republished from [The ECU Newsroom](#). Read the original article [here](#).



# Building wellbeing literacy through everyday self-care



Professor Narelle Lemon, Vice Chancellor Professoriate Research Fellow, School of Education.

**Professor Narelle Lemon from ECU's School of Education, discusses re-thinking and re-framing wellbeing and everyday self-care at the ECU Lecture Series.**

Do you think about your own wellbeing? How do you communicate your wellbeing? Do you make decisions every day to care for you? These were some of the questions posed by Professor Narelle Lemon at the third ECU Lecture Series event, [Building wellbeing literacy through everyday self-care](#).

## Re-thinking wellbeing and self-care

Professor Narelle Lemon is a Vice-Chancellor's Professorial Research Fellow in ECU's School of Education, where she leads the Wellbeing and Education Research Community.

She is on a mission to talk about wellbeing and everyday self-care, a topic that is generally only discussed or talked about when there's a problem, stress or exhaustion.

"I'm on a mission for us to think about self-care in a non-medicalised way, there needs to be an interruption to the damaging, commercialised messages of self-care," Professor Lemon said.

"I want to help us to build a wellbeing literacy, how we comprehend and compose an intentional language for wellbeing."

## The turning point

For Professor Lemon, self-care was an abstract idea at the beginning, something she didn't really think about until she went through a period of burnout ten years ago. She shared with the audience that she experienced exhaustion, withdrawal from social engagements, struggled to think rationally, and developed patterns that let her disregard the things she knew were good for her like exercise, healthy food, and social support.

"The turning point was actually being likened to a cow at an eight-week mindfulness-based risk reduction program where the facilitator asked us what we thought mindfulness was and why we were there," Professor Lemon said.

"I shared that I was about to burn out and the response I received was not expected, I was asked, 'Narelle, how long are you going to allow yourself to be milked like a cow? You're not about to burn out, you are burnt out.'

"I hadn't had anyone speak to me so directly with care and a smile on their face. I was not aware that I was burnt out."

This experience was the beginning of Professor Lemon's journey in building wellbeing through everyday self-care.

## Wellbeing Research

Professor Lemon shared that her experience is not uncommon with research exposing that many people feel self-care is selfish, they don't have time, find it difficult, compare individual practice to others and find that they disregard good wellbeing decisions when they're under pressure.

"There is evidence that those with little to no engagement in self-care practices prior to recommendations will remain less likely to follow professionals' advice," she said.

"This uncovers the need to look at self-care, education and a rethinking of interventions that empower individuals in their self-care practices while raising awareness and building confidence and capacity to reduce the effects of stress, exhaustion, and burnout.

"What this revealed to me is a need to build a literacy of wellbeing and self-care in non-medicalised ways."

## What is wellbeing literacy?

Professor Lemon described wellbeing literacy as a capability to comprehend and compose wellbeing language across contexts with the intention of using such language to maintain or improve wellbeing of oneself and others.

"Wellbeing literacy embraces building, maintaining and protecting wellbeing in order for individuals, collectives and systems to flourish," she said.

"By using the language, knowledge and skills of wellbeing, intentional communications of personal and communal wellness become feasible."

"Unlike other health choices that focus on physical health or mental illness, wellbeing literacy shifts our focus to what's possible rather than what's broken, and one way to build wellbeing literacy is self-care."

## What is self-care?

A vision Professor Lemon has is to interrupt the selfishness, impossible, commercialised, and incorrect use of the term self-care.

She argues that self-care is anything you do proactively that helps develop, protect, maintain, and improve health, wellbeing, or wellness.

"It is about meeting yourself each day, learning who you really are and continuing to be present with your needs to help you be the best version of yourself today," Professor Lemon said.

By approaching self-care as an interruption of the self, Professor Lemon encourages people to think about the self in terms of self-compassion, self-love, self-regulation, and self-awareness.

"We think about the self not as the 'I' but we think about it as relational, in terms of caring for 'I', 'us' and 'others'," she said.

"Context matters and self-care changes across context. Each combination of people and setting influences self-care, you must tune in to, 'What do you really need right now?'"



## The self-care toolbox theory

Professor Lemon shares that a way to approach everyday self-care is to think about it as a toolbox of strategies and practices, or tools that work for you right now to help you be your best.

A toolbox for self-care requires a variety of multiple intentional activities, strategies, or practices across diverse areas of wellbeing science.

For example, Professor Lemon shares what her self-care looks like in a day, it includes intentional practices like eight hours of sleep, green tea during a mindful moment ritual, homemade vegetable soup, appreciating ECU's therapy dogs Edi and Watson and dinner with energy boosting friends.

"Thinking from a wellbeing science perspective, there's positive emotions, self-compassion, appreciation, engagement, creativity, boundaries, relationships with others and self, and health," she said.

"We can have tools that are new or tools that you use all the time, you can collect them, leave, borrow, or lend them, you can swap them and use them in multiple different ways to solve a problem."

"We acknowledge that tools do not always work in every situation, and they don't work in isolation, so the context and the reason for use is important."

## Five dimensions

Professor Lemon's work focuses on self-care being thought about through five dimensions:

### Mindful awareness

Noticing what is happening when it happens and paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.

### Empowerment

The agency or choice you have in the moment. Telling the truth to ourselves about what we need and putting in place what we need.

### Time

Time is a variable that guides us. How can you think about time with your self-care in terms of things like micro moments? What does time look like in terms of a pause, a stop, a tilt?

### Habits

Habits are small choices that you make and repeat over time.

We often underestimate the small changes, the little tweaks we make to our thinking and behaviour. We imagine they don't make a difference. In fact, it is the small, tiny little tweaks we make, that add up and contribute to improvements in ourselves.

## Self-compassion

This is a way to feel safe and protected and it draws our attention to how we respond to ourselves, we are encouraged with self-compassion to treat ourselves with kindness and gentleness.

## Wellbeing research projects

Professor Lemon is currently working on several research projects that continue the conversation beyond what she shared at the ECU Lecture Series event.

Launched in May 2024, the [Citizen Wellbeing Scientists Project](#) draws from the principles of citizen science which invites participants to share what their self-care toolbox can and might look like. Members of the public are invited to document their own self-care practices using various multimedia tools such as photos, videos, or written notes.

Everyone is invited to [contribute to the project or gain inspiration for your everyday self-care](#).

Flex Your PEX is a project that supports future teachers. Professional experience or PEX, is the work integrated component of a teaching degree. The project's objective is to switch from the negative and deficit ways of seeing each other, challenges and the self in context, and to start to think about how we can be our best selves through character strengths and strengths-based pedagogy.

[SHESpeaks](#), funded by the Department of Communities, is a project addressing the perception that self-care is unachievable by women and aims to challenge societal norms and empower women's voices.

[Watch Professor Lemon's full lecture online.](#)

## ECU Lecture Series

Established in 2015, each year the ECU Lecture Series features distinguished Professors sharing their research expertise with ECU students, staff and members of the community. Followed by a Q&A discussion, these events are a valuable opportunity for the audience to ask their own questions and are open to the general public.

This article is republished from [The ECU Newsroom](#). [Read the original article here.](#)



# AI Might Interfere with the Acquisition of Writing Skills



Dr Anabela Malpique, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.

**Supporting the development of 'hybrid writers' in the AI Age. The AI makes it easy to generate text, at the expense of the development of writing skills.**

A growing number of generative artificial intelligence (AI) systems are starting to revolutionise written communication. This digital shift is likely to impact writing acquisition and development, underlining the urgency of preparing beginning writers to become 'hybrid writers', able to produce paper and computer-generated texts with a similar level of proficiency.

Dr Anabela Malpique from Edith Cowan University (ECU) has highlighted the importance of teaching handwriting in primary school education and beyond, despite children growing up in a digital age.

"We argue that it is vital to teach handwriting in the first years of schooling and to continue supporting the development of handwriting skills across primary and secondary years. Handwriting skills are connected to improved spelling and greater capacity to write longer and higher-quality texts. Handwriting also promotes our capacity to learn and memorise information," School of Education Senior Lecturer, Dr Malpique explained.

"Skilful writing is a powerful means of communication, and a key goal in educational contexts worldwide. Written words have shaped our cultures, defining our actions and thoughts as human beings."

## Digital Natives: Do Children Write Better on Paper or a Keyboard?

Dr Malpique and colleagues conducted a meta-analysis to examine studies published between 2000-2022, comparing the effects of writing by hand or keyboarding on primary students' writing performance (Foundation-Year 6).

"It's often presumed that children are digital natives because they have grown up with different technologies around them - so they will be naturally able to write texts using digital devices," Dr Malpique said.

The research findings showed that primary students produce higher quality writings using paper and pen(cil) than when using a keyboard. In a recent large-scale project examining the writing performance of Year 2 children (544 students, 47 classrooms) in WA, it was also found that children wrote longer and higher-quality handwritten texts.

"One thing we do know is the importance of transcription skills. Transcription skills refer to spelling and how quickly and accurately children can handwrite or type, also called automaticity," Dr Malpique added.

"Our research has consistently shown that young children's spelling and capacity to automatise handwriting and typing predicts the quality and the length of their texts. Simply put, children can better focus on what they want to say when handwriting or typing becomes automatised."

"Writing resembles other complex skills, such as driving a car. Unless we automatise the management of gears, pedals, blinkers, and wipers (transcription skills) we cannot select the most efficient or the most scenic route (creating texts)."

## Explicit Teaching of Handwriting and Keyboarding

Dr Malpique said teaching how to write letters is connected to children's spelling and capacity to develop automaticity in writing texts by hand. Similarly, keyboarding needs to be taught.

"Keyboarding, much like handwriting involves a complex set of cognitive, visual & motor processes, requiring frequent practice and instruction.

"It involves learning the location of the keys on a keyboard, combined with spatial skills of positioning, and moving fingers to press the keys in the correct sequence. Students need time to practice so they can move beyond the "hunt and peck" motion, which is typical of novice keyboarders," Dr Malpique said.

## What can Teachers and Families do?

As a complex skill, writing needs practice and perseverance. By working in collaboration with families, teachers can maximise opportunities for practice and enjoyment of writing or typing:

- Dedicate time for practice: Teachers can build regular practice routines in class and send home mini-tasks such as 10-minute writing or spelling prompts (writing a shopping list; finish a story; spot the spelling mistakes).
- Become a fellow writer by modelling: This means joining the writing as opposed to "policing" the writing. As you write you can talk about what you will write (planning), and you can share ideas about how you can make your writing clearer or more exciting.
- Talk about your mistakes and find ways of correcting your writing: When adults talk about their errors or doubts, they make them a natural part of the process. When they correct them, they show children strategies to revise their own writing.
- Read what you have written: Reading what you have written provides opportunities for correction and celebration. Praise children's risky attempts such as using new words or experimenting with expressions.
- Give children choice: The more children are in control of the process, the more likely they will enjoy it. They can choose topic, they can mix art and letters, they can choose paper or keyboard!
- Showcase the writing: Make children's writing visible on your walls, on your fridge or as wallpapers on your devices. Writing samples can also be a great way to show children how much they have grown as writers.
- Aim for automaticity: Find opportunities that let children see the importance and purpose of writing and keyboarding in their daily lives.

This article is republished from **Education Today**. Read the original article [here](#).



# Study finds Australian children's picture books failing to represent diverse families



Associate Professor Helen Adam, School of Education.

**New Edith Cowan University (ECU) research has revealed a lack of diverse family structures represented in Australian children's picture books.**

New Edith Cowan University (ECU) research has revealed a lack of diverse family structures represented in Australian children's picture books. The [study](#), led by Associate Professor Helen Adam, critically analysed a sample of 90 picture books from shortlisted and award-winning books in Australia from 2019 and 2020. It found that while there was some positive progress in the inclusion of diverse family structures, LGBTIQ+, step, blended, and foster families are almost entirely absent, potentially leading children from these family backgrounds to feel excluded or invisible.

Associate Professor Adam has called for educators to move beyond relying solely on award-winning books and seek out texts that more accurately reflect the diverse fabric of Australian society. "It is little wonder that award-listed books are often a source for book selectors, and this study is not a criticism of those books," she said.

"They are high quality and well-written, often containing valuable messages and themes that resonate with children. However, assuming that award-listed books are the best or only books to purchase can narrow the representation of diverse families," she said.

## Family representation: Key to inclusion

Associate Professor Adam stressed the importance of inclusive family representation in early literacy. "It's vital that all children can see families like their own in the books they read," she said. "Seeing themselves in books plays a crucial role in how children perceive their place in the world and contributes to their emotional well-being."

Positive progress toward inclusion of non-traditional family structures was noted. Of the 34 books depicting families 41% featured sole-parent families and a few showcased multigenerational households, however many family types were absent. "The omission of LGBTIQ+, step, blended, and foster families is concerning," Associate Professor Adam said. "This invisibility can send harmful messages to children from these families and perpetuate the idea that only traditional family structures are valued in society."

"It can also have profound effects on their engagement with literature, which is a key factor in developing strong literacy and language skills."

## The power of positive representation

Associate Professor Adam stressed that inclusive representation in children's literature benefits all children, not just those from underrepresented family types. "It's just as important for children from traditional families to see diverse family structures. Exposure to different family models fosters empathy, understanding, and a broader view of the world," she said.

The study also referenced research from the United States which demonstrated that adding LGBTIQ+ books to classroom libraries led to measurable improvements in student reading assessment scores.

"Diverse books are not just about representation — they directly support better educational outcomes," Associate Professor Adam said.

## A call for change in book selection

Associate Professor Adam said it is understandable that award-winning books were often seen as the gold standard for quality, but this study had shown that limiting book selection to only these books may not offer the diversity our students need. "By actively seeking out books that represent the diversity of families in society, we can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for all children," she said.

Associate Professor Helen Adam and Dr Lynette Vernon's next study is investigating how Australian families select books for their children. The study 'Where are the diverse families in Australian Children's Literature? Impacts and consideration for language and literacy in the early years' was published in the [journal Education Sciences](#).

Associate Professor Adam is currently recruiting parents of children aged 0-18 for a study into how Australian families select books for their children. By completing an anonymous survey, you will help us to understand the factors that influence parents' choices in selecting books.

This article is republished from [The ECU Newsroom](#). Read the original article [here](#).



To find out more or participate in this [study](#), select the link or scan the QR code.



# Government school reforms need to start with ‘coalition of the willing’, says explicit teaching pioneer



Associate Professor Lorraine Hammond AM, School of Education.

**The ACT Education Directorate will have to mobilise teachers who are willing to change their way of doing things if the Strong Foundations literacy and numeracy overhaul is to take hold in Canberra’s government schools, according to a pioneer of the science of learning and explicit teaching movement.**

Dr Lorraine Hammond from Edith Cowan University in Western Australia, who has been a big influence on the Canberra region Catholic schools’ adoption of the successful Catalyst high-impact teaching program, is in the national capital for three days of professional development with teachers and students at Holy Family Primary School in Gowrie.

Fifty teachers have given up three days of their holidays to be coached by Dr Hammond and her team from Edith Cowan, along with a group of primary school students who have also given up their time to help them hone their skills.

The teachers are mainly from ACT Catholic schools; none are from government schools. In light of the recent literacy and numeracy inquiry, perhaps some should be attending.

Dr Hammond, who made a submission to the inquiry, said the directorate should bypass those attached to the past and start with a “coalition of the willing”.

“It’s very important to do that,” she said.

“You need some lighthouse schools. I know that you’ve got the Catholic schools down the road, but I’m not entirely sure how willing and enthusiastic government teachers might be going to Catholic schools.”

Dr Hammond said the barriers were significant, and if the government schools wanted to do it well, they would need to do a stocktake to preempt the barriers.

“The barriers will be the people who don’t want to do it,” she said.

“That’s OK. Just leave them to one side initially and let’s get some people going.

“And then, because teachers are altruistic and they want the best, it just creeps very, very quickly, because then parents are like, ‘Well, hang on, what’s happening at that school down the road, they’re doing this. Why aren’t we doing that, too?’”

Dr Hammond said the resistance to change was purely ideological and had sprung out of the child-centred and collaborative education movement.

But the weight of evidence and data eventually found these approaches wanting, especially when it came to literacy.

Dr Hammond said it was a case of accept change or go, if the reforms were to be successful.

“If you deeply hold beliefs about pedagogy, and about teaching reading and literacy and numeracy, and they’re a bit outdated now, people have to kind of either give them up or retire,” she said.

“I mean, it’s no good hanging on to them.”

Dr Hammond said the balanced literacy approach, which still includes the now discredited whole reading method, remained a force in ACT Government schools.

She said the work of directorate advisers was still privileging a very balanced literacy approach.

“There’s nobody endorsing that right now, so there is a need to catch up quickly.”

Dr Hammond has worked with low socio-economic schools in Perth and the Kimberleys, where students suffered real disadvantages, and the results put better-off schools to shame.

She said ACT Government teachers would have to put their socio-economic pride to one side and realise teaching was not a socio-economic issue but an instructional one, and no child should be left behind.

“To get to 100 per cent reading, you’ve got to go through the bottom 20 per cent, so this is going to help everybody.

“If we don’t go through that bottom 20 per cent they’re never going to learn how to read. That’s the position that Catalyst took as well.”

Dr Hammond also believes that beyond the teaching, the architecture and classroom setting must be right for learning, so it’s out with the open plan, desks must face the teacher and a reasonable amount of order and expectation must be restored to the classroom.

“It’s really important that you understand that you will come in, stand behind your desk, and wait. Then I say good morning, and then you’ll all sit down,” she said.

“Routines like that, and by some they’d be perceived as quite draconian, but routines like that establish a calm, orderly working environment for everybody.

“If there’s no attention, there’s no learning. I say with explicit teaching: are they paying attention? Are they thinking? Are they practising?

“That’s really what we’re trying to achieve.”

Schools faced many pressures, but ultimately, it was results that mattered.

“They look at their data: could we be doing better?” Dr Hammond said.

“For every Catholic school, there’s a government school right next door in Canberra, and that’s probably why that [literacy and numeracy] report was so pointed in the differences.”

This article is republished from **Riotact**.  
Read the original article [here](#).



# The Y WA launch new school readiness program to tackle developmental vulnerabilities



Dr Simmone Pogorzelski, Lecturer, School of Education.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) provider the Y WA has responded to what it terms ‘alarming’ statistics showing that 22 per cent of children start school developmentally vulnerable in one or more Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains by developing a unique school readiness program. School readiness refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by a child, so that when they commence formal schooling they can successfully engage in learning. In development for over two years, the program is informed by a contemporary understanding of the science of early childhood learning and brain development. The play-based intentional learning program (School ReadyY) has been rolled out across all 14 of the Y WA Early Learning Centres and is designed to support three to five year old children by building success in three developmental domains:

- Literacy and language development
- Social and emotional wellbeing
- Numeracy

The program is initially focussing on early literacy and oral language through play-based, fun learning experiences, the Y WA CEO Dr Tim McDonald explained. “Reading is the key to learning so if we can teach children the early literacy and oral language skills that prepare them to learn to read once they get to school, they will have a greater opportunity to thrive,” he said.

Currently one third of Australian students fail to learn to read proficiently, at an estimated cost to the economy of \$40 billion. Dr McDonald is a leading authority on student learning and engagement and has led the program with recognised experts in their fields. Dr Simmone Pogorzelski, researcher at Edith Cowan University developed the Literacy and Language component in partnership with Knowledge Society and Y WA educators. Dr Tessa Weadman from La Trobe University Science of Language and Reading Lab reviewed the language components, and both were instrumental in facilitating a pilot of the program and evaluated its impact.

The Y WA has also taken the bold step to appoint Literacy Specialist Renee Chakaodza to provide ongoing support and coaching to educators as they implement the program. “School readiness is often perceived as being able to sit on a mat quietly, being able to get your lunchbox ready, use scissors or being able to listen to a story, however evidence shows that the brain is so receptive at this young age and there is so much more we can do to prepare children for success at school and beyond,” Dr McDonald said. “Our focus on the early years is a commitment to prioritising prevention and early intervention.”

This article is republished from **The Sector**.  
Read the original article [here](#).

# Fostering Children’s Growth Mindset in the Early Years



Dr Fiona Boylan, Lecturer, School of Education.

Recently Dr Fiona Boylan, an early childhood researcher at ECU launched her new book aimed at supporting early years educators to foster children’s growth mindset. In the Early Years Learning Framework (AGDE, 2022), developing children’s growth mindset is a key component of becoming a confident and involved learner.

Fostering Children’s Growth Mindset in the Early Years offers an insightful guide on how educators can foster growth mindsets in children from birth up to eight years of age. It centres on a set of nine design principles for positive change, along with practical strategies for integrating each one into your setting. This accessible approach, based in both research and practice, will support you to create a culture that inspires children to understand their mindsets, develop a love of learning and enhance children’s achievement and wellbeing.



Fiona will also be taking part in a BeYou In Focus webinar: Fostering growth mindsets in the early years on Wednesday 13 November 2024 12.00pm - 1.00pm AWST.

Join this webinar to listen to panellists Dr Fiona Boylan (Edith Cowan University) and Tess Herring (Tumut Community Preschool) talk about mindset theory, research and practice and how you can harness a growth mindset to promote children’s and educators’ positive mental health. You’re invited to stay online after the 1 hour webinar to join a 30 minute conversation with our panellists and other educators from across Australia sharing each other’s strategies and experiences.

→ Purchase the book via the [website](#) or by scanning the QR code.



→ Register for the BeYou In Focus Webinar via the [website](#) or by scanning the QR code.



# Open Access Research Articles in the School of Education



Associate Professor Melanie Brooks, Associate Dean (Research)



Written by School of Education academics, please find below a selection of recently published articles which are available to you without any subscriptions. Please select the links or scan the QR codes to view these journal articles which are all freely available. For more information about our research at ECU, visit our [website](#) or scan the QR Code.



**Where Are the Diverse Families in Australian Children's Literature? Impacts and Consideration for Language and Literacy in the Early Years.** *Education Sciences*. 2024; 14(9):1006.

Adam H, Murphy S, Urquhart Y, Ahmed K.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14091006>

A lack of representation of diverse families in children's books can affirm insecurities and contribute to a sense of "otherness". This study reports on the representation of family diversity in award-listed Australian children's picture books. A critical theoretical framework was employed to analyse

both texts and images. This study found a lack of diverse family structures in children's books, especially LGBTIQ+, foster, step and blended families. This paper argues that to ensure inclusive and equitable literacy learning opportunities for all, educators need to go beyond award-listed books when selecting books for early literacy environments.

**Becoming singular: Musical identity construction and maintenance through the lens of Identity Process Theory.** *Psychology of Music*



Forbes, M., Goopy, J. & Krause, A. (2024).  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356241267863>

This study applies identity process theory to explore how individuals maintain and construct identities that feature music, singing, and singing teaching. Researchers analysed interviews with Australian singing teachers to understand how they enacted identity principles. Two main themes emerged: Living a musical life is my destiny, and achieving goals in music and teaching is motivating. Teaching singing provided a way to become distinctive and valued. Participants' lifelong musical engagement satisfied continuity and positive distinctiveness identity principles. Self-efficacy and self-esteem were fulfilled through social connections and teaching. The study's findings have implications for identity resilience and musical engagement across the lifespan.



**Comfort in the role: The core of positive veteran teachers.** *Education Sciences*, 14(9), 998.

Jefferson, S., Gray, C., & Lowe, G. (2024).  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14090998>

This article explores the strategies employed by positive, highly experienced teachers with about 20 years of teaching (veteran teachers). This article explores how maintaining comfort in the role is critical to maintaining their enthusiasm and commitment to the profession. The article points to key support measures accessed by these teachers to maintain this commitment.







**Responding to children's voices: the new frontier in education policy reform. The Australian Educational Researcher.**

Ruscoe, A. (2024).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-024-00761-w>

This article highlights the transformative potential of children's voices in early childhood education, challenging entrenched beliefs and advocating for their inclusion in decision-making processes. It critiques the tendency to view children as secondary stakeholders, despite their rights and capacity to influence educational practices. Drawing on declarations from Australian education policy and evidence directly from young children, this paper emphasises the need for forums that amplify children's insights, and their potential to reshape teaching and learning culture and priorities. It argues that recognising children's agency can catalyse meaningful change, not just in education but across many sectors affecting children's lives. The paper calls for systematic ethical inclusion of children's perspectives as an urgent reform mechanism in education.



**Embodying policy work: an exploration of contexts, actions and meanings towards new possibilities for physical education teacher education (PETE). Sport, Education and Society, 1–15.**



Evans, V., Aldous, D., & Penney, D. (2024).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2024.2398614>

This paper reflects the importance of the body in Physical Education (PE) Teacher Educator's professional work that we contend, is inextricably linked to policy developments in PE, teacher education and schooling. By focusing on embodying policy work, the paper presents a framework

directed towards transformative thinking and practices in teacher education. Bernstein's sociological theory is central to exploring three interrelated sets of rules that direct and limit professional work and identities. The paper prompts reflection on what professionals embody in their everyday practices, why and how it unfolds as it does, and the implications for teacher educators and future teachers.



**Hot leadership, cool leadership: How education policies are implemented (and ignored) in schools. Educational Policy.**

Brooks, J.S., & Brooks, M.C.(2024).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048241268309>

This article examines how school principals in the Philippines interpret and implement education policies. Through interviews and observations with 93 principals, the study identifies factors that lead to "hot leadership" (active engagement) or "cool leadership" (passive or neglectful approaches) in policy implementation. Facilitators of hot leadership include mandates, alignment with existing practices, and moral purpose. Inhibitors leading to cool leadership include lack of resources/monitoring and fear of embarrassment. The authors propose a framework with four quadrants of policy implementation: creative, transformational, neglected, and compliance. The study highlights the complex, contextual nature of policy implementation and the crucial role of principal leadership in determining policy success or failure at the school level.



# New earn as you learn teaching pathway for career changers and high achievers at ECU



Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean, School of Education.

**ECU is the only WA university offering a new employment-based pathway where recent graduates and career changers can get a Master of Teaching while earning an income.**

The Federal Government and Edith Cowan University (ECU) have launched an exciting new employment-based pathway where eligible students will be paid while attaining teaching qualifications to tackle Australia’s teacher shortage. It’s called the High Achieving Teachers (HAT) program, and it starts in Semester 1, 2025.

“We are delighted to be the only Western Australian university to offer the HAT program. It allows recent non-teaching graduates and career changers looking for something rewarding the opportunity to attain a Master of Teaching while earning an income,” ECU School of Education, Executive Dean, Professor Caroline Mansfield said.

“ECU is responsible for delivering more than half of Western Australia’s teachers; however we need more, and this is an innovative way of boosting the number of people entering the profession.”

### Enhancing theory-practice connections

Successful applicants in ECU’s new HAT program will study one of three Master of Teaching courses, in either Early Childhood, Primary or Secondary Education. Unlike the existing coursework schedule for these master’s degrees, eligible students’ study will be structured around the four Western Australian school terms.

“We know this will better align with school needs and in doing so has the potential to enhance theory-practice connections,” Professor Mansfield said.

“It also allows for a more convenient transition for those participants with school-age children who won’t be expected to work during the school holidays.”

### Earn as you learn

HAT program students will be paid while studying and start work in a classroom from year one.

They will be placed in one of ECU’s HAT partnership schools, either public, Catholic or an independent school.

The program is open to people with a Bachelor degree who are interested in making the switch from their current field into teaching.

This applies to:

- Recent graduates who hold a non-teaching degree
- Final year students who expect to graduate with a non-teaching degree in 2024
- People wanting to switch career to teaching

“We are looking for people with strong undergraduate results and there will be some emphasis on graduates who have studied STEM courses.

“We will also consider applicants’ personal qualities to assess their suitability, as teaching is a highly personal profession,” Professor Caroline Mansfield added.

This article is republished from **The ECU Newsroom**. Read the original article [here](#).

➔ Interested in learning more about the HAT program? Find out more via our [website](#) or by scanning the QR code.





# Does it matter if students do tests on computers or on paper?



Dr Anabela Malpique, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.

**Australian students are increasingly taking tests on computers. This includes major tests used to check national progress on literacy and numeracy.**

The idea is this prepares students “for the future”, because “technology is everywhere”. But as our two recent studies suggest, the way students respond to test questions on computers may not be the same as on paper.

This is a particular issue amid concern over the latest round of NAPLAN results, which appear to show too many Australian students are not learning basic skills in English and maths. NAPLAN (for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9) has been fully online for two years.

## Our research

In our recent study, we reviewed 43 studies comparing tests on computer and paper. This included research from 18 different countries (including Australia, the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom). Fourteen of these studies focused on school-aged children.

In general, the studies showed for younger school students (who had less computer skills), test scores tended to be higher when done on paper. This effect dropped off as students got older. We also found when it came to computer testing, scores were worst when students needed to answer complex questions involving multiple steps.

This is due to the demands placed on working memory (the part of your thinking that allows you to hold onto multiple pieces of information at one time – for example, a list of names and coffee orders). When working memory has too many pieces of information at once, we experience “high cognitive load”.

Students may experience this if they are unfamiliar with using a particular computer or particular program, testing platform or browser. Students may also experience high cognitive load when the questions they answer become more complex. Not only are they working out the answer, but they are working out how to use the computer (or reminding themselves how to use it) at the same time.

## Comparing students on paper and on a computer

We also saw this phenomenon at work in our own 2023 study, even when students were well into high school and familiar with the computers used in a science test.

We compared the differences in test scores for computer and paper-based tests with Year 9 students. This study involved 263 science students from two schools in Perth, where students learn using their own devices. Within this sample, there were 14 individual classes taught by seven different teachers.

Students completed one test on their own computer and another (featuring very similar questions) on paper. We categorised the questions in each test as “easy” or “hard”. When students answered easy questions, they achieved higher scores (by about 7%) on the computer-based assessment.

When students completed hard questions, they performed better (by about 12%) on paper-based assessment.

This suggests the computer mode adds to the cognitive load students experience when answering questions. This is a bit like the way a computer’s memory might become overloaded if you run too many programs at the same time, and it slows down and doesn’t perform as well. This finding is similar to that of a 2018 study that looked at the verbal skills of a group of children aged between four and 11.

## What about working memory capacity?

In our study on Year 9 students, we also tested students’ working memory capacity, by giving them increasingly long lists of numbers to remember.

We then controlled for this using statistics. This allowed us to compare the computer and paper test scores while assuming all students had the same working memory capacity. Under these conditions, we found there was no difference in test scores between paper and computer.

This suggests students with lower working memory capacities are most disadvantaged by computer-based tests. People with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are one group that particularly struggle with working memory. We know there will typically be one or two students per classroom who have ADHD.

## What can we do differently?

Computers of course have an important role to play in education, and are powerful learning tools. But our research shows taking a test on a computer is not the same as taking the same test on paper. Schools should consider:

- Giving students extra working time when completing complex tasks or tests on a computer.
- Teaching students word processing skills from an early age to increase their ability to type and navigate computer programs.
- Minimising any digital distractions, either during tests or during class work. This includes pop-ups, multiple tabs and online games.

Additionally, families should think about providing everyday opportunities at home for younger children to learn to type (such as emails, messages and shopping lists). This will help to build their skills and confidence with keyboards and computers.

This article is republished from **The Conversation**. Under Creative Commons license. Read the original article [here](#).

# Bendat Equity Scholarships make their debut at ECU



Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean, School of Education.

**ECU recently celebrated the inaugural Bendat Family Foundation Equity Scholarships with a ceremony at Edith Cowan House on Joondalup Campus.**

These Scholarships, aimed at supporting students in critical areas of study such as nursing, social work, and teaching, mark an important milestone in the Bendat Family Foundation's commitment to education and community service.

Awarded for the first time this year, the scholarships will help students throughout the duration of their degree. The Scholarship will widen participation and break down barriers that restrict entry to education and aims to support students with social and economic disadvantage to thrive at university.

Several recipients of the 2024 Bendat Scholarships shared their gratitude and plans for the future. Bachelor of Science (Nursing) student Richard Cavenoni said that receiving the Scholarship made academia more accessible and achievable.

“The Scholarship gives me the confidence and resources to strive for something meaningful. I feel empowered to work towards becoming a nurse, a profession where I can dedicate myself to caring for and looking after others.”

Bachelor of Social Work student, Chantal Moore, plans to pay the generosity forward.

“I plan on paying the Foundation’s generosity forward with my work and commitment to Australian families as I learn more about research in the area of childhood mental health and wellbeing.”

Bachelor of Education (Secondary) student, Erin Lynch, highlighted the Scholarship’s personal meaning for her.

“Being able to teach drama and English holds immense significance to me. With this Scholarship, the Foundation has not only alleviated the financial burden of my education but also provided me with the invaluable encouragement to pursue this dream of mine.”

## Giving back to the WA community

Jack and Eleanor Bendat established the Bendat Family Foundation to give back to the Western Australian community.

Arriving in Australia with very little, the Bendats were met with generosity and kindness, which helped them build a wonderful life for their family. Their Foundation focuses on improving lives, supporting families, and enabling individuals to contribute actively to Western Australia. They firmly believed that education is transformative and seek to make it more accessible to Western Australians.

The Bendat Family Foundation highlighted the significance of the scholarships. “We have purposely chosen to focus these scholarships on areas of study that will lead to careers in areas where people are very much needed in Western Australia, particularly in regional and rural areas. The recipients of these scholarships are all very motivated and focused on the impact they can have in the community.” The Scholarships not only provide financial assistance but also serve as an investment in the recipients’ futures and their potential contributions to the community.

“A scholarship is not only a way to assist an individual to receive an education. It is an investment in their future and is transformative for them and their family,” the Foundation said.

“Education can completely change the trajectory of an individual’s life.”

These Scholarships are a testament to the Bendat Family Foundation’s mission to support education and enrich community development. The impact of these Scholarships extends beyond financial assistance, providing recipients with the support and encouragement needed to achieve their educational and professional goals. As the first ECU recipients embark on their journeys, they carry with them the legacy of Jack and Eleanor Bendat’s generosity and commitment to making a difference in Western Australia.

This article is republished from **The ECU Newsroom**. Read the original article [here](#).

➔ To find out more about scholarships at ECU, visit our [website](#).





# ECU Wins Innovator Award

Dr Julie Boston, Director, Partnerships and Engagement, School of Education and the Simulation & Immersive Digital Technology Group.



**Dr Julie Boston, School of Education, Dr Brennen Mills, School of Medical and Health Sciences, Associate Professor Martin Masek, School of Science and the Simulation & Immersive Digital Technology Group (SIDTG), Edith Cowan University win an Innovation Award for Paraverse.**

Three Australian innovators have been named winners of the Indian Ocean Defence & Security 2024 (IODS 2024) Innovation Awards worth \$40,000. They were among 15 finalists who each delivered a 3-minute pitch at the Indian Ocean Defence & Security 2024 conference.

The panel of five judges, led by Michele Clement, Director of the Western Australian Defence Science Centre, listened to the pitches and added their marks to those previously awarded by a separate panel of seven judges who determined the finalists.

## The Award:

**Indian Ocean Defence & Security 2024 Collaborative Innovation Award:** Mr Brennen Mills and the team from Edith Cowan University –Paraverse. Their success was announced and trophies presented on Friday 26 July at IODS 2024 by Hannah Beazley, Acting Minister for Training and Workforce Development representing the Minister for Innovation.

The Innovation Awards were created by AMDA Foundation Limited and driven by its altruistic purpose: to promote the development of Australia's industrial resources in the fields of aviation, aerospace, maritime, defence and security. They recognise and reward innovation by Australian individuals and organisations at the forefront of innovation in products, services and business processes in the maritime domain. They were presented for the first time at Avalon 2013.

Since then, some \$725,000-worth of Awards have been presented. AMDA Foundation Limited is an Australian not-for-profit corporation established to promote the development of Australia's industrial, manufacturing and information/communications technology resources in the fields of aviation, aerospace, maritime, defence and security.

This article is partly republished from the **Asia Pacific Defence Reporter**. Read the original article [here](#).

# Why is sex and sexuality education taught in Australian Schools?

Dr David Rhodes, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.



Sex ed in schools is controversial, but experts say it's vital for young people to learn about their bodies, identities, and healthy relationships. Why are some parents concerned?

Comprehensive sexual education covers a range of important topics, according to Ee-Lin Chang, Manager of Health Promotion at Family Planning Australia. "It's not just about sex and STIs and contraception. It's about consent, and making an informed choice, and understanding what that looks like," she said. But she acknowledged parents might have concerns about what their children are being taught. "There's a variety of concerns common amongst parents from all different backgrounds," Ms Chang told SBS Examines.

"For example, is this type of education going to make my child go and have sex?" Ms Chang said sexuality education should be tailored for students, covering sensitive subjects in a culturally and age-appropriate way — but information shouldn't be withheld. "It's about being able to adapt it to the needs of the audience and recognising that for each individual, their culture and religious background will be part of their views."

Sex ed in Australia is "hit and miss" according to Dr David Rhodes, senior lecturer in the School of Education at Edith Cowan University. He says the curriculum is ambiguous and open to interpretation. "We're not teaching all students or young people in Australia the same things, and we're not giving them access to the same materials and information," Dr Rhodes said.

He added that young people will look elsewhere if they have unanswered questions about sex and sexuality, and may turn to inappropriate sources like porn sites or chat rooms.

Despite the taboo around talking to young people about sex, he says comprehensive sexuality education is vital. "These lessons are pivotal to a person's identity and having healthy relationships ... we need to cater to the needs of the children that are in our care."

→ To find out more, listen to this SBS interview via our [website](#) or by scanning the QR code.



# ECU South West Campus has a new course on offer from 2025 - Bachelor of Education (Primary 1-10)



Dr David Rhodes, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.

The Bachelor of Education (Primary, 1-10) is a progressive course dedicated to producing future teachers ready for employment in primary schools and lower secondary schools, with a specialisation in one area: Mathematics, Science or Health and Physical Education to year 10. A variety of flexible admission options are available to suit applicants with differing needs.

Three distinguishing features of this course are the opportunity to focus on primary and lower secondary teaching, complete a formal specialisation in a single learning area to year 10 level and undertake units that provide preparation for teaching in regional, rural and remote areas.

The range and number of professional practice experiences are a key feature of this course. This ensures students can make the essential connection between theory and practice whilst building both professional and generic employability skills in real teaching environments. Partnerships between the University and 800 schools allow teaching students to gain experience in diverse settings including public,

independent, metropolitan, regional, rural and remote schools, allowing them to work with children from differing economic, social, ethnic and educational backgrounds.

Successful completion of the course presents graduates with the opportunity to gain employment as outstanding teachers equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience to make a difference in primary and lower secondary settings and in rural and remote communities.

This course creates quality graduates ready to take up employment in primary and lower secondary (up to year 10) education environments. Students may be employed as generalist primary teachers, specialist primary teachers or secondary teacher teaching to year 10 in a single learning area specialisation: Mathematics, Science or Health and Physical Education.

[Explore ECU's Teacher Education Courses Here](#)

## Drama Education Students Present: I'm With Her

By playwright **Victoria Midwinter Pitt**. Performed by the School of Education Drama Students.  
Directed by **Dr Christina Gray**, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.

'I'm With Her' is based on the words of eight prominent Australian women who share experiences of discrimination and abuse. It also speaks of resistance and solidarity, and provides an important space in which to think through what needs to be done.



**When**

26 - 29 November 2024  
7.00pm

**Location**

Edith Cowan University  
Theatre Sixteen  
Mount Lawley Campus  
Building 16 Room 16.117  
2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawley, 6050, WA.

**Cost**

\$15.00

Register online or via scanning the QR Code

**Director**

Dr Christina Gray



[Register Online](#)





Our professional learning programs have been designed with teachers in mind. The programs are delivered by qualified and experienced ECU educators with high level content and pedagogical knowledge and reflect adult learning principles. These courses are embedded in evidence-based teaching practices and are responsive to the cultural backgrounds and contextual circumstances of the participating teachers.

For more information and to register, view our current short courses [here](#) or scan the QR codes below.



Fully Online

## #1 - Understanding Childhood Trauma: An introduction for educators

Trauma-affected children can be found in any classroom and any school. In fact, one in four children experience a traumatic event before they turn three years old (Child, J. 2017). Trauma impacts development, behaviour and learning.

This short course is an ideal introduction to childhood trauma for all educators including parents, carers and youth workers. Providing effective support for children and young people affected by trauma begins with educators who are trauma-informed. By building your understanding and knowledge you have a better chance of making a positive difference.

### Cost

- \$199 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

## #2 - Trauma and Development: Understanding the impact for educators

Children and adolescents who live in adverse circumstances where there is neglect, abuse, or violence live in a state of hypervigilance and with toxic stress from experiencing ongoing, traumatic events. Toxic stress sabotages development and wellbeing – the brain and the body struggle to function effectively, the consequences of which can be far reaching. This short course looks at the impact of adversity and toxic stress on development, focussing on the brain. Educators will build their knowledge and understanding of children and adolescents whose development has been interrupted by toxic stress and trauma.

### Cost

- \$199 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

## #3 - Trauma and Behaviour: Reflecting and responding for educators

Behaviour is communication. Behaviour for the child or young person living with trauma is often an expression of their struggle to cope. This may include struggling to cope with managing big emotions, struggling to cope with learning and struggling with being with others. Trauma means days are full of struggles and feelings of fear. This short course aims to build your understanding of children and young people's trauma-driven behaviour and your knowledge of evidence-based strategies so you can more confidently and effectively, guide and support their development of self-regulation and behaviour competencies.

### Cost

- \$199 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

## #4 - Trauma and Learning: Meeting complex support needs for educators

Early childhood learning environments and school environments can be a struggle for the child or young person living with trauma. Struggling to think, pay attention, remember, play with others, trust and form friendships with peers and adults, every day can be exhausting and overwhelming for these children who often struggle to cope. In this short course you will explore trauma-responsive pedagogy to promote positive interactions and assist children and young people affected by trauma to achieve better learning outcomes. Teaching troubled children and young people is difficult and can take its toll therefore attention to educator wellbeing and self-care is introduced.

### Cost

- \$199 to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

### #5 - Trauma and Vulnerable Children: Helping them heal for educators

In this short course you will be introduced to children and young people living with family violence, refugee and asylum seeker experiences, children in out of home care, children living in poverty, and children impacted by the collective trauma histories of their families and communities. By the very nature of these specific experiences, it can be argued that these children and young people are vulnerable and are highly likely to be living with trauma. You will gain insight into the needs of these children and young people who have endured complex vulnerabilities, with the unique child, positive relationships, and a strengths-based approach at the heart of practice.

**Cost**

- **\$199** to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Semester One 2025  
Dates: Saturday 17 May,  
7 June and 28 June 2025.

Face-to-Face

### The Science of Reading: Translating research to classroom practice

Have you ever wondered how the human brain translates these squiggles and dots on a page into sounds and spoken words? Part of what we know is that learning to read is a complex neurological process that humans have taken thousands of years to figure out. Despite this, we expect children to achieve this in the first few years of school. This three-day course is designed to bridge the gap between research and practice and make explicit how evidence-based models of reading have determined the essential components required for the human brain to efficiently build a reading circuit and for a brain to learn to automatically recognise words.

**Cost**

- **\$1091.00** including GST (course includes all reading materials, case studies, morning tea and lunch).
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Face-to-Face

## | New Short Course - Sounds of Country

Commencing in Term Two 2025, this innovative, multifaceted course, Sounds of Country, focuses on culturally responsive pedagogy and practice, mainly within primary education, but also applies to early childhood and secondary education. The program will commence with an emergent On Country experience guided by Traditional Owner/s designed to connect participants' relational understanding of their local school's connection to place through the Boorn (tree) methodology.

This short course is guided by Traditional Owners/Elders by way of decolonising participants view and knowledge of Country alongside Aboriginal histories and cultures. The sessions are based on Indigenous methodologies of Dadirri, yarning and relationships. Highly experienced facilitators will deliver and model culturally responsive pedagogies through immersive and engaging practices.

**Cost:** \$2187.00 including GST (includes morning tea, lunch, workbooks, reading materials, online coaching sessions and case studies).

➔ A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation. For more information and to **express your interest**, get in contact with us via [education\\_shortcourses@ecu.edu.au](mailto:education_shortcourses@ecu.edu.au).



# Future Research & Career Pathway



**Vanessa Wintoneak (she/her/hers)**  
Doctor of Philosophy

## Can you introduce yourself and tell us about your background and academic journey?

Kaya/Hello! I am a White migrant settler living, working, and researching on and with Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar. My career in education began as a teacher in a child care centre and evolved to classroom teaching in local schools to being a lecturer at ECU. I completed my BEd (2009) at the University of Alberta and my MEd by Research (2019) at ECU. My interests during my undergraduate degree were focused on inquiry-based learning and the educational project of Reggio Emilia and my MEd considered children's funds of knowledge and funds of identity in the construction of curriculum and children's involvement levels.

## Why did you choose ECU to do your PhD degree?

The supervisory team that I was invited to study with (Professor Mindy Blaise, Dr Jo Pollitt, and Dr Jane Merewether) was an exciting opportunity as they encouraged a philosophically rigorous, multispecies, and creative approach to research.

## What have you enjoyed the most?

During my PhD I have most enjoyed connecting with and learning from transdisciplinary scholars and scholarship. I have done this through reading beyond the 'field' of Education, attending conferences like Cultural Studies Association of Australasia ([CSAA](#)), participating in [Rosi Braidotti's summer school](#), engaging with research groups such as [The Ediths](#), and being an Higher Degree by Research (HDR) member of the [Centre for People, Place and Planet](#) here at ECU.

## What is the focus of your thesis?

Walking-with Derbarl Yerrigan/Swan River: Methodological and Pedagogical Experimentations in Early Childhood Education is a PhD Thesis by Publication. The study was framed as a feminist project that experimented with ways of doing research and pedagogy otherwise and generated five practices: caring citational practices, relational

reading practices, responsive walking practices, emergent writing practices, and diffractive analysis practices. This research was motivated by responding with climate crisis from a feminist perspective, generating practices for recuperative futures, and situating practices with place. The study was framed by Common Worlds and Feminist New Materialisms theoretical lenses. The walking project took place on and with unceded Aboriginal Country, Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar in Western Australia, specifically with Derbarl Yerrigan/Swan River at Katamburdup/Pelican Point and young children aged two to five years.

A brief summary of the five practices that were generated through experimentation in this study:

### **Caring Citational Practices: A Transparent, Relational, Worlding-Making Practice**

Caring citational practices involve citing out of the norm. This practice is concerned with seeking, thinking-with, and promoting a wide range of knowledges that is inclusive of often marginalised groups of people and nonhumans.

### **Relational Reading Practices: Becoming in Relation With Knowledges**

Relational reading practices are concerned with building relations with knowledges, for making worlds that are situated in the multiple, being responsive to calls and arguments from diverse perspectives related to global crises, and engaging anticolonial ways of researching.

### **Responsive Walking Practices: Walking as a Situated, Relational, and Accountable Practice**

Responsive walking practices are about what kinds of practices make walking-with possible as an effort to engage with relational ways of walking and challenge methodological and pedagogical habits and models that are steeped in colonialism, human centrism, and objectivity.

### **Emergent Writing Practices: Writing as a Worlding Practice**

Emergent writing practices are ways of practising writing as thinking, making relations, and becomings through processual forms of writing that show the messiness and imperfections of researching as it is taking place.

### **Diffractive Analysis Practices: An Iterative and Non-Representational Practice**

Diffractive analysis practices are non-representational ways of working with data that forgo answers, closure, and notions of progress or creating new knowledge. They seek to identify differences productively and account for multiple spaces and times revealing entanglement and the multiplicity of worlds.

Six publications were presented as part of this thesis and can be found [here](#) for those interested in learning more about this research study.

## What advice would you give to other HDR students?

I plan to continue my career at ECU as a lecturer in the School of Education and look forward to publishing at least two additional articles from the work in my PhD thesis. I am anticipating the opportunity to engage in supervision of research students in the coming years, where I will be able to share and strengthen the exceptional supervisory mentorship I have received throughout my MEd and PhD experiences. As well, I plan to enjoy weekend camping trips where I can connect with Country without the looming PhD to-do list!

# Dr Sarah Jefferson School of Education Research Showcase



**Dr Sarah Jefferson**  
School of Education.

Sarah is a passionate educator and former secondary school teacher with substantial teaching experience both in Australia and overseas. Sarah began her academic and research journey only relatively recently. Sarah completed her PhD while working full time and is currently Course Co-ordinator of the Bachelor of Education (Secondary) programme.

As an early career researcher, her focus has primarily centred on the role of social support, particularly for highly experienced (veteran) teachers who remain positive and committed to their profession. Sarah considers herself particularly fortunate to have begun her research journey with the guidance and mentorship of an excellent team of colleagues.

As a result of this collaborative approach to research, it has facilitated a rich vein of valuable findings of this wonderful cohort of teachers. This has resulted in multiple publications through the team over the past few years.

Sarah highlights a pivotal moment in her research that was a turning point for her understanding both professionally and personally. She recalls interviewing one of the teachers who described how their advice to beginning teachers was to always find marigolds. Upon further questioning, the teacher recounted how they'd read a blog post that used the analogy of how marigolds are a companion plant that help plants and vegetables planted near them to grow and flourish. In contrast, walnut trees while looking impressive are poisonous and toxic to their environment. In other words, it's vital to surround yourself with those teachers or people in your life who support and encourage you. It went on to become the title of her thesis "The search for marigolds" and underpinning her philosophical approach to life more broadly.

In addition to publishing in leading education journals, Sarah has also collaborated with colleagues at other local universities, broadening the scope of her research to comprise the role of public value with a particular lens on its impact in education. She is also working as a contributing editor of a book on grit and resilience.

As part of her love of writing and research, she is also a regular contributor to [The Conversation](#) with over 70,000 reads of her work on a range of topics related to education. Fittingly, given the primary focus of her research is about social support, much of her work there is tied to its critical importance for teachers and students alike and ways to enhance and sustain it. Though a teacher focused researcher, Sarah's love and passion for research and writing means she is continually working on something in her 'drafts' folder! Her most [recent publication](#) is about the strategies used by positive veteran teachers to maintain comfort in their role despite the challenges they face.

## I High Achieving Teachers (HAT) Program

Australia has a shortage of teachers. To boost the number of people entering the profession, ECU and the Federal Government have introduced an exciting new employment-based pathway called the High Achieving Teachers program where eligible students will be paid while attaining teaching qualifications. The program is open to graduates and final year students who hold a non-teaching degree and want to switch careers to teaching.

This applies to:

- Recent ECU graduates who hold a non-teaching degree
- Recent graduates from other universities who hold a non-teaching degree

- Final year ECU students who expect to graduate with a non-teaching degree in 2024
- Final year students at other universities who expect to graduate with a non-teaching degree in 2024
- Domestic students only, including Australian citizens or Australian permanent residents

→ Interested in learning more about the HAT program? Find out more and express your interest via our [website](#) or by scanning the QR code.





# ECU Alumni Wins STEM Educator of the Year

We are thrilled to announce that Edith Cowan University alumnus Stephen Warwick has been named the winner of the WA Premier's Science Awards 2024 in the STEM Educator of the Year (Schools) category.



The Premier's Science Awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding scientific research and engagement taking place in Western Australia.

This prestigious accolade recognises outstanding contributions to STEM education and highlights the vital role educators play in inspiring the next generation of scientists, engineers and innovators.

## Inspiring young minds

Stephen Warwick, who has been shaping young minds at Ashdale Secondary College since 2018, has made remarkable strides in STEM education. As the Design and Technology teacher and STEM Coordinator, Stephen has been a driving force in integrating industry-relevant practices into the curriculum.

His work has not only enriched the educational experience but also significantly advanced STEM engagement in Western Australia.

Under Stephen's leadership, the college has developed innovative pathways in Engineering and Mechatronics, opening doors for students to explore cutting-edge fields. His pioneering efforts include the introduction of FIRST robotics at the college, a move that underscores his commitment to fostering a hands-on, interactive learning environment.

Stephen talks about his initiatives, like afterschool robotics clubs, and those that have extended beyond his school, impacting STEM education on a state and national level.

"I have a really strong passion for STEM education and passing on those skills and that passion to my students and I really hope to see those students going off to pathways into engineering and STEM fields and coming back at mentors," says Stephen.

[Hear about the Premier's Science Awards 2024: STEM Educator of the Year \(Schools\) Winner.](#)

## Championing creative thinking and fostering innovation

ECU Executive Dean of the School of Engineering Professor Paulo de Souza said that Stephen's recognition as STEM Educator of the Year is a testament to his dedication and innovative approach to teaching.

Professor de Souza explains that teaching creative thinking and fostering innovation is core to ECU's teaching model.

"Stephen's work also aligns closely with the broader goals of diversifying WA's economy through STEM, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills needed for emerging industries such as new energy, critical minerals and space exploration," said Professor de Souza.

"I offer my congratulations to Stephen for this well-deserved honour and for his continued impact on STEM education - his success is a proud moment for Edith Cowan University and an inspiration for future generations of STEM leaders."

## Elevating STEM fields

The Premier's Science Awards, a cornerstone of the Western Australian Government's strategy to elevate STEM fields, celebrate exceptional contributions in scientific research and engagement.

This year, the introduction of new STEM categories, including the STEM Educator of the Year (Schools), reflects the growing importance of recognising excellence in educational practices that prepare students for future challenges.

For more information on the Premier's Science Awards, [visit WA Government's Premier's Science Awards 2024.](#)

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# ECU Education Alumni Spotlight:

## Cheryl Oprandi

Diploma of Teaching (Primary) (1981)

Bachelor of Education (1989)

Master of Education (2002)

**Cheryl Oprandi figured out early on to follow her heart when it came to her career.**

Initially studying podiatry at her parents' urging, after a year she switched paths to study primary education at Claremont Teachers College. "I always wanted to become a teacher, but my parents kept saying 'do something else,'" Cheryl explains. But it was her own wonderful experience at primary school that made her want to do the same for other children. Migrating to Perth from Malaysia as an 11-year-old living with the effects of polio, Cheryl says the teachers she encountered made a huge impact on her life. "The teachers at Rosalie Primary School really looked after me. They were very, very good. And even with my disability and everything, I was school captain, I played all the sports - they included me," Cheryl says. "The supportive teachers there made a lasting impression, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion that inspired me to become an educator myself."

After graduating from Teachers College, Cheryl initially taught in America, before returning home to work in a range of primary schools across Western Australia, including Norseman, North Dandalup, Swanbourne, White Gum Valley, Dalmain and Mirrabooka. With a passion for science and always looking for different ways to get through to her students to make learning fun and practical, Cheryl says there were often excursions and experiences, and 30 years on still gets stopped by families who remember her. "I would teach the curriculum using different formats that would spark their interest. If I was bored, I felt the kids were bored," Cheryl says. "I would always take students on various excursions and invite people into the classroom to expose the students to other aspects in life. I tried to build an inclusive culture with parents and encouraged them to be active in school activities, as many didn't like their own school experiences."

And while she thoroughly enjoyed her 20 years teaching younger children, while working at Dalmain Primary School an opportunity came up for Cheryl to lecture university students at ECU. While lecturing in ECU's School of Education, Cheryl completed her Masters in Education Management, where she focused on students with ADHD and parent/teacher management. After eight years lecturing in Perth, Cheryl's husband's work took the family to the United Kingdom, where she continued lecturing in universities and teaching in schools. "I did a little bit of relief teaching in Liverpool to see what the education process was like - it's tough over there, it really is," she says. "My very first day I drove out to a school, I passed quite a few cars smouldering from being set on fire."

Cheryl lectured at the University of Chester, where she wrote a program on integrating different cultures, before turning her side hustle of selling jewellery into a thriving business. "I started a company called The Jewel Shop. I set it up from our house, then had display units in florist shops and I'd do house parties, but the business grew so big that I had to leave lecturing," she says. "



I ended up selling to quite a few footballers' wives, they would come to me with a shoe and want jewellery to match. I expanded into bridal jewellery and tiaras." Eventually selling the business and returning to Perth, Cheryl's experience selling the family farm led to her taking up a career in real estate, which she has now been successfully doing for more than 18 years. "Skills I learnt in teaching has helped in running my own businesses - the planning, public speaking, thinking outside the box, thinking on your feet, managing money," Cheryl says. "Unfortunately, a lot of teachers don't think they have transferable skills - they do have skills. In a lot of other countries teaching is revered, because you're moulding the future of others."

Cheryl and her husband Ray are directors of Cheryl and Ray Oprandi and work in conjunction with Sell Lease Property (SLP), selling residential and commercial properties including in key developments such as Elizabeth Quay and Perth Hub, part of Perth City Link. "The lowest price I've sold is \$183,000 apartment in Highgate, to \$7 million in residential housing in Dalkeith, and everything in between," she says. "But what I enjoy about real estate is the people you meet." Cheryl's latest venture is a passion project, forming Independence Network. Cheryl and her business partners - husband Ray and former PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) senior partner Ross Thorpe - all have an interest in helping more people with disabilities live independently through NDIS housing. "I collaborate with builders, investors, hospitals, participants and providers to facilitate the construction of certified Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) homes, creating accessible and inclusive living spaces for individuals with disabilities," Cheryl says.

"There have been 11 homes completed in 2024 so far and 38 are on the go now, and we build for high physical support participants." A cause close to her heart due to her own disability, Cheryl says it is wonderful to see how life-changing it can be for individuals and families to have a home tailored to their specific needs. "Even the builders we work with - they all have a link somewhere with somebody with a disability." With such a varied career and no signs of slowing down, Cheryl's advice to others is simple. "Adapt. You have to be adaptable. And know your audience."

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# Student

# SHOWCASE

A selection of some of the recent stunning creative works by Pre-Service Teachers in the fields of Technologies and Art Education.



**Textiles and Clothing Education Students**  
Colouration Workshop  
Organic dye baths and Liquid Radiance Dyes



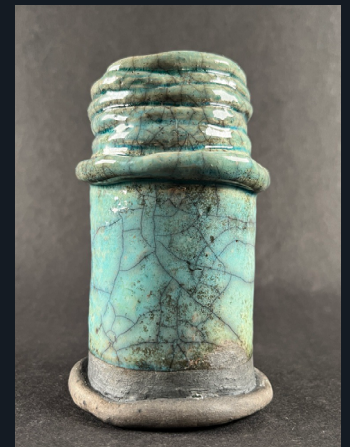
**Emily DiTrento**  
Ceramic Plate



**April Thomson**  
Ceramic Teapot



**Selene Oosthuizen**  
Ceramic Trinket Box



**Lauren Bonser**  
Ceramic Vessel




**Emma-Louise Uys**  
Ceramic Trinket Box



**Tex O'Meara**  
Ceramic Bust



**Pepper Bascombe**  
Ceramic Tea Set



ECU is committed to reconciliation and recognises the traditional custodians of the land upon which its campuses stand and their connection to this land. We acknowledge and offer our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past, present and emerging.



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