



Linking Research to the Practice of Education is a publication of the School of Education (SoE), UNE, for all educators: early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary. It introduces research, conducted by SoE staff, applicable to educational settings.

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Editorial

In our last edition of the year, we begin with an article by Dr Sally Larsen about the trend towards private (independent) schools in NSW. In the second article, Dr Somayeh Ba Akhlagh and her colleague discuss ways to be culturally responsive in the learning environment. In the third article, Victoria Norford (with supervisors Associate Professors Leonardo Veliz and Helen Harper and their colleague) discusses the importance of supporting multilingualism in the classroom and calls for participants for her PhD study. In the fourth article, Dr Sally Larsen walks us through the NAPLAN results, explaining why they are neither better nor worse than previous years. In the fifth article, PhD student Terri Swartz and her supervisor, Dr Sally Larsen, explain the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation and invite you to participate in their study. The sixth article, by Dr Casey Mainsbridge, examines the impact of the rise in teen gambling on sport. The seventh article, by Di Hansford and her colleague, explains the important link between speech and reading development. In the eighth article, Associate Jo Bird and her colleagues at Yarm Gwanga Preschool and Early Education Centre describe how they used a child-led approach to change the learning environment. In the ninth article, Kelli-Anne Price, Lauren Brocki, and Dr Alicia Phillips argue for the importance of language use to support reform in the early childhood sector. In the tenth article, Dr Adam Ren and Associate Professor Marg Rogers calls for participants for a bibliotherapy study. In the eleventh article, Master of Education student Elizabeth Theodoulou and her supervisor, Professor Huy Phan, explain the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for students' learning. In our tenth offering, we present four free, evidence-informed online resources developed by our staff for educators and families. Lastly, Amanda Burdon shares the story about an education student's journey to becoming a teacher.

Lead Editor

A/Prof. Marg Rogers
soenewsletter@une.edu.au

Assistant Editors

A/Prof. Leonardo Veliz
Dr Majida Mehana

School of Education

University of New England
Armidale, NSW, 2351
education@une.edu.au

More NSW students are going to private schools – where are they coming from?

Dr Sally Larsen | slarsen3@une.edu.au | Leadership, Pedagogy, Diversity and Inclusion

Associate Professor Emma Rowe | emma.rowe@deakin.edu.au | Deakin University

Australian families are increasingly choosing to send their children to private schools.

As of 2025, 17% of Australian students attended private (also known as independent) schools. This is up from 13% in 2006.

In comparison, the proportion of students going to public (also called government) schools dropped from 67% in 2006 to 63% in 2025. Catholic school enrolments remained steady at around 20%.

What do these shifts mean for schools? National school attendance figures can tell us about the overall population, but they may disguise different patterns in different areas.

So our [new study](#) looks at trends in New South Wales.

We wanted to better understand where students are going to school and if there are differences between type of school and location.

Our research

We looked at the proportions of NSW students attending each school sector between 2008 and 2025. We concentrated on NSW, as it educates about 30% of the national school population.

We used publicly-available data on school attendance.

NSW also covers a vast range of different geographical areas. We split up the data so we could examine patterns by four locations: major cities, inner regional areas, outer regional and remote or very remote areas.

We also examined the socioeconomic composition of schools in each sector, again split up by location. We were interested to see whether trends in the socioeconomic composition of schools changed and whether any changes differed by location.

Socioeconomic advantage is made up of a range of factors, including parents' education levels and occupations, family income and location.

More students going private

Just like the national figures, there was an overall increase in the proportion of students attending independent schools in NSW, mirrored by a decline for government schools.

In 2008, 66% of NSW students attended government schools and 15% attended independent schools. By 2025, government school attendance had declined to 62%, independent school attendance increased to 20%.

The greatest growth in independent school attendance was in inner regional areas, for example, Camden, Wagga Wagga, and Lismore. In these locations, attendance at independent schools increased by 7% since 2008. Attendance at government schools dropped by 9%.

While the largest proportion of students attending independent schools in NSW is still in major cities, inner regional areas are catching up.

In remote and very remote locations there are few independent schools. Students here mostly attend government schools (around 80%) with the remaining students attending Catholic schools.

The share of NSW private school students has increased almost 30%

Percentage of students in NSW attending government and independent schools

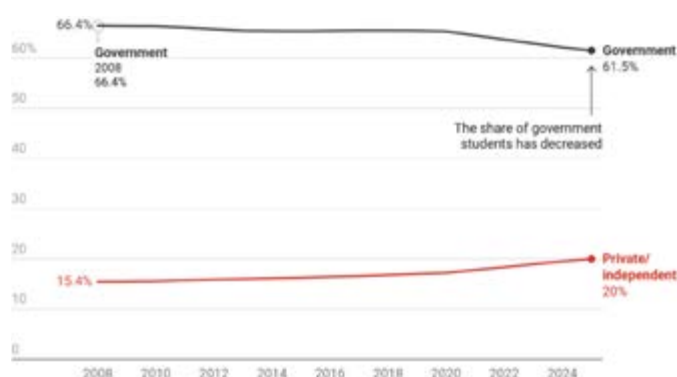


Chart: The Conversation. Source: Investigating Trends in School Socioeconomic Composition According to School Sector and Geographical Location

Data include students from major cities, inner regional and outer regional. Doesn't include remote/very remote due to lack of private/independent schools.

Location matters

School sector socioeconomic composition also differed depending on location.

On average, more advantaged students go to schools in major cities, rather than in regional, rural or remote areas. This is regardless of the sector.

This pattern could be driven by the commonly used "Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage" that we used to represent socioeconomic composition of schools. This measure includes location as one indicator of educational advantage.

Within each location, however, government schools had the lowest average socioeconomic rating, followed by Catholic schools. Independent schools educated the most advantaged students.

What's happening to public and private schools?

Our analysis showed declines in socioeconomic advantage of students attending government schools in all locations except major cities.

On average, the socioeconomic background of students in metropolitan government schools did not change much over 18 years.

The socioeconomic composition of Catholic schools also stayed relatively stable overall, though increased in remote locations.

But the overall socioeconomic composition of independent schools in major cities, inner regional and outer regional areas declined between 2012 and 2025. Declines were larger in areas outside of the cities.

This is because we are now seeing independent schools educating students from more similar backgrounds to those attending Catholic schools.

While it seems unexpected, this result makes sense if the students leaving government schools for independent schools are largely from middle-income families, attending private schools with lower fees.

The overall socio-educational background of private school students has fallen since 2012

Average index of community socio-educational advantage (ICSEA) values of NSW government and independent schools. The Australian average is 1,000 and lower values mean less advantaged backgrounds, larger values indicate higher advantaged backgrounds.

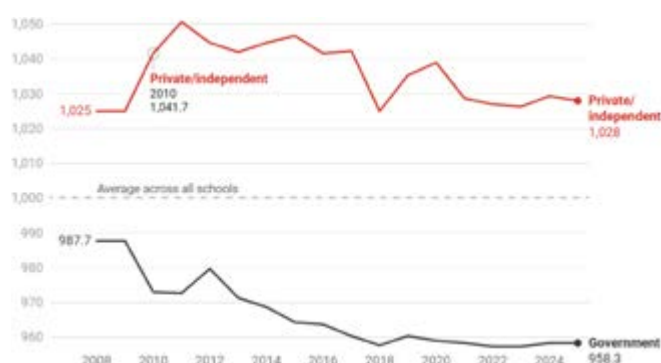


Chart: The Conversation. Source: Investigating Trends in School Socioeconomic Composition According to School Sector and Geographical Location

Data include students from major cities, inner regional and outer regional. Doesn't include remote/very remote due to lack of private/independent schools.

What does other research say?

Our results align with other Australian research, showing most government schools outside of cities are educating the most disadvantaged students in the country.

These results also show schools within each sector may not be comparable across all locations.



For example, government schools in inner Sydney will likely educate students from completely different socioeconomic backgrounds compared with government schools in Dubbo, Forbes or Moree.

What else do we need to know?

While this research provides a more detailed view of school attendance patterns around NSW, we were still limited by the type of data published by the national education reporting authority.

For example, we couldn't split up the data into high schools and primary schools. This may reveal different trends since data show students are more likely to go to private school for high school.

We also know rural and regional towns can differ greatly from each other, but they come under the same label in the Bureau of Statistics data we use. So these types of nuances are missing from our analyses.

What does this mean?

Previous research has also shown students who leave government schools are likely to be from more socioeconomically advantaged families.

In extreme cases, if many advantaged students leave some schools in favour of other schools, over time, it can lead to a system where advantaged and disadvantaged students are grouped into completely different schools.

While families of course have a right to choose what is best for their child, this can have an impact at a broader level.

There are many reasons families might choose a private school for their children. While our research cannot speak to this question, it does show us that school attendance patterns are changing in NSW. Understanding why we are seeing an increasing drift of students out of government schools and into private schools is an important next step.

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Learning cultural responsiveness from Japanese and Australian early childhood researchers

Dr Somayah Ba Akhlagh | sbaakhla@une.edu.au | Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education

Professor Maki Yamada | maki.yamada.my@sugiyama-u.ac.jp | Professor in Early Childhood Education, Sugiyama Jogakuen University

The growing number of migrant and refugee families presents challenges for host countries to provide inclusive and equitable early childhood education. This article presents research-based strategies developed through collaboration between Australian and Japanese researchers to support children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Background

Global migration and mobility have transformed early childhood education (ECE), creating increasingly diverse learning environments. These environments are shaped by varied cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, educators are required to provide inclusive and equitable learning experiences that recognise and value diversity. In response, multicultural education has evolved from a focus on race and ethnicity to a broader approach to teaching activities, skills and strategies that promote equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity. More recently, culturally sustaining teaching approaches have emphasised not only responsiveness to children's backgrounds but also the preservation and development of their cultural and linguistic identities.

Despite these advances, significant challenges remain in translating policy, theory and curriculum into effective classroom practice. Difficulties persist in building meaningful partnerships with culturally diverse families and supporting dual-language learners. Also, differences in global knowledge production continue to influence educational practice. These challenges highlight the need for culturally responsive teaching strategies and teacher education grounded in social justice and cultural competence.

Australia and Japan, both important destinations for migrant and refugee families, face differing levels of preparedness in meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children. This article presents collaboratively developed, research-informed strategies that support culturally responsive ECE and promote cross-national learning and adaptation.



Dr Ba Akhlagh reading a book about diversity for preschool children

Culturally responsive teaching strategies

Culturally responsive teaching is grounded in the principles of inclusive education to create environments where all children feel a sense of belonging, respect, and participation. Early childhood educators play a critical role in supporting children from CALD backgrounds. Educators can do this by recognising and valuing their identities, languages, and experiences.

Eight key principles underpin culturally responsive practice.

1. **Plan intentionally:** Educators should plan learning experiences based on children's interests, home cultures, and lived experiences, acknowledging the strong connection between home and educational settings.
2. **Promote collaboration:** Promoting teamwork and peer interaction through small-group activities encourages inclusion, social cohesion, and the sharing of cultural knowledge among children.
3. **Partner with families:** Strong partnerships with families are essential. Educators should actively engage families in the learning process and incorporate their knowledge, experiences, languages, and cultural practices into classroom activities.

4. **Create inclusive environments:** The classroom environment should visibly reflect diversity through inclusive books, posters, play materials, and spaces that celebrate different cultures.
5. **Value languages:** Recognising the importance of language is fundamental. Supporting heritage language maintenance and valuing multilingualism contribute to children's identity development, wellbeing, and academic success. Technology and digital tools can assist communication and language learning.
6. **Reflect critically:** Educators must critically reflect on and confront their own biases. Ongoing self-reflection and empathy help teachers challenge stereotypes and create more equitable learning environments.
7. **Celebrate diversity:** Celebrating cultural events and traditions provides opportunities for children and families to share their cultural knowledge, fostering mutual respect and understanding.
8. **Engage in professional development:** Professional development is vital in strengthening educators' capacity to implement culturally responsive practices.

Research shows that targeted training improves teachers' understanding of diversity, enhances collaboration with families, and supports the creation of more inclusive learning environments. Together, these strategies provide a practical framework for fostering equity, belonging, and cultural inclusion in early childhood settings. This helps to ensure all children's cultural and linguistic identities are recognised as valuable resources for learning and development.

Culturally responsive teaching is essential for creating inclusive early childhood education environments that support the learning, wellbeing, and sense of belonging of CALD children. In Australia, educational authorities have increasingly promoted culturally responsive practices, supported by professional development initiatives across Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australia. Feedback from participating educators suggests that the strategies presented in this article are practical and effective, with many teachers integrating them into their everyday teaching practices.



Professor Maki Yamada

Building on these positive outcomes, the strategies will be introduced to Japanese early childhood educators through professional development programs commencing in October 2026. The Australia–Japan collaboration demonstrates the value of cross-national knowledge exchange in strengthening educators' capacity to respond to cultural diversity and offers an adaptable framework for fostering more equitable and inclusive early childhood education settings internationally.

To find out more about these programs, please contact Dr Somayeh Ba Akhlagh.



“Workplace Wellbeing’ resources for early childhood professionals

In response to the educator shortages and attrition cycles in the early childhood education and care sector, the NSW Department of Education's Early Childhood Outcomes team have co-created research-based resources.

These free, online ‘Workplace Wellbeing’ resources are for educators, directors and management in the sector. They were co-created with educators, directors, management, mental health service providers, peak bodies and researchers. These include videos, webinars, case studies and other resources.

They can be used for professional development and a springboard for reflection and discussions during staff meetings.



How do you respond to multilingualism in the classroom?

Victoria Norford | PhD Candidate

Associate Professor Leonardo Veliz | lveliz@une.edu.au | Leadership, Pedagogy, Diversity and Inclusion

Associate Professor Helen Harper | hharper2@une.edu.au | Curriculum

Dr Carly Steele | Carly.Steele@curtin.edu.au | Curtin University

With increasing international movement and migration, Australia's rich cultural and linguistic diversity continues to grow. The most recent census figures show that more than half of Australia's population was born overseas or has a parent who was born overseas, and the number of people speaking a language other than English at home has now risen to 22.8% of the population ([ABS, 2022](#)).

As many teachers observe in their daily work, the growing diversity of the Australian population is increasingly reflected in the classroom.

Students' languages in the secondary school classroom

Heritage languages (also called community or home languages) are the languages other than English that students might use in family and community interactions. Along with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, heritage languages include the languages of migrant communities. The top five languages other than English spoken at home nationally are currently Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese, Cantonese and Punjabi ([ABS, 2022](#)).

With such linguistic diversity represented in Australian classrooms and no formal policy on multilingualism in education, many questions can arise in this space. What role should students' heritage languages play in education? How do secondary school teachers respond to this diversity and manage the challenge of teaching their subject content in increasingly multilingual classrooms? In the absence of guidelines, what teaching practices have emerged around multilingualism in the classroom?

New research project

To explore some of these questions, a new research project aims to understand teachers' views on student language use and the teaching practices that have emerged in response to our increasingly multilingual classrooms.

This study is part of a PhD research project with the University of New England that seeks to understand the role (if any) that heritage languages play in learning and to explore creative classroom practices.

Impact of the research

The results of this study are intended to inform teacher professional development programs and initial teacher education courses and contribute to conversations about how we support multilingual learners. In the absence of a formal policy on multilingual education in Australia, understanding how teachers are already responding to linguistic diversity is important. It can help to build more inclusive school environments where all students feel that their languages and cultures are valued.

Resources and classroom strategies for multilingual learners

At the end of the research survey, teachers can request examples of free, research-based resources and classroom strategies for multilingual learners, which will be sent by email at the end of the project. There is also an option in the survey for teachers to enter their email address to be kept up to date as results from this study become available.

Gift vouchers for research participants

Teachers who complete the survey can choose to enter a lucky draw to win one of five \$20 gift vouchers. Those who choose to participate in further stages of the project (an online statement sort activity and an optional brief Zoom interview) also have the chance to receive another \$20 gift voucher as a thank you for successfully completing the interview.

Your insights matter

If you teach in an Australian secondary school, please share your voice and valuable experiences in this new national research project on classroom language use. This quick 10-minute survey is open to teachers in all secondary schools around Australia (including government, Catholic and independent schools). Please [click on the link](#) or scan the QR code to participate.





Do you teach in an Australian secondary school?

We're interested in hearing about your classroom language practices and your views on students' heritage languages.

Heritage languages might also be called home languages or community languages.

These are the languages other than English that students may use when they are interacting with their family or community. Even if you teach in a school with few students from diverse backgrounds, we are interested in hearing from you.

This online survey should take less than ten minutes.



[Take the survey here](#)

What is the project about?

This project aims to explore teachers' classroom language practices and views on students' heritage languages. This project is being conducted by Victoria Norford as part of her PhD research at the University of New England.

What are the benefits of the project?

Your input will provide important data, helping us understand teachers' classroom language practices and views on students' heritage languages.

Participants have the option to enter a lucky draw to win one of five \$20 gift vouchers.

This study has received University ethics approval (reference number: HE-2026-2550-5076)

Enquiries to Victoria Norford: vnorford@myune.edu.au

School of Education
University of New England
Armidale, NSW, 2351, Australia

une
University of
New England

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The biggest news from NAPLAN 2026?

The results aren't really better or worse

Dr Sally Larsen | slarsen3@une.edu.au | Leadership, Pedagogy, Diversity and Inclusion

National NAPLAN results for 2026 are released today (mid-July). This is the test of Australian students' literacy and numeracy skills in years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (which runs the test) has pointed to a "concerning" drop in Year 3 numeracy. It has hailed "signs of improvement" for other year levels in maths. It also reports that average reading scores in Years 5, 7 and 9 are lower than in 2025.

But the most remarkable takeaway from this year's NAPLAN? None of the results are really any better or worse than those recorded since the NAPLAN scale was reset in 2023. What is going on?

Tricky statistics

Each result in 2026 is close to all other results in recent years.

When we track groups of students going through school, all the small differences in averages between 2023, 2024, 2025 or 2026 are (according to the definition provided by the testing authority) "negligible in size".

Given it is easier to find statistically significant group differences in large samples, no significant differences between any cohorts since 2023 is really remarkable.

What are the trends?

Graphs presenting NAPLAN results inevitably show trends that are likely to be misinterpreted in public analysis of the tests.

For example, numeracy scores for Years 5 and 7 have trended upwards since 2023. But the improvements of 6.1 and 9.5 scale scores (respectively) are small, given the scale spans from 1 to 1,000.

Year 3 numeracy scores have trended downwards, but this difference is even smaller, at 4.7 scale scores.

Reading outcomes in Year 3 have remained very stable, with those for Year 5 trending downwards – a reduction of 8.4 scale scores. Again, this is negligible in size. Reading scores for Years 7 and 9 have barely shifted, with 2026 results within 5 scale scores of those between 2023 and 2025.

These results for reading may appear surprising considering changes in the way early reading is taught, currently being rolled out around the country.

It is possible a test like NAPLAN is not precise enough to pick up the changes in students' progress that may come as a result of teaching changes. On top of this, NAPLAN only assesses a narrow range of academic skills. NAPLAN may not be testing the relevant skills or abilities that show other improvements.

NAPLAN Numeracy scores

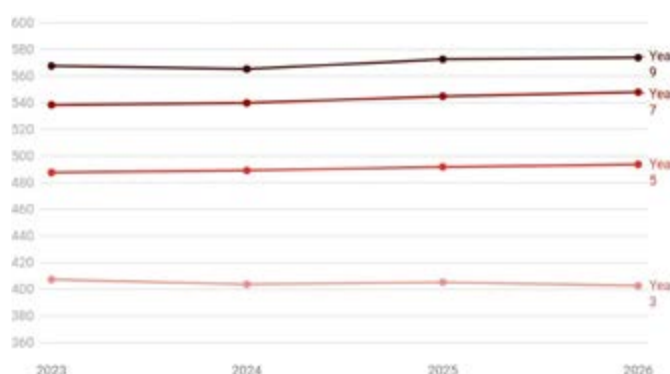


Chart: The Conversation. Source: ACARA - NAPLAN

Tracking progress

One of the key goals of NAPLAN is to better monitor and track student progress. This is often overlooked in public reporting which tends to focus on average scores or proportions of students falling into proficiency bands.

NAPLAN Writing scores

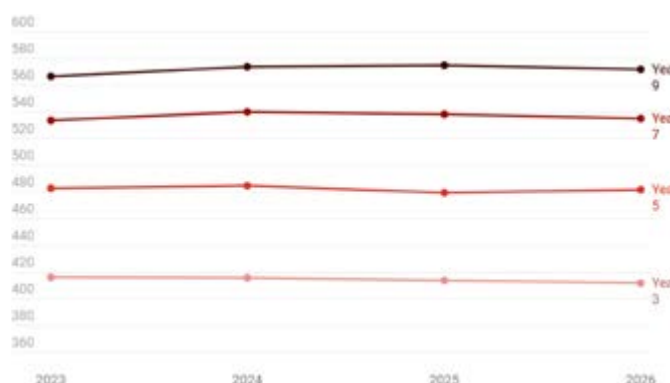


Chart: The Conversation. Source: ACARA - NAPLAN

Unlike school-based assessments, which typically focus on students' attainment within a year level or curriculum stage, NAPLAN tests were specially designed to measure progress over several years – for example, to look at how much Year 5 students progressed from Year 3 in writing skills.

NAPLAN data therefore allows a good picture of typical developmental patterns. Rather than interpreting each year's results in isolation, schools can use longitudinal data to identify where students are not making expected gains.



NAPLAN Reading scores

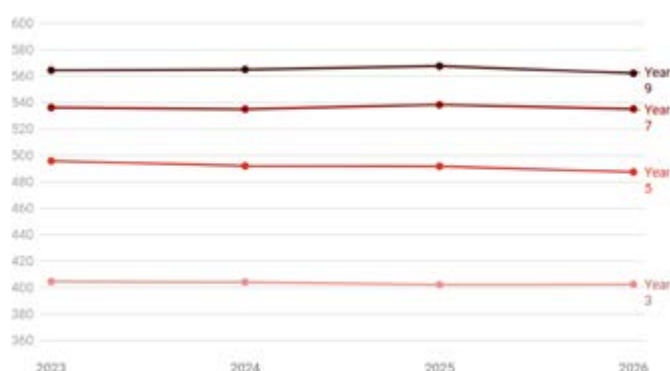


Chart: *The Conversation*. Source: ACARA - NAPLAN

Progress and proficiency bands

Another way to think about progress is to look at proportions of students in each of the [four proficiency bands](#).

When the NAPLAN tests were revised in 2023, the [reporting scale was reset](#). Now parents and schools receive information about students' achievement in one of four bands: "needs additional support", "developing", "strong" and "exceeding".

A great deal of attention is focused on the proportions of students in the bottom two bands. About 30% of students are in these two bands each year, with some variability between states and territories.

This year's data shows the same pattern across the four tested grades at the national level, with some small differences depending on different demographic groups. But this does not mean 30% of students are "failing", [as is often reported](#).

Less attention is paid to whether and how students in each proficiency band make progress from one test to the next.

If students fall into the "developing" proficiency band, this means "the student's result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing". Since the tests take place at the beginning of the school year, students will continue to work towards expectations as they progress through the year. With the right support, these students will continue to improve.

The reality is most students make progress on NAPLAN tests over time. My own research has shown students with the poorest performance in Year 3 make the largest gains in both reading and numeracy by the time they reach Year 9. It is worth noting the cut-off scores used to create the bands increase from one year level to the next, representing the increased expectations as children move through school.

A student in the "needs additional support" band in Year 3, and again in Year 5 will usually have made progress across the two years.

No surprises, but still useful

It is likely teachers and principals will already be aware of which students [need additional support](#). A key part of teachers' everyday work is to monitor students' progress. So NAPLAN results may provide confirmation for schools about students' achievement rather than surprises.

That said, tracking all students' progress is important for ensuring they are continually supported and don't get "lost" in the system.

This may happen especially as students move from [primary to high school](#). Better use of longitudinal NAPLAN data could help schools identify students who will likely need extra help as they start high school. For example, better monitoring of kids struggling in Year 5 could help secondary school teachers design and implement more targeted supports when students arrive in Year 7.

NAPLAN going forward

There will likely be media reports about the new results claiming students' literacy and numeracy skills are not ["meeting expectations"](#).

But careful examination of the 2026 data does not support this interpretation. It also detracts from the useful information we can learn about where students are up to with literacy and numeracy.

This article was originally published in [The Conversation](#) and is published here under a [Creative Commons Licence](#). Read the original article [here](#).



What do NSW teachers really think about HALT accreditation?

Terri Swartz | tswartz@une.edu.au | PhD Candidate

Dr Sally Larsen | slarsen3@une.edu.au | Leadership, Pedagogy, Diversity and Inclusion

Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation is designed to recognise and reward teachers whose practice goes beyond the Proficient level. In this article, we explore why so few teachers have pursued HALT and invite NSW teachers to share their perspectives.

Background

Most discussions about HALT focus on teachers who have completed it. We know far less about why the majority have not pursued it. I rarely encounter colleagues who have considered HALT accreditation. That gap between the policy's ambition and the teachers' reality is what drew me to this research.

Have you considered pursuing Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher accreditation?

Or have you decided it is not for you? Despite the NSW Education Standards Authority's (NESA) overhaul of the HALT application process, the NSW target of 2,500 HALTs remains well short at 532. This reflects a similar gulf in the national target of 10,000 HALTs versus the current reality of 2,263.

Whether you have looked into it and decided it is not for you, or never given it a second thought, your perspective matters.

As part of my PhD research at UNE, supervised by Dr Sally Larsen, I am exploring what helps and what hinders teachers when it comes to HALT accreditation.

I want to hear from teachers who have never considered HALT, just as much as those who have.

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

**Are you a teacher in NSW?
We want to hear from you!**

This short, anonymous survey is part of PhD research exploring what helps and what hinders when teachers consider applying for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation.


 UNE
University of
New England

It takes 5-10 minutes to complete.

Completely anonymous. No identifying data collected.
Help inform future support for teachers across NSW.

Teachers at all career stages are welcome - even if you have never considered HALT.

Scan the QR code or visit the link below

https://unesurveys.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5dt5pRSIOGq6a2

Thank you for supporting teacher research.

Researchers: Terri Swartz (PhD Candidate) & Dr Sally Larsen (Supervisor), UNE School of Education



This study has UNE HREC approval (Approval No. HE-2025-2438-3443).

Your invitation to participate

All current and recent (within the last 5 years) NSW teachers, from any sector, are invited to complete a short, anonymous online survey.

Time commitment: 5-10 minutes.

Anonymous: No personal data will be collected.
All responses are completely confidential.

Ethics: The study is independent of all school employers and has been approved by the University of New England Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval No. HE-2025-2438-3443).

Your experiences can help shape how we understand and support the teaching profession in NSW.

If you are a current or recent NSW teacher, what would need to change for HALT accreditation to feel worthwhile to you?



The rise of teenage gambling in Australia and its impact on sport

Dr Casey Mainsbridge | cmainsbr@une.edu.au | Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

Recently, the Australian Institute reported that Australians gamble more than any other nation in the world, showing that gambling behaviour starts well before the age of 18. In this article, I provide some background on gambling in Australia, explore the new reforms, and reflect on how teenage gambling has unintentionally impacted sport.

Background

Almost one in three 12–17-year-olds gamble before they are legally old enough to do so, with numbers increasing from 30% to 46% of 18–19-year-olds who reported gambling in the past year. The health consequences of gambling, such as mental health disorders, behavioural changes, and decreased self-esteem, can be widespread and significant at individual, family, and community levels.

New evidence suggests that Australian teenagers are more likely to gamble than to play sport. The number of 18–19-year-olds who gamble each year is about twice the number who play soccer, Australian rules football, and cricket combined. In addition, Table 1 shows 12-to 19-year-olds' participation in Australia in 2025 in soccer, basketball, and gambling. These numbers indicate that twice as many 12–19-year-olds participate in gambling compared to playing basketball.

Activity in 2025	Participation Numbers
Soccer for 12–19-year-olds	484,490
Basketball for 12–19-year-olds	439,773
Gambling for 12–19-year-olds	902,717

Table 1: 2025 National participation rates for 12–19-year-olds

In 2026, a three-part documentary presented by well-known Australian Shaun Micallef highlighted that gambling is established in Australian culture and has become standard behaviour for many. This culture has developed through connections between gambling and horse racing, a variety of sports and sports clubs, pubs, and community life. In recent years, this has grown to include online betting platforms, marketing strategies and advertising, and sports-betting promotions.

Of concern is that gambling is no longer viewed as a recreational pastime but rather a multi-billion-dollar industry, with deliberate advertising aimed at young Australians encouraging frequent gambling despite the health, social, environmental consequences, and economic impacts.

For example, social factors that influence teenage gambling include both parental gambling behaviour and peer gambling behaviours, with environmental factors including access to gambling opportunities, different forms of gambling advertising, and simulated gambling through technology-based games. Health, social, and economic impacts can lead to a range of psychological effects, including impulsivity, emotional issues, behavioural problems, and a lack of stability when coping with stress. Being exposed to situations where these psychological effects occur consistently during teenage years increases the chances that these problems continue into adulthood, potentially leading to addiction.

Many Australian teenagers believe that sports betting is a natural element of the sporting experience, with broad marketing making young people view gambling as a core aspect of modern sports culture.

The new reforms

In response to the rapid growth in teenage gambling, in 2026 the Australian Government legislated reforms that restrict gambling advertising on television to a maximum of three advertisements each hour between 6:00am and 8:30pm. They banned gambling advertisements through online platforms, unless people have a logged-in account or are over 18. In addition, the Commonwealth's 2023 Inquiry into Online Gambling and its Impacts on Those Experiencing Gambling Harm recommends numerous policies to reduce Australia's gambling problem.

Despite these approaches, little is known about the reasons why teenagers gamble and the motivations behind gambling's power in Australia. One perspective that has not been considered is that for many teenagers, gambling is a sport in their eyes. This concept involves finding out about the teams or athletes who are taking part in a contest, learning about their performances, and taking the challenge of deciding who might win or about something that might occur during the contest. This challenge requires effort in the form of thinking, investment by making a bet, excitement towards what a potential outcome might be, and the incentive of winning money.

In an Australian study exploring the influences of gambling during youth, sports betting became an increasing focus during early teenage years, often beginning with football tipping competitions and informal betting with family and friends. Young people reported a sense of achievement and skill when they had success with betting and enjoyed the rivalry that the betting competition created. Young people also reported increased interest in sports, sports betting, and a growing understanding of betting odds, paying greater attention to sports betting advertisements.

The unintended consequences

While gambling rates in Australia have continued to rise, this trend has been mirrored by national decreases in both participation in organised sport and physical activity. This is reflected in the 2022 Australian Physical Activity Report Card, where Australian children and young people were graded a D- for physical activity levels and screen time. The Australian Sports Commission's 2025 Participation Picture Report indicates that Australians are choosing to develop new methods beyond organised sport for health benefits. These include outdoors in parks, at the beach, or a fitness facility. The report suggests that more Australians are choosing activities that allow individual freedom and involve few rules and regulations, prompting traditionally popular sports to develop innovative ways to encourage participation, particularly among teenagers.

With modern-day technological conveniences directly impacting population health, sedentary habits, and access to gambling information, the relationship between these factors and the behaviours they lead to needs further research. Such a study may lead to an improved understanding of why gambling is increasing among Australian teenagers, identify opportunities to provide education on valuing money, and provide timely reminders of the multiple benefits of regular participation in sport and physical activity. In addition, resources for gambling education and gambling support for young people can be found at Gamble Aware and Gambling Helpline.



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If you can't say it, you can't read it!

Diane Hansford | Diane.Hansford@une.edu.au | Lecturer in English, Literacies and Language

Jennifer Kompara-Tosio | jkompara@myune.edu.au | PhD Candidate | Casual Lecturer

Experts tell us that children's language experiences before coming to school have a significant influence on their literacy development. In this article, we discuss the importance of oral language, then use a case study to illustrate these processes, before exploring some of the strategies to support communication and literacy.

Oral language is foundational

Oral language is so important for communication development that students who cannot hear and use the language patterns found in texts cannot recognise them and therefore struggle to understand. Where students' home language differs from Standard Australian English, it is the teacher's job to fill that gap and make connections in the classroom environment.

Children whose home language and experiences are more like the language of school, come to school already privileged by the many hours of interaction they have engaged in with their literate parents. Children, with possibly university-educated, language-rich parents, enter school with a significant understanding of the grammatical (*syntactic*) structures and academic technical language that they will meet in school.

Case study

To illustrate this, we now focus on Josie, who is a preschooler. Josie is well ahead of what would normally be expected for when she enters kindergarten. She already understands the alphabetic principle as evidenced in her writing samples. She understands the connection between the letters (graphemes) and individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken language, and she is beginning to demonstrate this in her writing.

In Figure 1, at four years, 3 months old, Josie demonstrates quite well-developed phonemic awareness and sounds out words to create meaningful text. Her self-initiated note to her mother says "I ned mor plems (I need more plums)".

In Figure 2, at four years, 8 months old, Josie knows the spoken sounds in k/a/t (cat); b/a/n/y (bunny) and t/a/d/e (Teddy).



Figure 1: Josie's image at 4 years, 3 months old



Figure 2: Josie's image at 4 years, 8 months old

She can spell her name with a reversal of the first letter, J/o/s/i/e. She uses capital letters and understands directionality, as her writing flows from left to right. Josie is already beginning to read and write. Josie's parents have prepared her well for her next phase of schooling.

The importance of collective meaning-making

Comprehension difficulties often appear in middle to upper primary and in secondary school. These difficulties require the teacher to spend considerable time engaging students in complex subject-specific texts. Teachers need to support students' reading of these texts by ensuring that their oral exposure to the language of the text is adequate to the task. Because oral language is an essential prerequisite to reading comprehension, students who cannot hear and use language patterns will not recognise them in text.

Sentence-level unpacking, correct modelling of stress and phrasing, and providing time for structured oral rehearsals can enable students to access complex texts and discuss them with greater confidence. We argue that meaningful texts should be introduced in the early years by providing rich text experiences using both fiction and non-fiction texts. Research suggests that students in the early years who engage with non-fiction texts develop strong vocabularies to deal with school disciplines such as those found in history and geography.

Setting the context: Building the knowledge of the field

There comes a point in primary schools, from Years 3 - 5, where the language students encounter is language not used or heard in the earlier years of schooling, nor is it part of most children's everyday language spoken at home. For example, texts around European settlement of Australia, in all probability, include language that has not been used at home, such as the history terminology about the Australian colonies. This can include words such as settlement, inhabitants, colony, conflict, exploration, occupation and so on. This vocabulary, and the structure of historical recounts, is found in the NSW Stage 3 HSIE Syllabus. This highlights the need for teachers to spend time building knowledge of the field of topics found in Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) texts that are used.

The following teaching and learning cycle provides some details about how teachers build the language needed and students' understanding of the text types they will encounter in the upper primary and secondary years of schooling (Figure 3).

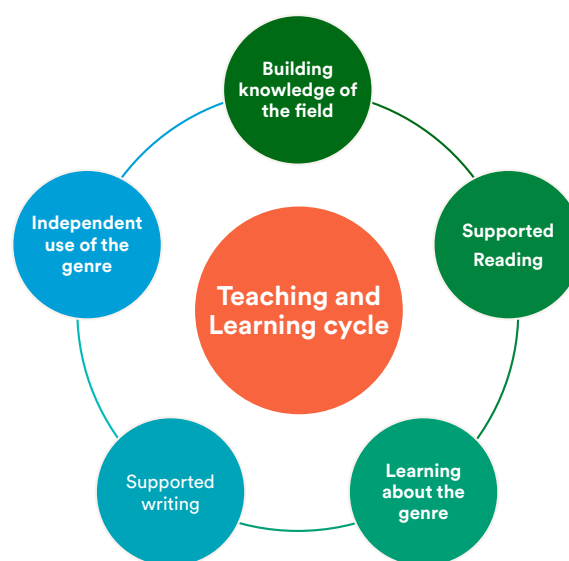


Figure 3: Basic curriculum cycle example (Adapted from: Derewianka, 2026)

Dialogic teaching: Developing a risk-taking culture

Our focus here is on oral language and the way that a dialogic classroom can encourage and develop children's language and comprehension of texts. During our teaching, we need to be aware that we are not inadvertently putting our students to the test. The following phrases are helpful for students to hear.

“Students can try ideas without fear”, “We can change our minds”, and “Mistakes help thinking”

The well-known television image of a teacher firing questions at the class, searching for correct answers, is the opposite of what dialogic teaching is all about. The important thing here is that teachers' questioning techniques need to be nuanced, sensitive to progress and always affirming student contributions.

This will ensure that student voices are valued, self-esteem is enhanced, and students can try ideas without fear and anxiety. Therefore, classroom teachers should demonstrate teacher-to-student dialogue in order to encourage student-to-student and student-to-teacher dialogue to ensure the development of collective meaning-making that supports literacy.

The five principles of dialogic teaching below set out the key ideas for teachers to follow (Table 1).

Collective	The class learns together - Use shared enquiry: “What are we trying to understand?”
Reciprocal	Students listen and respond to each other - Require students to build on, question, or rephrase a peer's idea
Supportive	Students can try ideas without fear - Establish norms: “We can change our minds”; and “Mistakes help thinking”
Cumulative	Ideas build into a line of reasoning - Keep returning to prior contributions: “How does that connect to what Mia said?”
Purposeful	Talk serves learning goals - Make the talk goal explicit: “Today we are using talk to justify our interpretation”

Table 1: The five principles of dialogic teaching (Adapted from: Alexander, 2018)

Conclusion

Not all children come to school with the learning foundations evident in Josie's writing. She has a well-developed vocabulary and has been read to regularly for most of her life. These language skills underpin her now visible writing practice. Many children, however, come from language backgrounds that differ from Standard Australian English. When this is the case, the starting point for the teacher is to support the ongoing development of extensive oral language through classroom experiences including regular reading and discussion while using Dialogic Teaching Principles. This applies throughout all the years of schooling.

This approach, in conjunction with the appropriately staged application of the Teaching Learning Cycle, will maximise language development, support success and confidence for all students and lead to more equitable outcomes. Josie illustrates what extensive oral interaction can make possible. Schools must deliberately provide comparable opportunities for children who have not had the same range of language experiences before entering school.

Transforming learning spaces using a child-centred lens

Jo Stewart | jprice3@une.edu.au | Yarm Gwanga Preschool & Early Education Centre

Abbey Lawlor | alawlor3@une.edu.au | Yarm Gwanga Preschool & Early Education Centre

Galia Urquhart | gurquhar@une.edu.au | Yarm Gwanga Preschool & Early Education Centre

Associate Professor Jo Bird | jbird21@une.edu.au | Early Childhood Education

In our early learning service, our two-to five-year-old learning environments and excursions were strictly defined by age. This often ignored social connections and natural peer mentorship that thrive in a mixed-age setting. In this article, we report on the way we transformed the learning spaces using a child-centred lens.

Background

Our early childhood education and care service, Yarm Gwanga, is situated on the grounds of the University of New England. It caters for 56 children from babies to school-aged each day, with 73 families as part of the Yarm community. The centre is made up of four rooms – babies, toddlers, kindy and preschoolers. However, Jo and Abbey, the lead educators in the kindy and preschool rooms, who are about to finish their UNE early childhood teaching degrees, decided the current setup was not working for the children and educators.

Giving children more autonomy encouraged educators to reflect on the way things had always been done and sparked a desire for change. Previously, children were grouped by age and followed fixed routines, with little flexibility to respond to their individual needs and rhythms. Yarm Gwanga operated under a model where ‘everyone moved together’—whether transitioning inside, outside, or to meals—which frequently stifled child agency and limited choices around fundamental needs, like sleep and relaxation.

Logistics often took precedence over learning; we were caught in a cycle of packing up learning spaces for lunch and managing supervision hurdles within our multi-tiered playground, that prevented a true indoor-outdoor flow. Even the weather and physical layout dictated what happened, and sometimes children were separated from friends and siblings during mealtimes simply because their ‘room’ went in for lunch.

Ultimately, we realised our days were being shaped by routines rather than the deep, relational engagement we value. By moving away from these age-based restrictions, we have embraced a slow pedagogy, which encourages calm, unhurried daily routines that leave space for curiosity, care, and being present in the moment. Pedagogy is the method and practice of teaching. Slow pedagogy prioritises relationships and creates a more equitable, connected landscape for the children and educators.

The Change



Figure 1: Every item from the two rooms outside during the change



Figures 2-4: The Arthouse



Figures 5-6: The Sanctuary

A day in redesigned preschool spaces

At 8:00 am, the doors open, and the space offers children autonomy to choose how they start their day. By 9:30 am, with the full team present, all play spaces open, and morning tea set, children come to the table as their bodies dictate, honouring hunger cues over fixed schedules.

The morning thrives on exploration. In 'The Sanctuary' (previous 3-5 space), children sit with an educator engaged in conversation. Another child has retreated from the busy outdoors to find calm and quiet in the sensory swing. 'The Arthouse', (previous 2-3 space), is now transformed into a world of inquiry. Stepping over sprawling train tracks, the sound of educators scaffolding ideas without overtaking is heard. At the hot glue gun table, a five-year-old teaches a two-year-old: "Don't touch this bit, it's hot." This is peer-led learning in action.

In the top playground, energy shifts as children chase siblings through a thoroughfare of bikes and pedestrians. Every child has the space and agency to lead their own unique day.

As lunch approaches, the rhythm shifts with intention. The group splits, allowing for a tailored experience.

Our younger 'Magpies' head to lunch, while the older children engage in collaborative learning. Lunch is a time to come together, discuss the day's discoveries, and plan, before continuing to engage in self-chosen play for the afternoon. Any child requiring sleep heads to 'The Sanctuary,' while those who self-manage their rest, continue to explore.

Educators move through spaces following children's play, meeting supervision requirements. While each group has key educators as primary points of contact, the entire team is responsive to every child. This collaborative approach ensures individual needs are met, maintaining the collective rhythm of a thriving, child-led community.

Nurturing change through collective reflection

The redesign of our spaces was rooted in a deep, unwavering commitment to critical reflection and a collaborative process. Jo and Abbey knew that for change to last, it needed to build on the strengths and ideas of the whole team.

This meant not just acknowledging but actively celebrating our diverse team. Educators with varying qualifications, extensive experiences, and diverse perspectives were crucial in enriching discussions, challenging preconceived ideas, and ultimately, shaping innovative concepts for the new environments. This initial phase of collective self-reflection, where every voice was valued, laid the foundation for the 'professional bravery' required to move beyond traditional structures.

The redesign was a cyclic process of constantly gathering feedback from children, families, and staff, and then adapting practices. For example, the 'About Me' forms moved from standard data collection to a collaborative tool to gather richer information about children's individual needs, interests and family context.

There was no predetermined vision. Instead, ongoing discussions, embracing flexible processes, refining our teaching approach, and importantly, building deeper relationships with families as we reshaped our spaces and practices, ensured the redesign reflected the needs of the Yarm Gwanga community.

Where to from here?

The redesign has been an ongoing journey, shaped by more than twelve months of implementing changes, reflecting on what works, and making further improvements. Educators, children, and families continue to share their perspectives, helping to guide the process. Preschoolers now regularly visit the babies' room, showing care and respect while building relationships and strengthening siblings' sense of belonging.

As the service continues to evolve, younger children are naturally accessing learning experiences that were once only available to the preschool group.



Why words matter in early childhood reform

Kelli-Anne Price | kprice32@une.edu.au | Casual Academic in Early Childhood Education

Lauren Brocki | lbrocki@une.edu.au | Lecturer in Early Childhood Education

Alicia Phillips | aphill54@une.edu.au | Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education

Australian early childhood education and care (ECEC) is at a turning point. Workforce shortages, child safety concerns and growing public expectations have created an urgent need for change. In this article, we explore how language can shape the much-needed reforms to improve the sector.

Background

Workforce shortages, child safety concerns, rising operational costs and fees, and increasing public scrutiny formed the backdrop to the National ECEC Summit held earlier this year. More than 1,500 educators, researchers, union representatives, service leaders and advocates came together to identify ten demands spanning workforce conditions, professional recognition and public understanding of ECEC. Together, these priorities recognised that the ECEC workforce needs stronger support to meet growing expectations. Yet, while many of these challenges are well recognised, our recent research reveals that the language used to describe ECEC is itself a powerful, though often overlooked, driver of reform.

Why language matters

Policy is shaped not only through legislation and funding, but also through the language used to define problems and propose solutions. The words used by governments, policymakers and the media influence how the public understands ECEC. Language also influences where and upon whom responsibility is placed and which reforms appear both necessary and achievable.

We examined political speeches, ministerial communications and media releases to understand how governments talk about early childhood education. Rather than asking what governments do, we asked how they talk about the profession.

Three recurring patterns emerged.

1. Educators are often framed as “childcare workers”

Across political communications, educators were frequently described as “childcare workers”, collapsing the complex knowledge, theory and practice of teaching into a single idea of care. While care is central to early childhood education, this language can obscure educators’ professional knowledge and expertise. They are teachers, curriculum designers, advocates and professionals responsible for children’s learning, development and wellbeing.

How a profession is described influences how it is valued. When early childhood education is framed primarily as childcare, policy debates naturally prioritise affordability and supervision over the quality education, professional expertise, and workforce development.

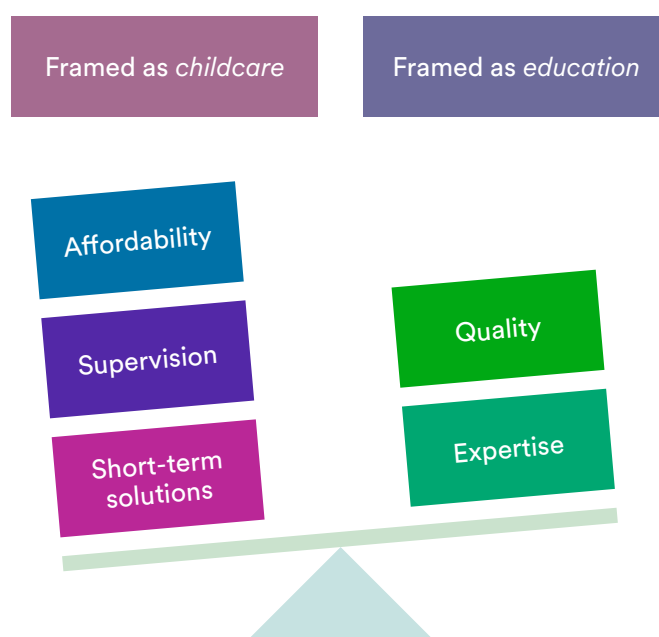


Figure 1: How language shapes policy priorities in early childhood education

2. Safeguarding is framed as individual vigilance

A second pattern concerned child safety. Political language frequently positioned safeguarding as a matter of educators identifying risks or "spotting predators", placing responsibility primarily on individual vigilance.

Recent [safeguarding research](#) offers a broader way of understanding child protection. This wider work on safeguarding reform shows that keeping children safe depends not only on individual educators but also on the organisational cultures, professional preparation, relationships and regulatory systems that support safe practice.

This distinction matters because language shapes where responsibility is placed. When safeguarding is framed primarily as an individual responsibility, broader conversations about organisational leadership, regulatory systems and professional support can become less visible.

3. Workforce investment is framed as generosity

Political announcements frequently described funding initiatives as government "pay rises" or "support for educators". While important, this framing can present workforce funding as generosity rather than long-term investment in a skilled profession facing persistent workforce shortages.

This reflects a broader pattern of framing systemic challenges as issues that individual educators are expected to solve. For example, in an earlier volume of this [newsletter](#), Phillips and Brocki (2025) argued that many of the sector's challenges arise from structural conditions and policy settings rather than the actions of individual educators.

Whether examining [workforce reform](#), safeguarding or professional recognition, responsibility is often located with individual educators rather than the structural conditions in which they work.

Looking beyond individual responsibility

The National ECEC Summit highlighted the sector's desire for systemic change. Calls for improved working conditions, stronger regulation, better educator preparation, and greater professional recognition were not simply requests for new policies; they were also challenges to how early childhood education is understood and represented.

Across our research on political language, safeguarding and workforce reform, a consistent message has emerged: many challenges facing early childhood education are framed as problems of individual responsibility when they are, in reality, systemic issues. Sustainable improvement depends on recognising early childhood education as a profession supported by strong systems, not one sustained by the efforts of individual educators alone.

Linking research to practice

For educators, this research study offers an important reminder that advocacy is not only about proposing better policies. It is also about shaping the conversations that surround the profession. The language used by governments, policymakers, the media and the broader community influences whose expertise is recognised, how responsibility is allocated and which policy solutions become politically possible.

The National ECEC Summit demonstrated that the sector has a shared vision for reform. Achieving that vision will require more than a change in legislation. It also requires changing how early childhood education is discussed. If language helps determine which problems become visible, it also shapes the solutions that governments and the wider community are prepared to support.



Does bibliotherapy actually work? Call for participants

Associate Professor Marg Rogers | marg.rogers@une.edu.au | Early Childhood Education

Dr Adam Ren | adam.ren@une.edu.au | Early Childhood Education



WE NEED YOU!

What's in it for you?

Parents get a \$50 AUD gift card, and each child gets a \$25 AUD gift card for completing the study. You can keep the storybook/s we provide.

01 STORYBOOK STUDY

Testing whether children's storybooks help children (3-11 years) in military, veteran and first responder families.

PARENTS

02 CAN STORIES HELP?

Can storybooks support children to understand what is happening in their family?

WITH

03 COPING STRATEGIES

Can storybooks support children in building their coping strategies to deal with deployment, training, relocation, or parents' injuries?

CHILDREN

Child and Family Resilience Programs

Bibliotherapy is supporting someone socially and emotionally through shared reading and related activities.

We're inviting parents from service families (Defence/military, veterans and first responders) and their children (3-11 years) in Australia, Canada and the UK to be involved in a bibliotherapy (storybook sharing) study.

While we get great feedback about our free storybooks made with and for people from service families, we also want to know if they work.

Attention Defence, veteran and first responder families and those who support them!

The study will involve:

- filling in a 10-minute registration survey
- reading a storybook with a child and doing some related activities over a month
- completing two online surveys and asking your child some questions (that we will provide)
- Click the link below to find out more and register your interest in being a participant!

Expression of Interest can be made here: <https://bit.ly/4vIbEHn>

Thank you for supporting children from service families!

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No. HE-2026-2923-6346).





A contemporary examination of the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in student learning

Elizabeth Theodoulou | elizabeth.theodoulou@education.vic.gov.au | Master of Neuroscience and Education candidate

Professor Huy P. Phan | hphan2@une.edu.au | Educational Psychology, Teaching & Learning

Motivation is central to educational psychology because it influences choices, behaviour and learning outcomes. This article discusses the nature of two fundamental motivational types, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and reviews contextual and cultural influences on the learner. It also presents limitations in the current research and suggests long-term studies to increase educators' knowledge to improve student learning outcomes.

Motivation

Two types of motivation we talk about in educational psychology include intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Both are widely recognised as the two primary forms guiding human behaviour and contribute meaningfully to student engagement and achievement. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) positions autonomy, competence and relatedness as core needs that drive motivated behaviour. We define these three terms as:

1. Autonomy – the capacity to make independent decisions,
2. Competence – the ability to do something effectively or efficiently, and
3. Relatedness – the state or degree of being connected or associated.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Early behaviourist theorists thought about motivation as a response to external reinforcement. That is, individuals are influenced by reinforcers of their behaviour within their environment. However, it has been argued that individuals have an intrinsic drive towards competence that cannot be explained solely through rewards or punishment. This claim laid important groundwork for later theories of intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in tasks for inherent satisfaction rather than external incentives. Intrinsic motivation flourishes when individuals experience autonomy, competence and relatedness. It is strongly associated with the concept of "flow," a state of deep absorption occurring when tasks match an individual's skills and interests. Research demonstrates that intrinsically motivated learners are more persistent, display deeper engagement, and pursue mastery.

Extrinsic motivation, by contrast, involves performing activities to obtain external rewards or avoid negative consequences. These rewards may be tangible, such as certificates, or intangible, such as verbal praise. Within SDT, extrinsic motivation is thought of as a continuum ranging from controlled to integrated regulation, indicating the extent to which external values become internalised.

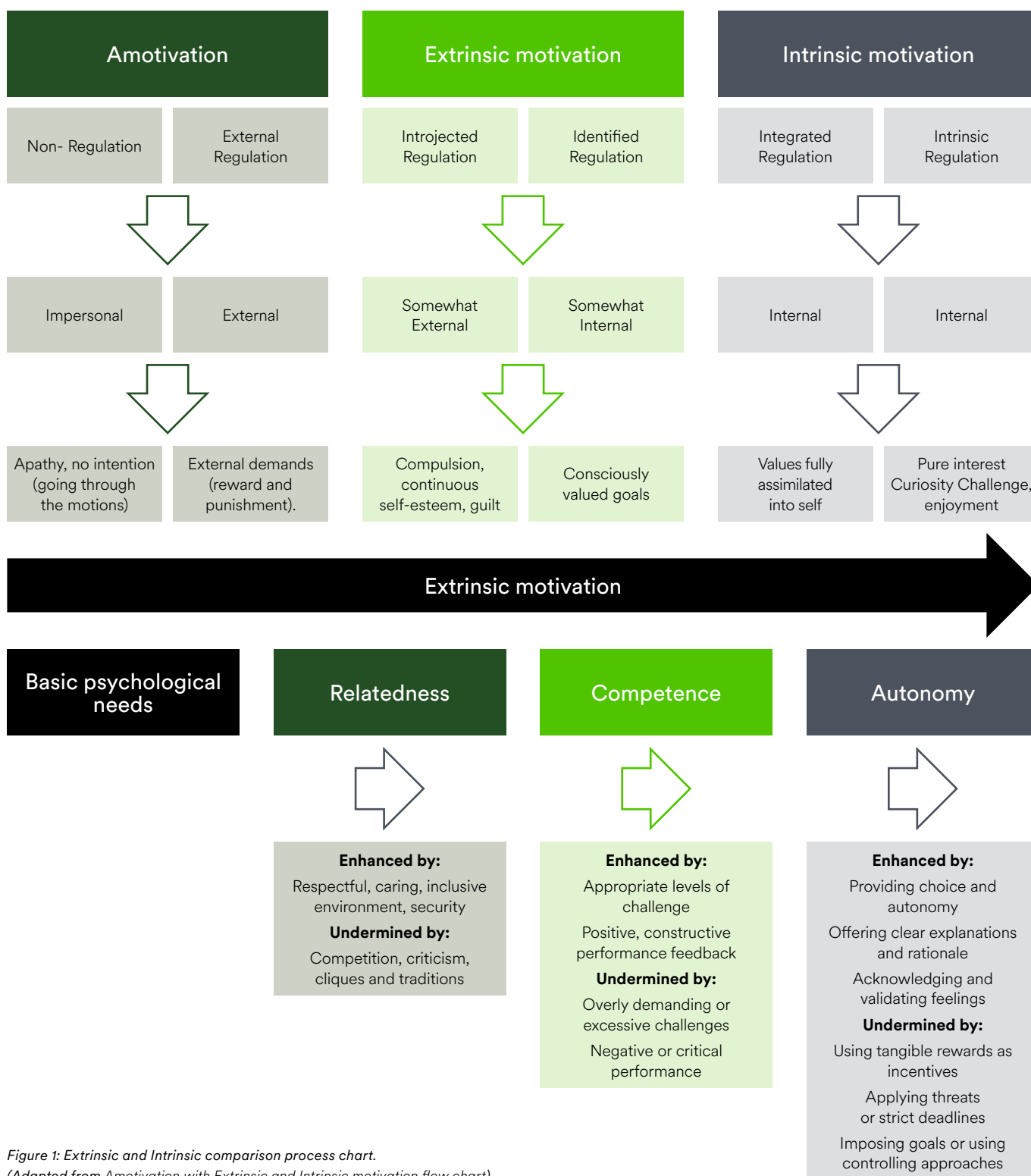


Figure 1: Extrinsic and Intrinsic comparison process chart.
(Adapted from *Amotivation with Extrinsic and Intrinsic motivation flow chart*)

While extrinsic incentives can effectively start engagement, their long-term impact varies according to the individual, the learning context and the level of autonomy allowed.

A key challenge in educational settings is balancing these two types of motivation.

Over reliance on extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation by reducing students' sense of autonomy or diminishing creativity. However, extrinsic motivators can be valuable when learners initially lack interest, making them a necessary, though secondary, part of effective teaching methods and practice.

Contextual and cultural influences

Motivation is shaped by sociocultural (the combination of social and cultural factors) and environmental factors. An individual's motivational tendencies are influenced by their learning environment, cultural values and personal experiences. For example, filial piety in many Asian cultural contexts can function as both an intrinsic motivator (a desire to honour one's family) and an extrinsic one (pressure to meet familial expectations).

Difficult learning conditions such as comparative scoring practices and a teacher using judgemental speech seemingly trying to inspire students may actually inhibit students confidence in class participation. Low socioeconomic status and limited access to meaningful learning opportunities can suppress intrinsic motivation. Students exposed to stress, instability or low-quality instruction may rely heavily on extrinsic prompts simply to maintain engagement.

Teachers, therefore, play a critical role in shaping motivational climates. Learning motivation operates within relationships. This means interactions with teachers significantly influence students' sense of competence and autonomy. Supportive instruction, meaningful tasks and autonomy-supportive communication are essential for fostering intrinsic motivation. This is particularly the case for students with limited motivational support outside the classroom environment.

Limitations in existing research

Despite a large body of evidence for these theories, key limitations remain in motivation research. A major concern is the reliance on narrow and similar samples in foundational studies. These have often been western students or, historically, animal subjects. This restricts the generalisability of findings across cultures, ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Further, although research frequently documents ways in which extrinsic rewards may reduce intrinsic motivation, there is limited research guidance for educators seeking to cultivate intrinsic motivation in a systematic or sustainable way. Additionally, many studies examine motivation in short-term settings rather than investigating how motivation evolves over time.

Educational practice further complicates the picture. Systems such as School-Wide Positive Behaviour Supports rely heavily on extrinsic incentives. While effective for behaviour management, these frameworks risk overshadowing opportunities to build intrinsic motivation. So, they risk shaping school cultures that prioritise compliance rather than curiosity or autonomy.

Proposed research direction

To address these research gaps, a comprehensive longitudinal study is proposed to examine how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation develop across diverse educational settings.

Unlike cross-sectional studies, a longitudinal approach would capture changes in motivation over time, enabling researchers to understand how environments, instructional approaches and cultural factors shape motivational development.

The study would involve multiple school contexts, each using different motivational emphases: one prioritising intrinsic motivation, another using a balanced approach, and another relying mostly on extrinsic rewards. Data would be collected from students and teachers at regular intervals, including academic measures, motivational self-reports and behavioural observations.

This data could inform teacher education, curriculum design and policy development, supporting an educational shift toward intrinsic-first motivational models. This aligns with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which emphasise the importance of understanding learners' backgrounds and needs.

Conclusion

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation remain foundational theories in educational psychology. Intrinsic motivation supports deep engagement, autonomy and long-term mastery, while extrinsic motivation can activate learning in the absence of initial interest. However, intrinsic motivation is often under used in contemporary education, in part due to limited research on how to cultivate it effectively across diverse learning environments. Comprehensive longitudinal research is needed to address this gap. Such work could enhance theoretical understanding and support educators in fostering learning environments that prioritise intrinsic motivation. This could ultimately cultivate lifelong learners capable of sustaining curiosity and engagement well beyond formal schooling.

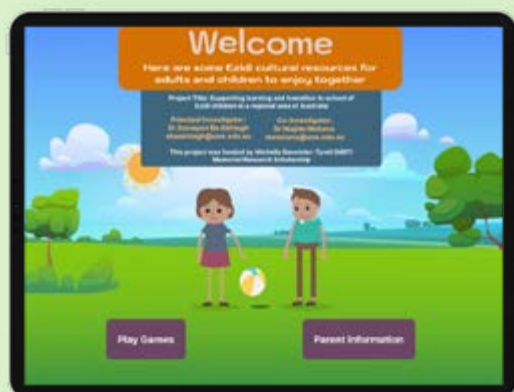
Recommendations

Teachers are in a position to provide meaningful learning experiences for students by:

- Providing choices to students allowing them to practise autonomy where possible in learning activities, goal setting and assessment methods.
- Matching tasks to students' skill level to challenge them enhancing feelings of competence and success.
- Emphasising efforts in constructive feedback and avoiding comparison of students' assessment outcomes.
- Ensuring classrooms always feel safe where students feel respected and valued. Cultural, social and personal values must be considered to ensure personal values are embraced for optimal learning motivation.
- Minimally using extrinsic reward systems to initiate engagement then promoting student learning and motivation through internal drivers.

Resources

These free, evidence-informed resources are created for educators, support workers and families. They are part of UNE's School of Education research translation activities. Research translation is the process of turning findings and data into practical, real-world applications.



Supporting learning and transition to school for Ezidi children

- These cultural resources are for Ezidi children aged birth to 8 years.
- They were created in consultation with the Ezidi community.
- Led by Dr Somayeh Ba Akhlagh and Dr Majida Mehana.
- Cultural resources designed to engage families in their children's transition to school while giving children the opportunity to maintain their home language.
- They include literacy and numeracy activities, songs, recipes, games, and parent information.



Scan QR Code or
[Click here](#)

STEM for All

- For early childhood educators to learn about gender equity in STEM.
- Created by Dr Somayeh Ba Akhlagh, Associate Professor Marianne Knaus, Associate Professor Maryam Jamal Alharthi, Mrs Asma Aljohani, Dr Nouf Albadi, and Professor Nahla Mahmoud Gahwaji.
- An Australian-Saudi joint initiative promoting STEM.



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The SILO Project

- 28 free STEM units.
- Designed with primary teachers for classroom use.
- Ongoing development by Associate Professor Brendan Jacobs.
- Aligns with the Australian Curriculum and NSW Syllabus.
- Requests from teachers are welcome.



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Child and Family Resilience Programs

- 27 free, evidence-informed e-storybooks with accompanying educational activities.
- 4 free suites of online modules for parents, educators, support workers and clinicians.
- Instant, free personalised programs.
- Co-created with parents, educators, support workers, clinicians, and those from service families.
- Designed to support children from service families (Defence, veteran and first responder) and those whose parents work away (e.g. Fly-In-Fly-Out and Drive-In-Drive-Out).



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Lessons in living from a UNE teaching graduate

Amanda Burdon | media@une.edu.au | UNE Media

Life got in the way of Crystal Primmer achieving her childhood dream. But the mother-of-five has now achieved it, two decades later, thanks to UNE.

“As a little girl, I would sit my sister Katie down in our small lounge room and insist she play ‘schools’ with me for hours,” Crystal says. “I was always the teacher and while she often lost interest, I never did. I loved it; instinctively, it felt like where I belonged.”

Now Crystal has graduated from UNE with a Bachelor of Education (Secondary Arts) and is relishing her first full-time appointment, teaching in a Sydney high school. But it has been far from smooth sailing.



Education graduate Crystal Primmer is living her childhood dream

“After I left school, I went straight into the workforce, married the love of my life and I had our first beautiful daughter at 24. Uni seemed unattainable and my dreams of becoming a teacher drifted into the background.”

Crystal had a role in administration, “just working to pay the bills”, when Katie tragically died by suicide.

Then, just three years later, shortly after the birth of her third child, Crystal was diagnosed with stage three bowel cancer.

“From that moment, everything changed. What followed was surgery and six months of physically and emotionally exhausting chemotherapy while I continued to raise our young children. Yet, through that experience, something became undeniably clear: life is fragile and too short not to chase your dreams.”

So, at the age of 32, Crystal embraced the flexibility UNE offered to pursue her long-held teaching ambitions.

“My family had always come first, so this was not easy. I studied while breastfeeding. I wrote essays late at night when the kids were in bed. I listened to lectures in the car during school pick-ups. I just fitted my studies in wherever I could because I knew it was what I wanted and needed to do.

There were tears, exhaustion, moments of doubt, multiple setbacks, and many times when I felt like giving up. Balancing study, motherhood and life’s demands often felt overwhelming. But I kept going and UNE made it possible. I wasn’t locked into attending classes at a certain time and studied on my terms.

Twelve years later, Crystal is living out her dream and cancer-free. She is also a passionate advocate for Bowel Cancer Australia and Lifeline and raises funds for both charities.

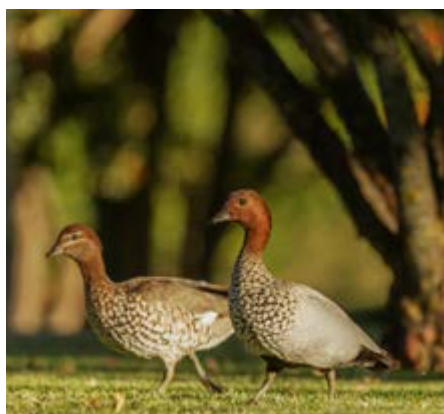
After pausing her studies to have her two youngest children and accommodate the demands of home-schooling during COVID lockdowns, Crystal hopes her tenacity demonstrates to her own children that it’s never too late to achieve life goals.

“They saw their mum do something and never give up. They were part of this. And I would not be here without the support of my husband, my family and friends.”

And as for whether the dream has lived up to expectations...

“From the moment I stood at the front of a classroom, everything just clicked; I knew it was exactly where I was meant to be. I just love it. It feels like I’m whole. Every part of my journey – from the little girl who loved to teach, the grief of losing my sister, the strength it took to survive cancer and the years of study and motherhood – had led me to this point.

“I feel an overwhelming sense of pride, not just in becoming a teacher, but in everything it took to get here. And I believe I would not be the same teacher had I done this at 20. I just took a while to get there.”





Future Teacher Scholarships

The School of Education at UNE is offering scholarships for students in Years 11 and 12 to support them in completing up to two Education units available in Education and Teaching degrees, delivered as part of the HSC University Pathways program.

The available units are:

- EDEE100 English Language in Use;
- EDME146 Primary Mathematics 1: Numeracy;
- EDEC102 Young Children's Resilience;
- EDEC104 Children's Spaces and Places.

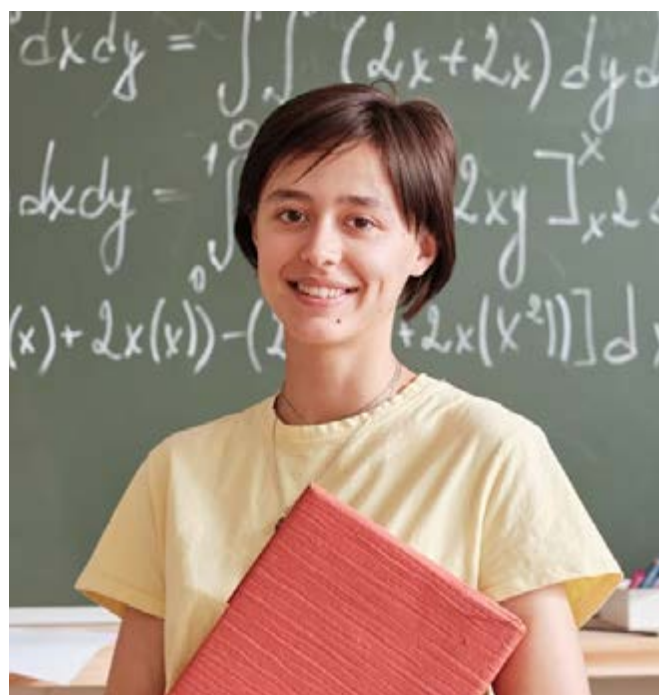
You need to meet all of the following entry requirements:

- You are a student in a registered secondary school or are currently registered for home schooling;
- If you are under 17 years of age, you have the consent of your parent/guardian; and
- If you are enrolled in a registered school, you have been recommended by the school Principal.

If interested and want to find out more information, please contact [Head of School, Education](#).

If you are ready to apply, please [complete the application form](#).

Please note that Scholarships only apply to the units listed in bold above from the UNE School of Education.



School of Education
University of New England
Armidale, NSW, 2351, Australia



Are your students or staff interested in studying early childhood?

[Explore the UNE Course Handbook](#)

Studying early childhood education has many benefits, including:

- making a difference in the most important years of a child's life,
- the ability to build on children's interests and strengths,
- being able to place children at the centre of their education,
- being part of a growing and important field,
- being in demand (there is a shortage of degree-qualified early childhood teachers in Australia),
- working closely with families to support children's learning, and access to a variety of work options.

There are two different early childhood education courses offered at UNE.



Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary)

This is a unique teacher education course that offers two career options for graduates. The course allows employment flexibility across schools and early childhood services to suit graduates' opportunities and circumstances.

It is an initial-teacher education qualification that encompasses working with children from birth to age 12 in both early childhood and primary school settings.

This course is available:

- full time or part time,
- on-campus or online,
- with a Trimester 1, 2 and 3 start each year.



Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care)

Graduates are qualified to teach children aged birth to 5 years and there are multiple entry pathways.

Students commencing in Year 1 of the degree choose four subjects from a wide range of options relevant to contemporary early childhood teaching, leadership and business such as Dinosaurs!, Introduction to Literature: Children's Books, Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, Introduction to Legal Studies, and Introduction to Management Accounting and more.

The four electives are completed in the first two years of the course. Students starting in Year 1 will also have more professional placement days than the minimum requirement.

Students with a diploma in early childhood education and care (or equivalent) will start at Year 3 of the degree. In Years 3 and 4, students complete subjects, with flexibility in terms of the order subjects are completed.

Most placements can be completed in a student's own workplace allowing for new knowledge to be put into practice.

This course is available:

- full-time or part-time,
- online,
- with a Trimester 1, 2 and 3 start each year.

School of Education
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Are you interested in further study?

You can find out about our UNE Education courses via [the Handbook](#).

The University of New England offers a wide variety of programs to assist teachers to upgrade their skills. Within many courses, you can specialise in the area in which you are interested.

For more information, visit:

[School of Education Postgraduate Study,](#)

[Graduate Certificate in Education Studies,](#)

[Master of Education \(Research\),](#)

[PhD](#)

Scholarships, prizes and awards

UNE offers many [scholarships, prizes and awards](#) to support our students with their studies. Many of these go unused because students do not apply believing they would not be eligible. It is worth spending the time to apply.

Other undergraduate teaching degrees

Discover our wide range of undergraduate pre-service teaching degrees (early childhood, primary, secondary) and [conversion degrees here](#).



Want to stay informed about our School activities?
Join our UNE School of Education community on Facebook to keep up with our news and happenings in research, teaching and learning [Facebook/UNEeducation](#)

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University of
New England



Are you wanting to become a teacher?

The career opportunities for education graduates are increasing every year, especially in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

By studying at UNE, you will be well equipped to perform in these often-demanding contexts, plus you'll be more likely to obtain a permanent teaching position if you work in an area of teacher shortage. The NSW Government even offers a variety of targeted scholarships to help you study and gain employment: www.teach.nsw.edu.au/getpaidtostudy

UNE has developed undergraduate courses in Early Childhood, Primary, Early Childhood/Primary, and K-12 Teaching to expand employment prospects by qualifying you to teach across two sectors.

What Teaching Courses are Available?

UNE offers a number of undergraduate Education courses including:

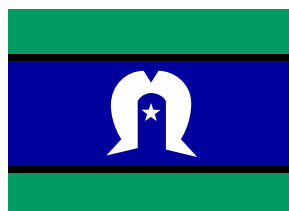
- Bachelor of Education
 - Early Childhood Education and Care
 - Early Childhood and Primary
 - K-6 Teaching
 - K-12 Teaching
 - Secondary Arts
 - Secondary STEM
 - In-service conversion (for teachers who might be thinking of retraining)
- Bachelor of Special and Inclusive Education (Primary)
- Master of Teaching (Primary)
- Master of Teaching (Secondary)

Worried About the “Three Band Five” Requirements?

Many of our Initial Teacher Education courses are structured to include one year of “discipline studies” (i.e. subject/s that you will go on to teach in schools) in the first year of study. Successful completion of this first year also gives all students, irrespective of their educational backgrounds, the opportunity to demonstrate they meet the Government’s academic standards for studying teaching.

You can find out more about becoming a teacher [here](#).

Want to stay informed about our School activities?
Join our UNE School of Education community on Facebook to keep up with our news and happenings in research, teaching and learning [Facebook/UNEeducation](https://www.facebook.com/UNEeducation)



Acknowledgement of Country

The University of New England respects and acknowledges that its people, courses and facilities are built on land, and surrounded by a sense of belonging, both ancient and contemporary, of the world's oldest living culture. In doing so, UNE values and respects Indigenous knowledge systems as a vital part of the knowledge capital of Australia.

We recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of the Aboriginal community and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future.

Artwork: Warwick Keen "Always was, always will be" 2008. Gifted by the artist to UNE in 2008