

#TraumaAware2026

CONFERENCE

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Brisbane Convention &
Exhibition Centre

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TRAUMA-AWARE
EDUCATION

ORAL PRESENTATION

Inspiring minds, transforming lives and moving beyond awareness

100

Billabongs of Knowledge: Cultural Safety in Trauma Informed Practice from a First Nations Perspective

Ryan K, Tujague, N¹

¹The Seedlings Group

Kelleigh Ryan and Dr Nicole Tujague are descendants of the Kabi Kabi People of Southeast Queensland and South Sea Islander people of Gaua Island, Vanuatu.

Co-Founders of The Seedling Group Organisation and Co-author of Billabongs of Knowledge: Cultural Safety in Trauma Informed Practice from a First Nations Perspective

This keynote deepens educators' understanding of trauma from a First Nations perspective, recognising the ongoing impacts of colonisation alongside the strength of cultural identity and connection to the domains of Indigenous Social Emotional Wellbeing. It explores types of traumas, with particular attention to racial trauma and how it shapes student safety, belonging, and engagement in education. Drawing on lived and practice based wisdom, the session highlights culturally safe approaches to sharing knowledge and building respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and communities. Educators will also examine vicarious trauma and self care, emphasising reflective practice and collective wellbeing as essential to sustainable work. The keynote concludes by centring culture and healing, illustrating how cultural practices, story, and kinship systems foster resilience and create conditions for transformative learning. Participants will leave with practical, culturally grounded strategies that strengthen trauma informed practice and enhance cultural safety for all students.

101

After the Storm: A Journey of Trauma and Transformation

Achari J¹

¹Edith Cowan University

Dr Jennifer Achari shares her lived experience of childhood trauma and the deeply personal journey that shaped her life, leadership, and purpose. Separated from her biological parents as an infant due to mental illness, addiction, and violence, her early years were marked by instability and adversity. Yet her story does not end there. Through honest reflection, Jennifer explores what it means to move from survival to self-awareness, from dysregulation to self-regulation, and from pain to possibility. She connects her personal healing journey to her work as an educator and in trauma-aware education, highlighting a powerful truth: our capacity to co-regulate and support young people begins with our own inner work.

This keynote is not about theory alone — it is about deeply personal inner work. It is about understanding how trauma shapes the brain, body, and identity, and the journey towards intentional healing. With vulnerability and hope, Jennifer emphasises that while trauma is real and its impact profound, it does not have to define the future for those with lived experience, including the children and young people we teach.

102

Leading Trauma-Aware Schools: A new leadership approach

Brunzell T¹¹University of Melbourne

In this masterclass, University of Melbourne Associate Professor Tom Brunzell will offer strategies from his original research to help school leaders strengthen behavioural support systems and their schools' strategic planning towards their own trauma-aware school journeys. Drawing on over a decade of research and real-world examples from diverse school environments, Tom will demonstrate how to activate whole-school structures that meet students across all levels of need—from universal Tier 1 supports to targeted and intensive Tier 3 interventions to address complex student behaviours.

Participants will examine three strategic priority areas essential for sustaining both wellbeing and academic growth:

- Shifting staff mindsets and gaining staff buy in from reactive crisis management to proactive, relationally safe practice;
- Building consistent schoolwide systems that reduce decision-fatigue, increase clarity, and ensure fair and restorative responses to behaviour;
- Strengthening student capacity to meet higher expectations through strengths-based, trauma-informed routines and self-regulation strategies.

Leaders will leave with practical tools to help gain staff buy in, reduce staff burnout, uphold academic challenge, and create learning environments where students—and staff—can thrive.

From trauma-informed to trauma-transformative: findings from two decades of trauma informed practice in schools

Ralston S¹

¹Rebooting Life Pty Ltd

Are you Saturday proofing the young people you work with?

Drawing from 20 years of trauma-informed practice in schools, communities and remote settings, Sarah Ralston (Reboot CEO) introduces trauma-transformative practice in this interactive master class. Trauma transformative practice has emerged through the trialling of a broad range of trauma-informed strategies in over 900 school settings. The integration of trauma related neuroscience findings with agency, hope, behavioural change and resilience theories has resulted in reductions in recorded major and minor incidents in school data of between 50-80%.

Through the discussion of four school case studies (early childhood, primary, remote and Special) this workshop will describe the three pillars of trauma-transformative practice and explore the suggested mechanisms of change. This workshop will explore successes, mistakes and the ways trauma transformative practices can be embedded in daily school operations in a range of settings.

This workshop will explore:

- Application of whole brain (neuroscience) approaches into programming, pedagogy, relationship and co regulation, staff awareness and environmental design.
- The importance of a whole community approach to behavioural change, in which new patterns of interaction become normative, reducing individual effort while also fostering a collective sense of hope, safety, and capability.
- The empowerment of individuals through protective skill building and the critical role of visuals, repetition in daily routine, coaching language and embodiment. The core skills of self-regulation, problem solving, communication, healthy peer relationship skills and positive learning identity and metacognition will be addressed.
- Fostering agency and resilience in all ages through self-awareness, responsibility, practice and accountability.
- The role of trauma-informed staff wellbeing in learner attainment and behaviour.
- Central to trauma-transformative practice is the cultivation of healthy independence, resilience and adaptability: essential to Saturday proofing young people.

104

Trauma-aware education in vocational settings

Langton G¹¹Berry Street Education Model

Aim

The purpose of this presentation is to examine how intentional, brief relational interactions—referred to as micro-moments of connection—can enhance learner engagement, wellbeing, and persistence in vocational education settings through trauma-aware practice.

Background / Context

Research in trauma-informed education highlights the importance of safety, trust, and relational consistency in supporting learner readiness and cognitive engagement. Grounded in the Berry Street Education Model and developed in partnership with Kangan Institute, this work draws on trauma-informed and wellbeing-centred frameworks to explore how educator presence, attunement, and communication shape everyday learning experiences. While curriculum and pedagogy are well theorised, less attention has been given to the cumulative impact of micro-level educator learner interactions in vocational contexts.

Relevance

The presentation aligns strongly with trauma awareness and trauma-informed practice by foregrounding relational safety, co-regulation, and connection as foundational conditions for learning. It emphasises how educators can respond to learners' emotional and behavioural cues in ways that promote regulation, belonging, and engagement.

Contribution

This work contributes practical, evidence-informed insights to the field by positioning connection as a core educational capability in vocational education. It extends trauma-informed theory into applied VET practice, offering scalable strategies that strengthen learning cultures.

Description

The presentation draws on practice-based examples from vocational training environments, illustrating how micro-moments of connection can be recognised, intentionally created, and sustained within time-pressured settings.

Engagement

Participants will engage through reflective prompts, brief scenario analysis, and practice-focused discussion that supports immediate application.

105

Every word matters: how educator language shapes the developing sense of self in trauma-impacted children

Harwood S¹

¹Queensland Institute Of Play Therapy

This presentation explores the powerful role educator language plays in shaping the developing sense of self in children impacted by trauma. In the sensitive and formative early years, children internalise repeated relational interactions as beliefs about who they are. For trauma-impacted children, everyday classroom moments can either reinforce shame-based narratives or cultivate safety, competence, and agency.

Beginning with an overview of how trauma affects nervous system regulation and identity formation, participants will gain insight into how subtle cues of tone, phrasing, and response become identity messages. Through a trauma-informed lens grounded in relational neuroscience and play therapy principles, the session highlights how language can function as a regulating cue of safety or threat. The presentation emphasises the educator's role not only as behaviour guide, but as identity builder. Participants will explore practical shifts from praise, correction, and compliance-based responses toward reflective and regulating language that strengthens internal safety and self-trust.

Using applied classroom examples, the session demonstrates how intentional communication can interrupt shame cycles and foster resilience from the inside out. Participants will leave with concrete, immediately usable language tools to support trauma-aware practice in early childhood settings.

In conclusion, this presentation advocates for viewing educator voice as a central component of trauma-aware education, with the potential to profoundly influence children's developing sense of self.

106

The Silent Cost: Prevalence, Impact and Management of Secondary Trauma in Australian Educators

Fraser A¹, Molineux J², Armarego C¹, Meneses I¹

¹The Flourish Movement, ²Deakin University

Aim:

The paper examines the prevalence, impact, and management of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) across 2285 Australian educators to provide recommendations for change in education.

Background/Context:

Secondary Trauma is widely recognised in caring professions, however the impact on educators has often been overlooked even as incidences of trauma in children have risen. This paper summarises the largest dataset in the Southern Hemisphere examining STS in educators.

Relevance:

Data analysis shows the prevalence of secondary trauma and its impact on burnout, rumination, mental health and turnover intention. For example, 38% of respondents felt they experienced STS often/very often, with a further 38% experiencing STS sometimes, whilst 37% respondents reported they were likely to leave the profession due to STS. Special Education settings and those within Mainstream settings are of particular concern. Mitigating factors examined included support, psychological coping and recovery, which were effective in reducing the impact of STS. Findings show significant implications for education departments and schools in managing the impact of secondary trauma on educators reducing the risk on educator wellbeing.

Contribution:

Research provides new evidence about the prevalence and consequences of STS in educators while identifying practical strategies reducing its impact. Recommendations are made at all levels – policy, systems, schools, associations/unions, and individual.

Description:

Using mixed-method design, the study combined a national survey, open comment questions and interviews. Excel, SPSS and NVivo were used in data analysis.

Engagement:

Highly engaging and interactive presentation style, sharing key findings with stories. Small group discussion with volunteers to contribute to the larger group.

107

Beyond compliance: human-centred responses to psychosocial hazards in trauma-aware schools

Taylor C¹¹DoE North Coast Regional Office

Aim:

To introduce the Trauma-Aware Psychosocial Consultation Framework, supporting schools to interpret and apply psychosocial hazard responsibilities while centring the human realities of educator work.

Background/Context:

Teaching is deeply relational work. Educators regularly navigate emotional labour, complex student needs, and competing expectations while striving to maintain care, professionalism, and purpose. Psychosocial hazards are increasingly recognised within workplace health and safety legislation; however, many risk management frameworks originate from sectors where hazards are task-based and procedural. In education, risks often arise through relational and emotional labour and the cumulative impact of caring work. Without contextual translation, responses can emphasise procedural controls while overlooking the human conditions shaping educator wellbeing.

Relevance:

Trauma-aware practice calls attention to the conditions in which both students and educators live and work. Consultation processes that foster psychological safety and genuine voice align with trauma-informed principles of safety, trust, collaboration, and empowerment.

Contribution:

This presentation introduces the Trauma-Aware Psychosocial Consultation Framework, offering schools a structured way to translate psychosocial hazard responsibilities into human-centred dialogue and practical action that strengthens collective capability and sustainable ways of working.

Description:

Drawing on practice insights from system-level work with school leaders and staff, the framework follows four stages: understanding context, exploring underlying conditions, recognising protective practices, and strengthening the system. It integrates adaptive leadership with participatory dialogue tools such as the iceberg model, the COM-B framework, and strengths-based inquiry.

Engagement:

Participants will experience reflective prompts and dialogue structures demonstrating how trauma-aware consultation tools can be applied in school contexts.

108

Trauma-informed and healing centered teaching

Cross A¹¹Northwestern University

Aim:

To share a trauma-informed and healing-centered teaching approach that supports student learning, relational safety, and educator wellbeing through practices grounded in connection, agency, and collective care.

Background/Context:

Educators increasingly work with learners impacted by complex trauma, systemic inequities, and ongoing social disruption. While trauma-aware education has strengthened understanding of trauma's impacts, classroom practice often remains focused on behaviour management or individual regulation. Healing-centered engagement extends trauma-informed practice by emphasising cultural identity, relational belonging, and strengths-based learning. This session draws on practitioner experience implementing healing-centered strategies in educational settings, integrating trauma-aware principles with culturally responsive and relational pedagogy.

Relevance:

This presentation aligns with trauma-aware education by demonstrating how healing-centered approaches deepen safety, reduce re-traumatisation, and foster sustainable educator practice. It supports educators seeking practical, ethical ways to move beyond awareness toward transformational teaching that attends to both learner and educator wellbeing.

Contribution:

Participants will gain a clear framework for translating trauma awareness into healing-centered classroom practices, including strategies that support co-regulation, student voice, and collective resilience. The session contributes practice-based insights that bridge theory and everyday teaching realities.

Description:

The session presents a practice reflection using real-world examples, reflective tools, and adaptable classroom strategies. It draws on trauma-aware frameworks, restorative practices, and healing-centered engagement principles.

Engagement:

Participants will engage in guided reflection, small-group discussion, and interactive prompts to adapt strategies to their own contexts.

109

Problematic and/or Harmful Sexualised Behaviour (PHSB): Trauma Informed Responses in our Schools

Castle R¹, Knight C¹

¹Nsw Department Of Education

Aim:

To provide an overview of how schools can provide a trauma informed response when a child/young person (CYP) has displayed problematic and/or harmful sexualised behaviours (PHSB).

Background/Context:

Following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2013–2017), the NSW Government introduced Children First 2022–2031, a shared framework for preventing and responding to PHSB among children and young people. In line with this, the NSW Department of Education reviewed its policies and procedures on PHSB, leading to the development of new PHSB Guidelines and the establishment of a dedicated PHSB Team to ensure consistent, trauma informed responses in schools when incidents are disclosed.

Relevance:

Effective and proportionate responses to PHSB displayed by CYP requires a trauma-informed lens to ensure contextual and holistic care is provided. Research indicates that early and effective intervention is often effective in reducing further incidents of PHSB.

Contribution:

The Department of Education has implemented a PHSB Team to support school settings in providing a consistent and trauma-informed response to CYP.

Description:

Two case studies highlighting responses in the primary school and high school context will be shared. This will demonstrate the trauma-informed support the Department of Education's PHSB Team can provide to schools following a reported incident of PHSB.

Engagement:

This will be a research-based presentation by two PHSB Officers who will provide insights and practical strategies on trauma-informed responses to PHSB. This information can support participants in their understanding of and responses to PHSB in their schools.

111

Heal Through Movement: Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga for Trauma-Aware Educators (Thursday)

Yen F¹

¹Australian Trauma Education Centre | QUT

Aim:

To offer participants a direct experiential introduction to trauma centre trauma sensitive yoga and its core principles as an evidence-based wellbeing practice for supporting complex and developmental trauma.

Background/Context:

Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) is the world's first evidence-based yoga intervention specifically developed for complex trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. Twenty years of research, including randomised trials, demonstrate it is as effective as talk therapy in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression and posttraumatic stress while significantly improving interoception and self-regulation. Unlike traditional yoga, it removes performance pressure and physical adjustments, focusing instead on restoring a felt sense of safety and agency in the body through gentle movement that can be practised standing or seated in a chair.

Relevance:

This body-based approach directly advances trauma awareness and trauma-informed practice by giving educators and adult learners a safe, accessible tool for self-regulation and resilience without requiring disclosure or prior experience.

Contribution:

Participants leave equipped to integrate trauma-sensitive movement elements into classrooms, staff wellbeing programs and learner support, expanding practical options for trauma-aware education across vocational and higher education settings.

Description:

Participants will experience a Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive yoga practice that can be fully adapted to standing or seated positions, and an overview of the key theories.

Engagement:

Through active guided practice, reflection, and a brief group discussion on applying the principles in educational contexts to support both staff and trauma-impacted adult learners.

112

Embedding trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices, strengthening students' capacity to engage, regulate, and succeed.

Spencer S¹, Perks M²

¹Lincoln Gardens Primary School, ²Leigh Creek Area School

Aim:

Share the journey of embedding trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices that advocate for students whose behaviours are often misunderstood, while strengthening their capacity to engage, regulate, and succeed.

Background/Context:

LGPS serves a highly diverse community, with 97% Aboriginal students and high levels of trauma, disadvantage, and disability, both diagnosed and undiagnosed. These experiences significantly impact, relationships, and engagement with learning. In response, the school has prioritised a whole-school trauma-informed approach built on predictable routines, strong relationships, and culturally responsive practices. Research shows that consistent, interventions delivered by trusted adults are highly effective, positioning school staff as key agents of change.

Relevance:

Our work challenges deficit views that interpret behaviour as deliberate defiance, instead building understanding that behaviour is a form of communication. By focusing on safety, trust, and co-regulation, we are creating a culture where student needs are better understood and responded to with empathy and consistency.

Contribution:

This approach demonstrates how schools can advocate for vulnerable students by reducing barriers and creating safe, supportive environments. It offers practical examples of balancing complex needs while building staff capacity and consistency.

Description & Engagement:

Through structured routines, regulation strategies, safe spaces, and personalised supports, and ongoing professional learning. LGPS has developed a culturally responsive trauma-informed model. Participants will engage through authentic stories of challenges, growth, and transformation, gaining practical strategies that can be applied in their own settings.

113

I know the therapy but the room is on fire

Ribic N¹

¹Southern Cross University

Aim:

This practice-based presentation aims to help teachers and educators make trauma-aware responses more possible, more consistent, and less overwhelming in everyday classroom practice.

Background/Context:

Many educators understand trauma-aware principles, including the importance of safety, connection, and regulation. Yet in busy classroom moments, it can be hard to turn that knowledge into action. The risk is that trauma-aware practice becomes something educators value, but struggle to use consistently under pressure.

Relevance:

Drawing from early childhood practice, this presentation explores how educators can stay trauma-aware in the first seconds of a difficult moment. It introduces “Stop. Seen, Safe, Stat.” as a memorable first-response anchor to help children feel seen and safe before analysing or correcting behaviour. While the examples come from early childhood, the principle is relevant across educational settings.

Contribution:

This presentation offers a practical bridge between trauma-aware theory and everyday classroom action. By giving educators a simple first response they can return to consistently, it shows how small moments of safety and connection can accumulate over time to support children’s wellbeing and reduce educator overwhelm.

Description:

The presentation will use practice-based storytelling and concrete examples of visible and less visible distress to show how this first response can look in everyday interactions.

Engagement:

Participants will be invited to recognise children and moments from their own settings, reflect on what makes trauma-aware responses difficult in real time, and leave with one small shift they can use in practice.

114

Leading Change: Embedding Trauma-Responsive Practice in Specialist Schools

Moro A¹, Smileski L¹, Gardiner R¹

¹Ajuga School

Aim:

To explore practitioner reflections on how to effectively shift from a behaviour-based model to a trauma-responsive approach, while maintaining clear, consistent and firm boundaries within a specialist school setting.

Background/Context:

Traditional behaviourist approaches often prioritise compliance over understanding underlying need. Emerging research in trauma-aware education highlights the importance of relational practice, co-regulation, and recognising behaviour as communication. This presentation draws on school-based experiences within a K–12 setting supporting students with complex mental health needs, where staff have engaged in ongoing reflective practice to embed trauma-responsive approaches over the past 8 years.

Relevance:

This presentation aligns with trauma-aware education by demonstrating how reflective practice can support sustainable shifts in mindset, language, and response to student behaviour.

Contribution:

The session offers practical insights into the challenges and successes of transitioning to a trauma-responsive model, providing attendees with strategies to support staff reflection, consistency, and cultural change within their own contexts.

Description:

Using practice reflections and case-based examples, this presentation outlines the process of embedding trauma-responsive practices, including shifts in language, student behaviour support frameworks, environmental adjustments, and staff collaboration.

Engagement:

Engagement will be via oral presentation supported by evidence-based theory and lived examples, alongside guided reflection prompts to support application within participants' own settings.

Keywords:

Ajuga School, trauma-responsive practice; practice reflection; behaviour as communication; consistent whole-school language; connections over compliance

Contribution Format:

Practice Reflections

115

Wellbeing for the Frontline

Mitchell R¹¹Elements ABC

Aim:

To introduce a practical, trauma-informed wellbeing framework (the 4Rs) designed to support frontline workers and educators experiencing cumulative stress, moral injury, and compassion fatigue.

Background/context:

Frontline professionals are carrying an increasing emotional load as they support children and adults whose behaviours often reflect unmet safety needs rather than defiance. While many are skilled at supporting others, they often lack simple, repeatable routines to protect their own wellbeing. Trauma-aware approaches emphasise self-regulation, reflective capacity, and sustainable recovery practices. The 4R framework—recognise, rest/regulate, repair, recover—integrates familiar concepts such as the window of tolerance, stress physiology, and foundational needs to translate theory into practical action.

Relevance:

Trauma-aware practice requires adults to remain regulated, responsive, and attuned. Strengthening staff wellbeing directly improves psychological safety, reduces escalation cycles, and enhances capacity for trauma-informed decision-making.

Contribution:

The session offers an accessible, evidence aligned framework that organisations can embed to strengthen workforce sustainability through neurodiverse affirming and culturally inclusive practices. By supporting wellbeing across diverse cognitive and cultural identities, the approach promotes retention, reduces burnout, and enhances the quality of support provided to individuals with complex needs.

Description:

Using the metaphor of a seesaw tipping above or below the line, participants learn how to recognise early signs of overload and respond with brief, effective routines for regulation and recovery. The workshop blends micro-education, guided reflection, and practical strategy-building, culminating in a personalised wellbeing action plan.

Engagement:

The session uses interactive personal activities, reflection, paired discussion, and visual metaphors to support active learning and real-world application.

116

Courage Beyond Compliance: Enabling Safe Disclosure in Child Sexual Abuse

Humphries K¹

¹Kelly Humphries, ²AiLecs- Monash University

Disclosure is often treated as a clear moment of telling. For many children, it is anything but. It is shaped by grooming, trauma bonding, cognitive dissonance, shame, silence, and the very real fear of not being believed or understood.

We will reframe disclosure through the eyes of the child, exploring what must exist for a child to feel safe to speak, and why many do not. It examines how trauma and coercion influence behaviour, communication, and engagement, and how institutional responses can unintentionally reinforce silence when they rely on compliance, clarity, or consistency that trauma cannot provide.

Drawing on frontline practice, this session moves beyond procedural responses to relational, trauma-informed engagement. Participants will explore how to recognise behavioural cues, make meaning from ambiguity, and confidently ask the “next question” in ways that build trust and reduce harm.

Central to this work is the concept of “courage beyond compliance” shifting from doing what is required, to responding in ways that are attuned, adaptive, and grounded in the lived experience of the child. It also introduces a critical re-frame: discomfort is not something to avoid, but data to be understood and used to inform stronger, more responsive practice.

Participants will leave with:

- a deeper understanding of the barriers to disclosure
- practical strategies to support safer, more effective engagement
- increased confidence in navigating uncertainty and complexity in real time

This session bridges the gap between what children experience, how systems respond, and strengthening the conditions for disclosure before harm escalates.

117

Who Holds the Teacher? Reimagining Professional Supervision through the Reflective Circle Education Model

Southall A¹

¹La Trobe University

This interactive workshop develops educator capacity to implement trauma transformation through professional peer supervision, using the Reflective Circle Education Model (RCEM). While educators are expected to respond to the complex impacts of trauma, education systems offer limited formal structures for professional support. This absence leaves teachers carrying significant emotional and relational labour, undermining their capacity to remain regulated in complex environments. RCEM addresses this gap by reconceptualising supervision as a structured, relational, and critically reflective group process. Grounded in psychological safety and critical reflection, the model has been implemented across a diversity of settings including primary, secondary, specialist, and alternative education contexts, often working with young people experiencing complex adversity and marginalisation, demonstrating that trauma transformation is not simply an outcome of practice, but is enacted through structured, collective peer supervision.

This positions educator wellbeing, relational safety, and ethical responsibility as core conditions for sustaining teacher regulation and trauma-aware practice in trauma-impacted contexts, challenging individualised and strategy-based approaches. RCEM offers an evidence-based, scalable model for embedding trauma-aware professional supervision within educational systems. Drawing on mixed-methods research, findings demonstrate impacts on educator reflexivity, professional agency, and capacity for self-regulation, alongside sustained trauma-aware practice change.

In this workshop, participants will engage directly in a facilitated reflective circle, experiencing trauma-aware professional learning through guided reflection and collaborative dialogue, with opportunities to apply insights to their own contexts and consider implications for system-level change.

118

From Lived Experience to Leadership: Youth Voices Shaping Trauma-Aware Education

Akhlaki N, Ibrahim G¹

¹QPASTT

In this keynote address, Youth Voice members centre the lived experiences of young people within conversations about trauma-aware education. Through storytelling and reflection, they explore intersectional trauma, racism, discrimination, and the systemic barriers that shape the educational journeys of students from refugee and migrant backgrounds. At the same time, they highlight the powerful role educators, mentors, and institutions can play in disrupting harmful cycles and fostering environments of belonging. By elevating youth perspectives, this presentation calls for education systems that not only respond to trauma, but actively cultivate spaces where young people are supported to contribute, lead and thrive.

119

Trauma and ADHD: How should we support children with inattention and disorganisation?

Scott J¹

¹The University of Queensland

There has exponential rise in children and adults seeking treatment for ADHD in high income countries across the globe. In Australia, approximately one in 20 children are diagnosed and receiving treatment for ADHD- often with little regard for the environment in which they are living and the adversities which they have experienced. Inattention, impulsivity and disorganisation are transdiagnostic problems- they occur in depression, anxiety and in response to trauma. The Australian Child Maltreatment Study showed that 62% of Australians experience one or more forms of maltreatment in childhood.

This presentation outlines issues around the diagnosis and optimal management of ADHD and considers the role of trauma, adversity and other factors that may be causal of or worsen executive dysfunction. The appropriate standard of care for children being assessed and treated for attentional problems will be outlined. The challenges of supporting children with both executive dysfunction and childhood trauma will be discussed and strategies provided to support the best outcome for neurodiverse children who have experienced adversity.

200

The Neurology of Leadership: Navigating the Adult Nervous System in Schools.

Desautels L¹

¹Butler University's College of Education

In Dr. Desautels' work, the adult is the "Thermostat"—if we are cold and rigid, the room freezes; if we blow a fuse, the room goes dark.

We are introducing a new framework for adults working with children and youth—a multi-tiered approach designed to support and nourish the adult nervous system. This framework offers practices and insights to deepen our awareness of our own nervous systems, enhance decision-making, and empower personal agency.

By addressing the needs of the adult nervous system in schools, districts, and organizations, we aim to foster a sustainable mindset for emotional and mental health. This, in turn, can reduce burnout, build resilience, and create a sense of safety within our learning communities.

The framework is flexible, offering different ways to support staff, individuals, or smaller groups. Think of the tiers as a menu, offering options that best meet the unique needs and preferences of adults. Whether you choose to engage with all the tiers or focus on just one or two, we welcome differentiation to ensure a personalized and effective approach.

201

Unconditional Love and the Power of Being Seen Through Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being

Williams J¹¹TEDx speaker /author and former Principal, New Zealand

In a world often obsessed with "fixing" behaviour, Jase Williams (Māori) offers a different invitation: to stop looking at what is wrong with a person and start honouring who they are and where they come from, and the generations of knowing and being they embody. Drawing on over 25 years of experience—from the principal's office to inside our prisons—Jase bridges the gap between relational neuroscience and the ancient wisdom of te ao Māori (the Māori world).

This keynote moves beyond the theory of trauma-aware and informed care and into the "middle of the work." Jase challenges the traditional constructs of resilience, replacing them with a framework grounded in whanaungatanga (connection) and aroha (unconditional love). He shares insights from his work alongside educators, social agencies, communities, gang members, and incarcerated men to demonstrate that true healing doesn't happen through programs; it happens when a person feels truly seen, heard, known, valued, and loved.

Through this indigenous lens, Jase explores:

- Ways of Knowing and Being: How ancestral wisdom provides a blueprint for equity-driven, compassionate practice in modern, high-stress settings.
- The Neurobiology of Belonging: Why safety and relationship are the primary prerequisites for any cognitive or behavioural shift.
- Mana-Enhancing/Strength Based Connection: Moving from "managing" people to uplifting their inherent dignity and worth through unconditional love.

Jase's message is a call to return to our most basic human needs. It is an advocacy for the "unconditional"—reminding us that when we provide a true felt sense of belonging and cultural safety, we don't just mitigate trauma; we create the conditions for genuine transformation and collective community healing.

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The Biology of Hope: Exploring How Neuroplasticity and Nervous System Awareness Foster Healing, Resiliency, and Hope

Desautels L¹

¹Butler University's College of Education

Overview: Through the lens of Applied Educational Neuroscience® (AEN), this session explores how stress, adversity, and trauma shape the developing brain, body, and nervous system, impacting emotions, behaviors, relationships, learning, and health. We will also examine the science of neuroplasticity, co-regulation, and connection as pathways for healing, resilience, and transformation. Grounded in the belief that the brain and nervous system can change across the lifespan, this session offers practical, nervous-system-aligned strategies to cultivate safety, regulation, belonging, and hope within our schools, organizations, and communities.

Key Outcomes: Understand and apply the science of neuroplasticity into our practices, settings, and within all areas of our lives, promoting healing and resiliency from the inside out.

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Leading with Love: Practical Strategies for Implementing Mana-Enhancing Practice/Strength Based Practice in Schools

Williams J¹

¹TEDx speaker /author and former Principal, New Zealand

While the keynote invites a shift in heart, this workshop provides the "how-to" for leaders and educators ready to move from theory to systemic transformation. Drawing on his decade as Principal of Henry Hill School, Jase Williams shares the journey of leading an internationally recognised school-wide shift that resulted in the 2021 Prime Minister's Education Excellence Award for Wellbeing from Jacinda Ardern.

This session is designed for educators and leaders who are ready to dismantle "fixing" mentalities and build environments where belonging is the primary pedagogical tool. Jase will pull back the curtain on the Henry Hill story, showing how a commitment to unconditional love and indigenous ways of knowing and being can redefine school culture, engagement, and community trust.

In this session, Jase will guide participants through:

The Henry Hill Blueprint: A step-by-step look at how to move a school from traditional behavioural management to a relational, trauma-aware, and mana-enhancing/strengths based model.

Leadership in the "Middle of the Work": Navigating the challenges of shifting staff mindsets, overcoming systemic barriers, and leading with vulnerability and equity.

Environmental Safety vs. Relational Safety: Creating an environment that provides a "true felt sense" of belonging and safety for students, staff and community.

Measuring What Matters: Moving beyond standard data to value the "unseen" indicators of wellbeing and connection.

Participants will leave not just with inspiration, but with a framework to begin transforming their own leadership practice through the lens of connection, belonging and love.

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Connecting Culture and Movement to Thrive

Nguyen C¹, Lennox M¹, Lau S¹

¹Qpastt

Trauma experienced across the refugee journey and during settlement can significantly disrupt young people's capacity to engage, learn, and feel safe within school environments. Impacts often extend beyond mental health presentations including anxiety, depression, concentration, attendance, peer relationships, and overall sense of belonging. In response, the Connecting Culture and Movement to Thrive project integrates expressive arts therapy with movement-based approaches, including yoga and somatic, body-based practices to support recovery, regulation, and connection for refugee-background students in schools.

This 40-minute experiential workshop will introduce participants to the project's design and delivery within educational settings, led by HEAL Expressive Arts Therapist's. Attendees will engage with key theoretical underpinnings of expressive and somatic work, including trauma-informed and body-based approaches relevant to working with trauma presentations. The session will highlight how movement and creative expression can support nervous system regulation, cultural connection, identity, and meaning-making, while strengthening protective factors for young people impacted by trauma.

Participants will also gain insight into program outcomes, including feedback from students and school staff, demonstrating the impact of integrating expressive, movement-based modalities within school contexts. The workshop will then shift into guided experiential activities, offering attendees a felt sense of the practices used with students, such as grounding, rhythm, and culturally responsive movement exploration.

This session is suited to educators, wellbeing staff, and practitioners seeking practical, strengths-based approaches to supporting trauma-impacted students. It aims to build understanding, confidence, and embodied awareness of how expressive and somatic practices can foster safety, engagement, and thriving in school communities.

205

Thinking Beyond Adversity: Activating Early Life Opportunities (ELOs) as the Pedagogical Engine of Trauma-Aware Education

Harris G¹¹Pathways to Resilience Trust

Trauma-informed practice has transformed education and care by increasing awareness of Early Life Adversities (ELAs), largely influenced by the foundational work of Dr Bruce Perry and the Center of the Developing Child (Harvard). This shift has strengthened safeguarding, reframed behaviour, and deepened understanding of developmental vulnerability. However, a persistent gap remains: awareness of adversity does not, in itself, change developmental trajectories.

This presentation introduces Early Life Opportunities (ELOs) as the next evolution in trauma-aware practice. Drawing on applied neuroscience, neuroplasticity, and relational frameworks aligned with Bruce Perry and Stephen Porges and Australian Early Childhood Pedagogical practices (EYLF 2.0), ELOs are positioned as the active ingredients through which development is shaped and reshaped in real time.

Rather than focusing primarily on what has happened to the child, ELOs centre what is happening for the child within moment-to-moment interactions. These include patterned experiences of co-regulation, sensory modulation, relational timing, and repair. Through repeated, attuned engagement, these micro-experiences drive experience-dependent plasticity, enabling adaptive brain-body reorganisation.

The session draws on evidence-based training and mentoring from the Pathways to Resilience Wings to Fly 2.0 (conferred by the AIFS, 2025). Importantly, this approach does not replace trauma-informed care, rather it extends it. It shifts the field from awareness to activation, from deficit-based narratives toward relational, neurobiological opportunity.

Participants will leave with a neuroscience-aligned lens that acknowledges that whilst we cannot change what has happened to a child, we can meet them where they are at and leverage our pedagogical knowledge and practices to enhance children's ELOs.

206

Practice that sticks: insights and strategies that sustain whole site trauma-informed practice

Harrison J¹, Button E¹

¹Department For Education

Aim

This presentation shares insights from the South Australian Department for Education's Trauma Aware Schools initiative (TASi), focusing on whole-site implementation, outcomes, and practical strategies for advancing trauma-informed educational practice.

Background/Context

Since 2019, TASi has supported over 250 South Australian schools and preschools with whole-site training and implementation of trauma-informed practices. While this work has seen progress in schools, implementation success has been varied and challenges remain for sustained, long term whole-site and system wide trauma aware cultural change.

Relevance

The presentation will provide insight into experiences of implementing a whole-site trauma-informed practice approach in education contexts.

Contribution

This presentation focuses on advancing trauma-informed practice in education settings, providing insights into implementation processes and embedding whole-site approaches.

Description

Despite increasing focus on wellbeing within educational contexts, there is limited guidance to support educators and education systems to undertake whole-site implementation of wellbeing initiatives. Our learnings have been informed by implementation science in other fields and experiences of our schools and preschools.

To inform this work, the team conducted a short-term investigation on the implementation of trauma-informed practices. This presentation will outline the process, key findings and practical tools co-developed with participating sites. Specifically:

- Key implementation steps tested with sites
- Facilitators and barriers that sites encountered
- The impact of an explicit implementation approach, using site data, educator reflections and student outcomes

Engagement

Practical strategies and recommendations will be offered for schools, preschools, and system leaders seeking to implement or enhance trauma-informed approaches in their own contexts.

207

When the Method Is the Message: Co-Design as Trauma-Aware Intervention in Special Assistance Schools

Malope-Rwodzi N², Gillett-Swan J¹

¹Queensland University of Technology, ²The Y Queensland (YMCA)

Aim

This study examined how co-design methodology can be used to strengthen a SAS wellbeing model, keeping student voice at the centre of the process. The presentation will explore how co-design shifted power dynamics in favour of students, deepened their sense of agency and belonging, and produced a more responsive, trauma-aware wellbeing framework. Attendees will leave with practical insights into applying co-design in settings that serve young people.

Background

Y Schools Queensland offers adjusted educational programs for secondary students who thrive in an alternative learning environment. Central to this model is Thrive, a structured wellbeing program designed to build the conditions for meaningful learning. Y students have often experienced trauma, disengagement, and systemic exclusion. This study brought them to the table as genuine partners in reviewing and reshaping Thrive. Over 30 students engaged in a series of co-design workshops, contributing their lived experience to strengthen the model from the inside out. The result: a revised Thrive that highlights the principles, practices, places, people, and connections that underpin students' growth; and the connection between students and staff that enhances it.

Relevance

Trauma-Aware education recognises that healing happens in relationship, and co-design is built on that foundation. By repositioning students as experts on their own experience, co-design aligns naturally with trauma-informed principles: it prioritises safety, trust, and agency.

Contribution

This study documents a rigorous, student-centred co-design process, providing a replicable blueprint for any school wanting to move beyond tokenistic student consultation toward the kind of genuine partnership that trauma-aware practice demands.

208

Scaling Trauma-informed Approaches Across Complex School Environments: embedding IMPACT at Reynella East College.

Kelly D¹, Symonds W², Balfour C²

¹LBI Foundation, ²Reynella East Collge

Reynella East College has developed a shared language and set of strategies through our IMPACT approach that supports more than 200 staff to respond to student needs rather than simply reacting to their behaviour. This workshop outlines the replicable strategies that REC has implemented that have shifted trauma-informed practice from another thing to do, to a sustainable way of thinking and being that is deeply embedded in practice and culture.

REC has implemented a range of systemic initiatives to embed sustainable change. The PD program in 2024 and 2025 was restructured to enable staff to collaboratively develop more than 60 trauma-informed research and practice improvement projects using a Community of Practice methodology. This process directly supported innovations in student wellbeing policy and procedures at the College level and led to the development of the practice guide - The REC Way. This in turn has supported a more integrated approach to learning and wellbeing that includes generative AI trauma-informed wellbeing curriculum for students and a stronger focus on trauma-informed visual resources throughout the college.

There is strong evidence that the IMPACT model facilitates positive cultural shifts, improved teacher confidence, consistent student regulation, and measurable improvements in wellbeing and learning outcomes. These findings contribute to the field by offering replicable strategies, supported by data from the Most Significant Change review, reductions in suspensions, and improved wellbeing metrics.

209

Signs of the Times: Brave Spaces, Trauma-Aware Practice, and Teacher Education

Lamping S¹

¹Curtin University

This presentation will define and consider the role brave spaces play in trauma-aware practice, with a specific focus on teacher education. Using the workshop model, we will engage in a collective dialogue around three vignettes which highlight the significant role emotion plays in grappling with material that underscores the structural conditions that produce trauma for marginalised people. Thinking with these vignettes, we will then consider the ways trauma-aware practice and, more specifically, the National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Education address issues of historic marginalisation, racial and cultural violence, and social/educational exclusion. We will use the Critical Agentic Relational Strengths-based framework to explore our own affective responses for evaluating instances where social positioning may perpetuate or uphold systemic practices of marginalisation. Here, we begin addressing emotion as a place of struggle and possibility by mapping critical instructional moments. This presentation locates social positioning and disruption of historic marginalisation as essential foundations of trauma-aware practice while also embracing the systemic challenges for teachers and teacher educators, arguing that the deep work of trauma-aware practice comes from actualising brave spaces. Drawing from current research around systemic harm and its place in trauma-aware practice, this presentation seeks to think with leading scholarship around dignity and responsibility for education in our times.

210

Trauma Aware Educator Wellbeing

Burnett S¹¹Crisis Prevention Institute

Aim:

To explore the concept of the Trauma Aware Educator using well established frameworks, positioning educator wellbeing as both a professional responsibility and a key protective factor in safe, supportive learning environments.

Background/Context:

Educators increasingly support students affected by complex trauma and emotional dysregulation, yet the impact on their own wellbeing is often overlooked. Grounded in the core values of care, welfare, safety and security, this session draws on trauma-informed principles and neurobiological insights into secondary and vicarious trauma, alongside emerging practices that prioritise staff regulation and resilience.

Relevance:

This presentation highlights the critical link between educator regulation, relational safety, and behavioural escalation, while distinguishing between trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practice. It reinforces the need for whole-school approaches that extend trauma awareness to staff wellbeing.

Contribution:

The session contributes practical, preventative strategies aligned with recognised models to strengthen professional boundaries, reduce burnout, and support sustainable practice. It promotes a shift toward systemic approaches that embed educator wellbeing within trauma-informed frameworks.

Description:

Using a practice-informed approach, the session integrates theory, reflective prompts, and applied strategies. It explores early warning signs of compassion fatigue and provides examples of embedding regulation, peer support, and reflective practice into school culture.

Engagement:

Participants will engage through guided reflection, real-world scenarios, and interactive discussion, supporting translation of concepts into practical strategies for diverse educational settings.

211

Doing school differently - The Pirlirrpa Alternative Education Program

Chapman R¹, Shetty E¹

¹St James College

Schools are increasingly expected to respond to the impacts of trauma, exclusion and disengagement while continuing to operate within mainstream education systems. This abstract explores how schools can "do school differently" without abandoning mainstream structures, by embedding trauma-aware, inclusive and relational approaches into everyday practice. Drawing on the development and implementation of the Pirlirrpa Alternative Education Model, this presentation examines how safe, predictable and flexible learning environments can be created for students whose needs are not met within traditional classrooms, creating a successful wellbeing space, for staff and students, whilst still being mainstream.

The Pirlirrpa Model is grounded in trauma-aware principles that prioritise relational safety, co-regulation and student voice as foundational to learning. Rather than positioning alternative education as a separate pathway, Pirlirrpa operates alongside mainstream schooling, providing adaptive supports that reduce re-traumatisation and support re-engagement. Key elements include shorter days, educational pathways and curriculum design, strengths-based learning, community and workplace connections, and an explicit focus on wellbeing as a prerequisite for academic participation.

This presentation will share practice-based insights into what it means to do school differently while remaining system-aligned. It will consider the conditions required for implementation, including staff mindset, wellbeing systems and leadership support. The session aims to support educators and school leaders to critically reflect on how trauma-aware practice can move beyond individual strategies to become embedded within school culture, enabling safer, more inclusive and responsive learning environments.

212

From crisis to culture: one early education company's journey to genuine trauma-informed safeguarding

James M¹, Tapa R²

¹Social Care Solutions, ²Platinum Early Learning

Aim: To showcase how partnering with child protection and trauma experts, and choosing transparency over silence, can elevate an early education organisation and improve outcomes for children, families, and staff.

Background/Context: When an early education company discovered that a child abuse offender had completed shifts in one of their centres, they faced a choice: manage the fallout quietly, or do something different. They chose trauma-informed, transparent practice.

Relevance: Investing in safeguarding from board to frontline, this organisation embedded trauma awareness into every part of the business- policy, process, practice, and culture. This is what genuine, whole-of-organisation commitment to child safety looks like in practice.

Contribution: This case study demonstrates the profound impact a whole-of-organisation safeguarding approach can have, not just on child safety outcomes, but on staff wellbeing, family trust and business sustainability.

Description: Partnering with a child protection consultancy, the organisation received grounded, expert support through every stage: crisis management, staff support and supervision, professional development, policy reform, and executive leadership training. The consultancy also walked alongside them through the grief and loss of the experience. The results were tangible: improved service delivery, stronger client relationships, reduced staff turnover, and a reputation built on demonstrable safety.

Engagement: Through story sharing, truth-telling, and real practice guidance, this session steps through the timeline of what this organisation did to become truly safe and trauma-aware, and what becomes possible when an organisation has the courage to get it right.

213

Re-Humanising Early Childhood: A Trauma-Informed, Strength-Based, Sustainable Model for Wellbeing, Behaviour and Belonging

Button M¹, Demarco M¹

¹Solomontown Kindergarten - Department For Education South Australia

Aim:

To demonstrate how re-humanising early childhood practice through connection, co-regulation and relational safety transforms behaviour, wellbeing and learning in trauma-affected contexts.

Background/Context:

In a high complexity early childhood setting in regional South Australia, increasing presentations of trauma, dysregulation and diverse communication needs prompted a fundamental shift in practice. Over three years, a whole site model has been developed where connection is positioned as the primary intervention, grounded in the Early Years Learning Framework v2, the Berry Street Education Model and relational approaches.

Relevance:

This work speaks directly to trauma-aware education by challenging deficit views of behaviour and reframing it as communication. It prioritises emotional safety, predictability and co-regulation, enabling children experiencing trauma, adversity and chronic dysregulation to access belonging, agency and learning.

Contribution:

This presentation offers a sustainable, deeply embedded model that demonstrates improved outcomes for children, strengthened family trust and increased educator confidence and wellbeing. It contributes practical, transferable strategies for embedding trauma-informed practice across diverse education settings.

Description:

Participants will explore a practice based framework including proactive regulation and sensory planning, visual supports, co-constructed agreements, collaborative safety planning and relational family engagement. Real examples illustrate how children experiencing significant dysregulation are supported through neurodevelopmentally informed and restorative approaches.

Engagement:

Participants will be actively engaged through reflective prompts, relatable practice examples and opportunities to apply strategies to their own settings.

214

Predictability with Purpose

Hanford H¹¹Y Schools QLD

Aim:

To demonstrate how consistent, predictable routines across a multi-school setting fosters safety, belonging, and emotional regulation for students impacted by trauma.

Background/Context:

Our school is a Special Assistance School supporting young people who have disengaged from education, many with complex trauma histories. These experiences often manifest as heightened stress responses, difficulties with self-regulation, and barriers to sustained engagement in learning. In response, our multidisciplinary teams developed and implemented a dynamic, multi-layered daily structure, scaled effectively across eleven campuses.

Relevance:

Grounded in trauma-aware research emphasising predictability, relational safety, and clear expectations, these routines embed regulation strategies and transitions that reduce activation of fight-flight, freeze, or fawn responses to promote connection and belonging through stability.

Contribution:

The initiative presents a scalable example of systemic trauma-informed practice, demonstrating how predictable environments can positively influence behaviour, school culture, and learning outcomes.

Description:

The presentation will examine the development, implementation, and observed impact of a layered framework that combines a whole-day “Thrive Wellbeing Flow” with complementary lesson-level routines. Practical examples will demonstrate how these structures guide daily transitions, classroom instruction, and regulation opportunities across the school day. The session will also explore how these routines support staff consistency across campuses while maintaining flexibility to respond to individual student needs.

Engagement:

Participants will engage in an immersive, student point-of-view film that vividly brings trauma-informed practice to life, followed by a dynamic presentation that unpacks, each strategy, critically connects strategies to trauma theory, invites reflective dialogue, and equips educators with actionable insights for their own contexts.

215

Finding Calm, Building Capacity: A Whole-School Interoception Approach to Student Regulation

Connelly R¹

¹Playford Primary School

Aim:

To demonstrate how a whole-school, trauma-informed approach grounded in interoception can enhance student regulation, engagement, and inclusion.

Background/Context:

Over four years, a whole-school approach has been implemented to support student regulation. Central to this is The Nest, a dedicated interoception and regulation space providing targeted support for students requiring assistance to regulate and re-engage in learning. This is reinforced through consistent whole-school practices, including Berry Street Education Model strategies and in-class regulation supports. In the role of Autism Inclusion Teacher, this work also includes delivering professional learning, and coaching staff to implement sensory tools and strategies aligned to individual sensory profiles.

Relevance:

This approach aligns with trauma-informed practice by prioritising safety, predictability, co-regulation, and the development of student self-awareness, supporting both trauma-impacted and neurodivergent learners to access learning.

Contribution:

This model has contributed to a reduction in dysregulated behaviours and increased student re-engagement (Nest entries reduced from 407 in Term 1, 2023 to 114 in Term 1, 2026), alongside strengthened staff capacity and consistency. Family engagement has been integral, with parent sessions supporting regulation at home. The site is used as a reference by the University of Adelaide, with Occupational Therapy students referred to observe The Nest and interoception model as part of their Participatory Community Practice projects.

Description:

Students engage in structured interoception activities, develop individual regulation scales, and access layered supports across The Nest and classrooms, supported by ongoing staff coaching.

Engagement:

Participants will engage with practical examples, data, and strategies applicable to their own contexts.

216

Trauma-Informed Pedagogy and Sanctuary Trauma: Moving Beyond Awareness to Prevent Institutional Harm

Oberg G¹, Leslie R¹

¹University Of Southern Queensland

Schools are increasingly positioning themselves as places of sanctuary through trauma-informed pedagogies. Yet an overlooked risk remains: when students or caregivers seek support and encounter dismissal, inflexibility, or institutional resistance, schools can inadvertently become sites of sanctuary trauma. Originally conceptualised in clinical contexts, sanctuary trauma occurs when help-seeking is met with additional harm rather than safety.

This presentation explores how sanctuary trauma manifests in educational settings, particularly for neurodiverse, disabled, chronically ill, culturally diverse, and gender-diverse students and their families. Drawing on interdisciplinary research and a socio-ecological lens, the session identifies structural, interpersonal, and systemic factors that undermine trauma-informed intentions. These include rigid policy frameworks, deficit-oriented communication, microaggressions, exclusionary practices, and institutional responses that prioritise compliance over relational care.

Moving beyond awareness, the presentation offers practical strategies for prevention. These include embedding relational accountability in leadership practice, developing trauma-aware caregiver engagement protocols, reviewing discipline and adjustment policies through a sanctuary lens, and strengthening reflective professional learning focused on power, equity, and micro-level interactions. By reframing sanctuary trauma as a systemic issue rather than an individual misunderstanding, this session supports educators and leaders to move from trauma-informed rhetoric to trauma-transformative practice, ensuring that help-seeking within schools is consistently met with safety, dignity, and trust.

217

Improving Educator Wellbeing Within Student-Centred Practice

Roberts J¹

¹The MacKillop Institute, ²MacKillop Family Services

Aim:

To equip educators and leaders with a practical way to strengthen educator wellbeing within student-centred, trauma-aware practice so that adult emotional regulation and relational stability are sustainable.

Background/Context:

The complexity of inclusive educators' work mean they face elevated stress, emotional fatigue, burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Across more than 3,000 educators in schools implementing the ReLATE Education Model, educator professional quality of life has improved alongside ongoing work to strengthen trauma-aware and inclusive teaching and learning.

Relevance:

Trauma-aware education depends on adults who can remain emotionally regulated, predictable and relational during complexity. This session focuses on the educator conditions that make trauma aware and inclusive practice possible at both classroom and whole-school levels.

Contribution:

Participants will learn from ReLATE's Educator Wellbeing Framework, which organises personal, relational and collective practices that build compassion satisfaction and reduce burnout and secondary traumatic stress through everyday practice and culture.

Description:

This presentation will highlight what helps educators stay attuned to student needs, emotionally regulated during and after stressful incidents, remain connected to purpose and community, and keep improving practice without carrying the work alone. It draws on ReLATE implementation examples and practical insights.

Engagement:

Attendees will be provided with new ways to improve educator wellbeing using practical, real-world examples drawn from everyday school situations. Participants will be invited to connect these examples to their own context and to identify next steps that strengthen educator professional quality of life and student safety in their setting.

218

Masterclass - Rethinking Trauma-Aware Practice: What Young People Wish Adults Understood

Wilson S¹¹Our Pixie Friends

Aim

To extend trauma-aware education beyond awareness into meaningful classroom practice by translating lived experience into practical approaches that improve how educators respond to behaviour.

Background

Despite growing awareness of trauma, a gap remains between understanding and responding effectively.

Children experiencing trauma are often misunderstood, not because educators lack care, but because the internal experience driving behaviour is not always known. Without this insight, well-intended responses can unintentionally increase anxiety.

This session is grounded in the lived experience of 17-year-old Siobhan Wilson, offering rare insight into what sits beneath behaviour and why adult responses have a profound impact.

Relevance

This session supports educators and school leaders to move beyond awareness into meaningful, trauma-informed practice across early childhood, primary, and secondary settings.

Contribution

Participants will gain:

- A deeper understanding of behaviour through a lived-experience lens
- Practical strategies to strengthen emotional safety, connection, and engagement

Description

This masterclass bridges the gap between trauma awareness and classroom practice, reframing behaviour from something to manage to something to understand. Drawing on lived experience, it translates real experiences into practical approaches educators can use immediately, highlighting how everyday interactions can either support safety or increase confusion and anxiety.

Spanning early childhood to adolescence, it provides a clear framework to respond more intentionally, reduce escalation, and support engagement.

Engagement

Participants will:

- Work through real-life classroom scenarios
- Identify helpful and unhelpful responses
- Apply practical strategies to common challenges

219

The neuroscience of complex trauma: A deeper dive

Howard J¹¹Queensland University of Technology

Join Professor Judith Howard to take a (deeper than usual) dive into the neuroscience that explains the difficulties trauma-impacted children and young people in education settings experience with perceiving safety, with engaging well with relationships, with their emotional self-regulation, and therefore with learning. These understandings help us to grasp why these young learners behave in the way they do and face the challenges that they face. These understandings also inform what we can do in response, to enhance the education and life trajectories of this often quite vulnerable group of learners.

Doing and being safe: Listening and collaborating with children about safety in trauma-aware education

Lappin S³, Lappin C², Osenk I¹, Wong R¹, Goldsworthy J², Duke A¹

¹Flinders University, ²Connected Self Wellbeing Services, ³Junction Australia

This masterclass presents research findings and offers practice guidance for listening to children and creating safety in trauma-aware education.

Creating schools where children feel safe is a central goal of trauma aware education. Safety is essential for the prevention and healing of trauma. However, safety is a multifaceted, contextual, and abstract concept that is subjectively experienced. Therefore, to create safe schools for students, we need to involve children and young people in exploring contextual experiences of safety. Attendees of this master class will (1) hear from young participant-researchers, and (2) participate in experiential activities designed by Connected Self Wellbeing Services that support deep exploration of the experience of doing and being safe in school. Participants will walk away with new ideas, practices, and challenging questions to listen to and promote children's experiences of safety.

The Trauma Aware School Village (TASV) is a pilot intervention taking a Tier 1 whole-of-school approach to trauma-aware education in primary schools. Children's experiences of safety were prioritised and investigated through a classroom-based program for students, as well as creative research methods supported by participant researchers.

This master class will present the findings and practices from TASV that centre around 'doing' safe and 'being' safe. These findings challenge the assumption that school spaces are safe, or even neutral, and instead argue that trauma-aware education must include creating physical and social spaces that enable children to do safe things as well as be (and feel) safe.

221

Shifting from knowing to doing: A First Nation's Wellbeing Leader's reflections of trauma informed implementation

Iversen K¹¹Memorial Oval Primary School

Aim

To share a whole school approach to moving from trauma aware training to embedded trauma informed practice, with a focus on what shifted staff from knowing to doing.

Background/Context

Situated within a primary school on Bangarla Country on the Eyre Peninsula, 400 km west of Adelaide, serving a low socioeconomic community with high levels of trauma exposure. As a First Nations Wiradjuri woman and Wellbeing Leader, this work is grounded in relational and culturally responsive practices that prioritises connection, safety and belonging.

All staff completed Berry Street Education Model training in 2024; however, implementation remained inconsistent, highlighting the need for a structured whole school approach.

Relevance and Contribution

This presentation highlights the role of leadership, structure and culturally responsive practice in sustaining implementation.

Description

Staff feedback identified challenges for Junior Primary learners, which led to an implementation team in 2025 to adapt and refine lessons, strengthening quality and staff ownership.

A whole school approach was established with Tier 1 BSEM lessons in 2025, ensuring all students accessed explicit teaching to recognise and respond to stress. These shared resources support consistency across all tiers.

Consistent routines, including circle time with Acknowledgement of Country and ready to learn strategies, are now embedded across the site.

This approach increased consistency, staff confidence and collective ownership. Outcomes include a 57% reduction in wellbeing center access from 2025 to 2026. Wellbeing data showed significant improved in belonging and wellbeing literacy amongst students.

Engagement

Sharing real classroom and school examples for their own school contexts.

222

Joy. Nurture. Learn. Bringing Trauma-Transformative Practice to Life in Port Noarlunga Primary School, SA

Powney M¹, Wright M², Taylor E²

¹Australian Childhood Foundation, ²Port Noarlunga Primary School

Aim:

To share an action research journey that translates trauma-transformative theory into practical, sustainable classroom strategies that foster joy, connection, and readiness to learn.

Background/Context:

This practice reflection journeys through an action research project between the Australian Childhood Foundation, the South Australian Department for Education and Port Noarlunga Primary School, supporting whole-school, trauma-transformative change guided by the SMART Practice Framework. The work centred on fostering joy, supporting a positive start to the day, and strengthening connections between school, families, and community. Through cycles of action and reflection, educators explored the impact of trauma on learning and the critical role of relationships in supporting engagement and trauma transformation.

Relevance:

Students experiencing sadness, disconnection, and stress often struggle to access learning. This project highlights how trauma-transformative, relational approaches support regulation, belonging, and meaningful engagement.

Contribution:

This work demonstrates how embedding reflective, trauma-transformative practice can shift school culture, strengthen educator confidence, and build consistent, strengths-based partnerships with families.

Description:

Using an action research model, educators engaged in termly cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Strategies focused on curiosity, meaning-making, and co-regulation, supporting students to reconnect with safety and re-engage in learning.

Engagement:

This interactive, practice-focused session brings trauma-transformative work to life through real examples, reflective prompts, and shared strategies. Participants will actively explore how small relational shifts can create meaningful change, leaving with practical, strengths-driven approaches ready to apply in their own contexts.

223

Supporting traumatised students in the classroom through the SelfSense self-regulation program.

Blackwell D¹, Philpott-Robinson K¹, Southall A³

¹OTARC - La Trobe University, ³School of Education - La Trobe University

Aim:

To present the impact of SelfSense, a whole class self-regulation program co-delivered by occupational therapists and teachers, on student and teacher self-regulation.

Background/Context:

Meaningful self-regulation requires three foundational capacities: body awareness, co-regulation with a trusted adult, and language to describe internal experiences. For students affected by trauma, disrupted interoceptive processing can compromise all three.

SelfSense is a whole-class, three-stage program, grounded in the Alert Program® framework. It supports all students to recognise internal readiness to learn and to develop a personalised toolkit of sensory and movement strategies to optimise engagement. Delivered universally within the classroom, SelfSense avoids withdrawal models and embeds support within everyday learning environments.

Qualitative interviews identified four trauma-aligned mechanisms through which SelfSense strengthens these foundational capacities: predictable routines that promote felt safety; relational co-regulation through modelling; shared, non-stigmatising language for internal states; and enhanced teacher capacity.

Relevance:

These mechanisms align with core trauma-aware principles of safety, relational connection, and agency. SelfSense adopts a bottom-up approach, supporting students to understand and respond to their internal states, over relying on externally imposed behaviour management strategies.

Contribution:

This study demonstrates how OT–teacher co-teaching can embed trauma-aware, agency-centred practice at a universally, offering a scalable and inclusive model for primary education.

Description:

The workshop outlines SelfSense's design, implementation and impact, showing how co-facilitation enables trauma-aware practice to be embedded within everyday classroom contexts.

Engagement:

Participants will explore interoception and self-regulation through SelfSense activities, reflect on applications to their own context, and take away practical tools for immediate implementation.

224

From the knowing to the doing: Trauma-aware educator wellbeing as a shared system responsibility

Cole M¹¹ARACY - Queensland Kids Partnership

Aim:

To explore trauma-aware educator wellbeing as a shared, cross-sector responsibility, moving beyond awareness into the conditions, capabilities and common language that help adults support children, young people and families.

Background/Context:

Educators are increasingly responding to complex trauma, stress, neurodevelopmental needs and family adversity. Yet the wellbeing of educators is often treated as separate from trauma-informed practice, rather than foundational to it. Drawing on cross-sector work across education, health, youth justice and community services, this presentation explores how frameworks such as The Nest Wellbeing Framework and The Resilience Scale support a more integrated approach. Together, these tools help shift the focus from individual behaviour to the relational, ecological and systemic conditions that enable children and adults to thrive.

Relevance:

Trauma-informed practice is not the work of one role, sector or specialist. It is about all of us. When adults have a shared language for wellbeing, adversity, resilience and relational practice, they are better able to notice what sits beneath behaviour, respond with curiosity and care; supporting their own regulation and wellbeing.

Contribution:

This session contributes a practical systems lens to educator wellbeing, positioning it as core infrastructure for trauma-aware practice and sustainable workforces.

Description:

Using practice examples from capability-building initiatives, the session will explore how shared frameworks can support reflective practice, collaboration and shared responsibility for child and youth wellbeing.

Engagement:

Participants will be invited to reflect on wellbeing in their own contexts, and to consider how shared language and cross-sector approaches can help move trauma awareness into everyday practice.

225

Conversations That Count: When Student Voice Leads Change

Lose K¹¹Berry Street Education Model

Aim

When connection comes first, change follows. Conversations That Count explores how student voice can reshape wellbeing through trauma-informed, strengths-based ways of working. Drawing on practitioner insight, the session moves beyond theory to lay foundations for sustainable, future-focused practice.

Background/Context

This presentation highlights a case study from a South Australian school in a low-socio-economic community. Aligned with the Berry Street Education Model, this school focused on building safety through connection, predictable processes, and relational repair - positioning students as active contributors shaping a school culture underpinned by empathy, equity and shared responsibility. Central to this work are co-designed repair conversations that strengthen relationships and support behaviour change.

Relevance

Repair conversations are a core trauma-informed practice within BSEM, recognising behaviour as communication, prioritising dignity and safety. When educators model unconditional positive regard and share power, students develop self-regulation, agency and belonging.

Contribution

This session demonstrates how authentic student agency, supported by emerging digital technology resources, strengthens relationships, sustains behaviour growth and enhances whole-school culture.

Description

This workshop provides practical examples of a school enacting the Eucalypt Way pathways of learn, apply, and sustain, with a focus on translating professional learning into sustained, measurable practice. This includes:

- The establishment of Wellbeing Agents as leaders of connection and belonging
- The development of a de-escalation pathway titled 'Re-Set Road'
- Repair conversations grounded in shared language

Engagement

Participants engage with reflective prompts and scenarios to explore how student voice can be embedded within trauma-informed practice at their site.

226

A chance to pause: Reflective supervision for school leaders

Phillips M¹

¹Compassionate Schools

Aim: Reflective supervision is a timely, relevant, and effective addition to the range of professional support available to Australian school leaders. This workshop unpacks what reflective supervision is and how it benefits both school leaders and the communities they support.

Background/Context: Drawing on the research evidence documenting psychosocial hazards facing leaders in schools (Dicke et al., 2026), and the author's practice in providing supervision support to principals, assistant principals and wellbeing leaders across three Australian states, this workshop will combine theory and practice for participants to learn about, and apply, reflective practice strategies.

Relevance: The emotional demands of working in schools are well recognised in trauma-aware and trauma-informed settings. Professional supervision is a recommended strategy for leaders to enable them to share, reflect on and process their experiences with students, staff and families in a safe and confidential environment.

Contribution: Reflective supervision is an emerging, evidence-based resource for Australian school leaders, and this workshop will share insights from 2026 supervision with individual leaders and principal networks to add a practice perspective to the national discussion.

Description: The author, a teacher and organisational psychologist (board approved supervisor), will unpack common models and approaches currently being implemented with schools in Australia and the UK.

Engagement: The workshop will include the opportunity for an individual/pair structured reflection, short group debrief of the activity and Q & A; providing participants with the chance to experience an element of the process, and reflect on how they may incorporate supervision in their setting.

227

Heal Through Movement: Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga for Trauma-Aware Educators (Friday)

Yen F¹

¹Australian Trauma Education Centre | QUT

Aim:

To offer participants a direct experiential introduction to trauma centre trauma sensitive yoga and its core principles as an evidence-based wellbeing practice for supporting complex and developmental trauma.

Background/Context:

Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) is the world's first evidence-based yoga intervention specifically developed for complex trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. Twenty years of research, including randomised trials, demonstrate it is as effective as talk therapy in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression and posttraumatic stress while significantly improving interoception and self-regulation. Unlike traditional yoga, it removes performance pressure and physical adjustments, focusing instead on restoring a felt sense of safety and agency in the body through gentle movement that can be practised standing or seated in a chair.

Relevance:

This body-based approach directly advances trauma awareness and trauma-informed practice by giving educators and adult learners a safe, accessible tool for self-regulation and resilience without requiring disclosure or prior experience.

Contribution:

Participants leave equipped to integrate trauma-sensitive movement elements into classrooms, staff wellbeing programs and learner support, expanding practical options for trauma-aware education across vocational and higher education settings.

Description:

Participants will experience a Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive yoga practice that can be fully adapted to standing or seated positions, and an overview of the key theories.

Engagement:

Through active guided practice, reflection, and a brief group discussion on applying the principles in educational contexts to support both staff and trauma-impacted adult learners.

228

"You can't teach regulation that you don't practice yourself"

McGlinchy C¹, Eden D¹

¹He Whānau Manaaki Kindergartens

You can't teach regulation that you don't practice yourself: Lessons from a Trauma-Aware Pilot Last conference, we shared the development of Feeling to Learn a co-designed, trauma aware social and emotional programme grounded in relational neuroscience and mātauranga Māori. This time, we return with what happened when we put it into practice.

Over several months, kaiako across early childhood settings engaged in three relational strands: Mana of the Adult, Mana of the Child, and Belonging. Rather than delivering strategies to manage behaviour, the pilot invited educators to examine adult regulation, bias, cultural identity, and collective responsibility for emotional safety.

What unfolded was not a simple story of improvement. As awareness deepened, confidence sometimes dipped. Conversations about bias and ableism were uncomfortable. Long held behaviour habits surfaced. And yet, within that discomfort, something shifted.

Kaiako began describing behaviour less as defiance and more as communication. Values became visible and shared with tamariki and whānau. Routines were co-constructed. Adult responses slowed. Belonging became intentional rather than assumed.

This presentation explores what it means to move trauma awareness from theory into lived practice. It reflects on the relational conditions required for sustainable change including leadership alignment, time for reflection, and collective care for the adults themselves.

We will share not only what shifted, but what resisted change, and what this suggests about embedding trauma-aware practice at a systems level.

If trauma-aware education is to be more than a programme, it must transform how adults understand themselves.

229

Transforming trauma through movement in education

Duthie S¹¹Australian Childhood Foundation

Aim:

To provide creative, experiential, sensory and body-based strategies supporting regulation, engagement, and connection within the class/room – and when, how and why we use them.

Background/Context:

Movement-based approaches strengthen neural pathways that are disrupted by trauma. Simple, intentional movement supports regulation, attention, learning, safety, belonging and healing.

Relevance:

Trauma-transformative practice recognises body-based activities as healing for children who have experienced trauma. Integrating movement into education spaces and routines offers a practical, non-pathologising approach, creating learning environments where children feel safe within themselves and with others.

Contribution:

This workshop reframes movement not as a behaviour management tool, but as a neurodevelopmental and relational imperative driving regulation, safety, connection, engagement and learning readiness. It provides a grounded rationale for embedding embodied practices into everyday pedagogy, creating trauma-transformative and healing-resourced education systems.

Description:

This workshop draws on practice-based methodology, integrating movement-rich, relationally-attuned activities within class/room environments to support regulation and engagement. Practice examples illustrate how rhythmic, co-regulated movement can shift children from survival-oriented states of mobilisation/immobilisation into readiness for connection and learning, highlighting body-based strategies that are responsive to children's developmental and relational needs. This approach supports reflection on how body-based practices create safer, more responsive environments for children who have experienced trauma.

Engagement:

This interactive workshop utilises case examples, brief experiential movement invitations, and visual material that makes complex ideas accessible and embodied. Weaving together research, story, and action, participants will experience how movement can transform regulation, relationship, and learning.

230

Grab 5 minutes: Building Low-Arousal Transitions & Sensory Strategies for Wellbeing for Lower Primary Students

Delaney J¹, Jones S²

¹Grow Your Mind, ²Highfields

Aim

To equip educators with practical, low-arousal transition and sensory strategies that proactively support wellbeing and engagement in lower primary classrooms.

Background/Context

This workshop is designed by primary school teachers for primary school teachers on the ground. Schools are busy places; this interactive workshop will help participants plan and embed practices that take less than 5 minutes throughout the day. There is no magic here, just simple, embedded practices that support regulation. In contrast, transition times are often high-stimulation moments that can trigger stress responses, particularly for students impacted by trauma or sensory sensitivities. Research highlights the importance of predictability, co-regulation, and proactive wellbeing practices.

Relevance

This session centres trauma-aware practice by focusing on prevention rather than reaction. It demonstrates how everyday classroom routines can reduce dysregulation and support emotional safety for all students.

Contribution

This masterclass offers scalable, whole-class approaches that shift the focus from individual self-regulation to shared, embedded practices. It provides realistic, classroom-tested strategies that can be implemented immediately.

Description

Participants will engage in hands-on activities, including designing a transition flow chart and creating a classroom sensory approach that integrates movement, mindfulness, and co-regulation.

Engagement

The session is interactive and grounded in real classroom scenarios, with opportunities for reflection, collaboration, and practical application.

Keywords

trauma-aware practice, sensory regulation, co-regulation, primary education, student wellbeing

231

Grassroots trauma awareness in regional Tasmania: Community capacity-building through Trauma Awareness Network Australia and TANATalks

Holzner K¹, Lizotte M¹

¹Trauma Awareness Network Australia

Communities across North-West Tasmania experience compounded social and economic pressures, including some of the nation's highest levels of socioeconomic disadvantage, as reflected in multiple SEIFA indicators which place many regional areas in the lowest national bands. These challenges intersect with persistent educational inequities: Tasmania continues to record the lowest school retention and Year 12 attainment rates in Australia, well below national averages, with attendance rates and learning outcomes consistently trailing other states. Alongside this, substance use remains a significant concern, with illicit drug use occurring at higher rates than the national average.

In this context, the Trauma Awareness Network Australia (TANA), grassroots, volunteer-powered, not-for-profit group in North-West Tasmania, works to strengthen trauma literacy, resilience, and community wellbeing. Through its flagship community education model, TANATalks, TANA provides accessible, science-informed trauma knowledge to residents across education, youth work, health, social services, and justice-adjacent community networks.

This presentation explores how TANA mobilises ordinary community members, to engage with the science of trauma, stress responses, and building resilience offering a cross-sector, community-first strategy for disrupting cycles of adversity. By emphasising relational connection and shared understanding, TANATalks builds local confidence, reduces shame associated with trauma responses, and expands the capacity of communities to nurture resilience.

Positioned at the intersection of health, youth, social work, education, and community development, this grassroots model demonstrates how small regional communities can lead transformative trauma-aware practices. The session will highlight practical examples, local insights, and implications for other rural areas seeking to build trauma-aware capacity from the ground up.

232

We need to talk about pedagogy: Integrating trauma-informed instructional practices to enhance learning

Greig J¹¹Berry Street Education Model

Aim:

A trauma-informed perspective on instructional practices asks educators to plan for the impacts that adversity and childhood trauma can have on young peoples' development and readiness to learn.

Background/Context:

The developmental impacts of trauma can disrupt students' ability to engage in learning and challenge educators' capacity to teach effectively. From an attachment theory perspective, early experiences of safety or threat shape how students perceive relationships and learning environments (Ogden, 2021). When stress levels are high, cognitive processes such as working memory and executive functioning are compromised (Tomoda et al., 2025). In classroom settings, students affected by trauma may interpret learning demands as unsafe, activating survival responses and leading to avoidant or disengaged behaviours (Beloyianni & Touloumakos, 2025).

Contribution:

Educators can proactively plan and carefully structure instructional practices to meet young people's needs for physical, relational, and psychological safety while at the same time maximising classroom engagement for growth in learning. Trauma-informed instructional practices show promising results for increasing attentional capacity, empowering student confidence and autonomy, and supporting the retention of learning for all students, particularly for students with complex learning needs (Martín, 2024).

Engagement:

In this workshop, you will learn:

- how maintaining high expectations and a focus on trauma-informed instructional practices has helped the Berry Street School students feel and achieve success as learners
- how the Berry Street Education Model has integrated the sciences of learning, trauma-informed practice, and wellbeing sciences into instructional planning to support students and educators.

233

Understanding the relationship between shame, trauma and behaviour policies and practices in schools and workplaces

Thorsborne M¹

¹Margaret Thorsborne and Associates

Trauma often triggers shame. It initially impacts our sense of self as flawed, and can linger, sometimes over a lifetime, to shape our behaviours and relationships with others. When we can conceptualise shame as a neurobiological social alarm, it will help us recognise our shame-defence behaviours, in ourselves and others, including children. Knowing what to do with these strong responses in self and others from a relational neurobiological perspective can guide our thinking about our behaviour policies and protocols.

Schools systems built on a carrots and sticks approach to discipline can do more harm to individuals and relationships as many of their strategies trigger unnecessary shame. This impacts of learning, erodes wellbeing, and risks disengagement along with more shame defence behaviours. A relational, restorative approach to issues of responsibility and accountability is more likely to minimise these negative outcomes, allowing shame to be metabolised in a healthy way and healing to be possible.

This workshop will explore the nature of shame, its power in our lives and relationships and how to view our disciplinary policies and protocols through shame-sensitive lens.

234

Prevention is Better than a Cure: preparing our children for the world they inherit.

Sacco B¹¹Education Economy

In a world defined by rapid change, uncertainty and complexity, meaningful impact comes from intentionally shaping learning environments that prevent disengagement through learner curiosity, safety and trauma-informed practices.

Drawing on insights from his book “Disruption in Schools: Understand me before you mark me!”, Ben Sacco demonstrates how children learn to navigate uncertainty, make decisions and reflect on outcomes when given agency rather than direction. Structures that are predictable do not always create calm and prevention is not about shielding children from challenges either.

This keynote explores considerations for designing learning environments that help children think critically, adapt, reflect and heal. We will examine the difference between protection and preparation, why over-structured learning can limit growth and how conditions that encourage learner curiosity are important in modern classrooms.

These are the conditions that transform uncertainty into opportunity.

Start where you are and do what you can! From Awareness to Action at Sheffield Hallam University, UK.

Pearse S¹, O'Brien, S²

¹Sheffield Hallam University & Director of the Early Years Community

Research Centre (EYCRC), United Kingdom ²Head of the Chester School of Education at the University of Chester, United Kingdom

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) is a major public university in a large post-industrial city in the north of England. The university has a strong, distinct focus on applied learning, vocational education, and graduate employability. It is one of the UK's largest universities, with a student population of approximately 32,000. The university is a top UK provider of graduate training for teachers, health and social care professionals and the creative industries. It trains approximately 1,000 new teachers each year on its core programmes across all age phases of education.

In this session we will share how trauma informed practice came to Sheffield Hallam University, how we have applied the approach and our aspirations for future work. It will describe how Early years specialists introduced trauma informed practice, and how the knowledge and the momentum grew across multiple domains throughout the university. We will explore some of the challenges and barriers as well as the opportunities grasped by the willing and the ambitious.

Beginning pre-Covid, we will outline how the work was initially predominantly centred in the core Initial Teacher Education provision but was soon extended and became integrated into the Civic work of the university with partners and in communities. We will share two specific examples of trauma informed work that helped children, families and young people cope with the pandemic and its aftermath. As the positive impact of trauma informed practice became clear, we will outline how the call for awareness and action was taken up across multiple disciplines as well as in student support and wellbeing. Finally, we will reflect on the need for further action to address our current challenges in a world of change and insecurity.

301

Trauma-Transformative Education: Building Schools Where Safety, Connection and Healing Can Flourish

Mitchell J¹¹Australian Childhood Foundation

Schools are now at the frontline of responding to the impacts of trauma on children and young people. Teachers see it every day in learning disruptions, relational withdrawal, emotional overwhelm and behaviours that communicate distress long before they communicate intent. Yet the frameworks available to educators have not kept pace with the complexity of what children are carrying, nor with what schools are being asked to hold.

This keynote traces the evolution of trauma-informed approaches and explains why education now needs a more contemporary, practice-aligned paradigm: trauma-transformative practice. The presentation highlights how early trauma-informed models helped raise awareness but have struggled to translate into consistent, measurable change in classrooms and school cultures. Trauma-transformative practice offers that roadmap. It reframes trauma not as a behavioural issue but as a disruption to safety, development, meaning-making and relational connection and positions schools as powerful environments for buffering, healing and hope. The keynote introduces the dimensions of trauma-transformative educational practice, including:

- Safety and predictability as foundations for learning
- Shame-responsiveness and relational repair
- Cultural humility and decolonising commitments
- Strengths-based meaning-making
- Relational integration across the whole school
- Compassion, hope and future orientation
- Collective responsibility and system alignment

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From Trauma-Informed to Trauma-Transformative: Creating Classrooms Where Children Can Heal, Belong and Thrive

Mitchell J¹¹Australian Childhood Foundation

Children do not leave their experiences at the school gate. Many arrive in classrooms carrying the impacts of adversity, loss, exclusion, disrupted relationships and trauma. While trauma-informed approaches have helped educators better understand the effects of these experiences on learning and behaviour, trauma-transformative practice challenges us to go further, moving beyond awareness to intentionally creating environments that support healing, connection, agency and hope.

This highly interactive workshop introduces educators to the 12 Elements of Trauma-Transformative Practice, a framework that positions relationships as the foundation for both learning and healing. Through practical reflection, collaborative discussion and real-world classroom scenarios, participants will explore how trauma-transformative principles can be embedded in everyday teaching practice. The workshop focuses on creating learning environments that are safety dedicated, relationally integrative, shame responsive, compassion oriented and guided by therapeutic intent. Rather than viewing challenging behaviour through a lens of compliance and control, teachers will be invited to consider how experiences of trauma, grief, shame and disconnection shape children's engagement with school, relationships and learning. Participants will examine how seemingly ordinary moments such as greeting students, responding to distress, managing conflict, fostering student voice and building belonging can become powerful opportunities for growth and healing. Using case studies, small-group activities and reflective inquiry, educators will explore practical strategies for strengthening felt safety, nurturing meaningful relationships, honouring lived experience and fostering hope within their classrooms and school communities. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of how trauma-transformative principles can support both student wellbeing and educational outcomes, while also identifying concrete actions they can implement immediately in their own practice.

Teaching Through Relationships: Trauma-Informed Approaches for Trainee Teachers

O'Brien, S¹

¹Head of the Chester School of Education at the University of Chester, United Kingdom

Why wasn't I trained in trauma-informed approaches when I did my initial teacher training (ITT)? This is one of the most common responses we receive when introducing Trauma Informed learning and development programmes to experienced ITT tutors. This reaction prompted mandatory training across all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision at the university, ensuring that more than 1,000 new teachers each year, across all age phases from 0–5 to post-16, receive initial training and certification, despite trauma-informed practice not being included within the compulsory Core Content Framework for ITT in England (Initial Teacher Training (ITT): Core Content Framework – GOV.UK).

In this session, I will share some of the theoretical and practical approaches used with trainee teachers, equipping them from the very start of their careers. This will include introducing key relational skills that help meet the relational needs of children and young people in the classroom; demonstrating how trainee teachers are taught the importance of social engagement in supporting learning and connection; and sharing a range of strategies for creating psychological safety in the classroom.

Alongside the importance of supporting children and young people to thrive through the presence of an emotionally available adult in school, a key priority is helping new teachers manage their own stress responses. This includes recognising the biology of stress and understanding the importance of , and strategies for, self-regulation within what can be a highly dysregulating environment. At a time when teacher retention in the early years of the profession remains a significant challenge, supporting new teachers to thrive in the classroom is paramount. I will share our approach and the impact of this training on both trainee teachers and ITT tutors.

304

Relationship Mapping: a tool to support connection with young children and families and promote reflective practice

Pearse S¹

¹Sheffield Hallam University & Director of the Early Years Community Research Centre (EYCRC), United Kingdom

Research consistently shows the benefits of close, caring relationships between children and adults in early years and school settings, though these are often overlooked in professional practice. Such relationships help children settle into new environments, form further attachments, and make stronger progress in language, reading, and grammar. They are also central to trauma-informed practice.

Advances in understanding brain development and the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences further emphasise the importance of relational approaches. Having an emotionally available adult before age eighteen can buffer the impact of trauma. In educational contexts, positive relationships can provide this protective role, offering a secure base for learning and development while shaping children's expectations of trust in others. However, some children who most need this support may resist forming relationships due to past experiences. Without a systematic approach to ensuring every child is supported through positive connections, these children risk being overlooked. This session introduces a simple relationship-mapping tool that supports reflection and practice. It allows practitioners to consider their feelings towards children, track how relationships develop over time, and identify those who may remain emotionally distant. The tool can also reveal patterns—such as differences related to gender—that might otherwise go unnoticed. Participants will have the opportunity to create a map for the children they work with and explore how it can strengthen their own relational practice and that of their team.

305

Implementing trauma informed practice in education for First Nations students

Johnson A¹¹Hester Holbrook Academy

Aim

To share with the audience the work Hester Hornbrook Academy are doing to implement trauma-informed practices that support and empower First Nations students.

Background

We see the importance of leading in trauma-informed, healing-oriented education for our students in a Special Assistance School. This perspective recognises that healing, identity formation, and educational engagement are deeply interconnected, and that culturally safe environments are essential.

Relevance

This presentation highlights the key features of trauma-informed practice that can support schools to engage First Nations students meaningfully and create connection.

Contribution

Our strategic intent to put students first by designing every wellbeing and learning experience around their aspirations and life pathways is reflected in the healing-oriented approach, where 'Wellbeing for Learning and Learning for Wellbeing' is foundational. We share how cultural safety is created through ongoing consultation with First Nations communities, ensuring identity, connection, and self-determination are embedded in curriculum, pedagogy, and campus design.

Description

The First Nations Community Engagement Lead strengthens our healing-oriented approach, ensuring trauma-informed practice is grounded in First Nation ways of knowing, being, and doing. We will share how this role and targeted actions advance a model of education where cultural identity and healing are not peripheral but central, shaping wellbeing, strengthening community connection, and supporting lifelong learning pathways.

Engagement

The audience will be engaged through an interactive workshop with activities to support understanding of the practices being implemented.

306

Square pegs in round holes: changing the narrative of trauma-informed education

Spooner-lane R¹, LÉstrange L¹, Brown M¹, Steindl E²

¹QUT, ²University of Sunshine Coast

Exposure to trauma among children and young people is increasingly prevalent, prompting Australian schools to embed trauma-informed practices. Professional learning has supported teachers to recognise trauma-related responses (e.g., dysregulation, impulsivity, hostility, and disruption), yet less is known about how schools are building trauma-responsive communities. This exploratory study draws on interviews with school leaders, teachers, and school-based allied health professionals (e.g., counsellors, social workers) who have completed a Graduate Certificate or Master of Education in Trauma-Aware Education program to provide a nuanced picture of how schools work to reduce the detrimental impact of trauma. Using the conditions of systems change model (Kania et al., 2018), findings show that trauma-informed education is largely driven by committed individuals but remains constrained by fragmented policy, limited resourcing and support, and inconsistent staff buy-in. The study underscores the need for holistic, system-wide change across policies, relationships, and entrenched beliefs.

307

BELONGing before learning: transforming outcomes for neurodiverse students through trauma-aware practice

Sneesby M¹

¹Berengarra School

Aim:

To demonstrate how a trauma-aware school framework facilitates measurable transformation among neurodiverse and disengaged students with trauma and complex mental health experiences.

Background/Context:

This practice reflection examines the implementation of the BELONG model in a specialist secondary setting that serves students with social and emotional complexity. The model incorporates consistent routines, relational practice, daily check-ins, and strengths-based pedagogy to reduce cognitive load and enhance psychological safety.

Relevance:

Aligned with the conference theme, this work highlights innovative trauma-aware approaches that foster significant improvements in engagement, wellbeing, and learning during adolescence.

Contribution:

This session presents an actionable, evidence-informed framework that connects wellbeing, curriculum, and student agency. Early outcomes include improved attendance, reduced stress, and increased learner confidence, particularly among neurodivergent and trauma-impacted students. This work is informing the design of a purpose-built trauma-aware campus, extending these principles into the physical learning environment.

Description:

The session provides a case-based overview of implementation across years 7 to 12, featuring structured routines, restorative practices, and co-regulation strategies. Insights are grounded in practitioner reflection, student perspectives, and ongoing data-informed refinements.

Engagement:

Participants will analyse authentic classroom scenarios and adaptable strategies for application in their own settings.

Keywords:

Trauma-aware practice; neurodiversity; student engagement; relational pedagogy; whole-school approach

Contribution Format:

Practice reflections

308

Emotional Intelligence 2.0: Moving Beyond Awareness to Emotional Competence in Schools

Slade P¹¹Switch4schools

Aim:

To explore how Emotional Intelligence 2.0 (EI 2.0) extends trauma-aware education by moving beyond emotional awareness toward emotional competence, agency, and decision-making capacity in students and educators.

Background/Context:

Trauma-aware education has made significant contributions to improving emotional safety, awareness, and compassion in schools. However, emerging research and practice suggest that awareness alone does not reliably translate into improved regulation, judgement, or resilience. EI 2.0 reframes emotion not only as something to be named or managed, but as information that can be interpreted, regulated, and used skillfully. This approach draws on contemporary psychology, neuroscience, and behavioural science to distinguish emotional literacy from emotional competence.

Relevance:

For trauma-aware practice to be sustainable, individuals and systems require skills that support emotional regulation, impulse management, and adaptive decision-making under stress. EI 2.0 offers a framework that complements trauma awareness while addressing educator wellbeing, student agency, and system-level functioning.

Contribution:

This presentation contributes a conceptual and practice-informed framework that helps educators avoid unintended outcomes such as emotional dependency, fragility, or avoidance, while maintaining trauma sensitivity. It offers language and tools for strengthening emotional capability rather than simply reducing distress.

Description:

The presentation synthesises research insights with applied examples from school settings, illustrating how EI 2.0 can be embedded into classroom practice, staff development, and wellbeing systems.

Engagement:

Participants will engage through reflective prompts, short scenarios, and interactive discussion to apply EI 2.0 concepts to their own educational contexts.

Keywords:

emotional intelligence, trauma-aware education, emotional regulation, educator wellbeing, student agency

309

From Crisis to Care – Embedding Trauma-Informed Practice in School Critical Incident Response

Evans J¹, Harris S¹

¹Department For Education

Aim:

To demonstrate how the Social Work Incident Support Service (SWISS) provides a unique and innovative model involving specialist, trauma-informed critical incident responses for South Australian school communities.

Background/Context:

SWISS was established in 2015 by the South Australian Department for Education, as Australia's first specialist centralised crisis response service in of its kind within education. It arose to address the significant impact of traumatic incidents such as community deaths, harmful sexual behaviour, suicidal and self-harm behaviours, and natural disasters on education communities.

Relevance:

SWISS exemplifies how trauma-aware principles translate into real-world responses that meet the immediate and ongoing needs of students and staff following critical incidents.

Contribution:

SWISS shows how trauma theory becomes active practice, supporting school communities to assess impacts, plan responses, and embed trauma-informed approaches during crises. By modelling calm, containment, and compassion, SWISS clarifies adult roles, strengthens student connections to relational and cultural supports, and supports recovery.

Description:

Utilising trauma-informed principles of safety, relationships, collaboration, cultural humility, and strengths-based practice, SWISS social workers offer a seven day telephone duty line, to provide consultation with staff and on-site support including psychological first aid with students, training and development for staff and collaborative recovery planning with staff and families.

Engagement:

The presentation will engage the audience through applied case examples drawn from recent critical incident responses, illustrating how trauma-informed principles are enacted using the SWISS practice model. These will support reflection on application, with opportunity for questions and discussion at the conclusion to consolidate understanding and invite professional dialogue.

310

Reconnect to School Kit: a trauma-informed tool for addressing Emotion Based School Attendance Problems

Brooke L¹

¹Nsw Department Of Educaiton, ²NSW Premier's Teaching Scholarship (sponsored by Anika Foundation), ³Australian Network for School Attendance

Aim:

This presentation aims to deepen understanding of emotion-based school avoidance (EBSA) and provide educators and clinicians with clear, evidence-based intervention ideas that are practical to implement. It also explores what schools can do to meaningfully reengage learners who are struggling to attend based on recent research.

Background/context:

EBSA is a complex and increasingly prevalent challenge with significant consequences for students' academic engagement, social development, and long-term wellbeing. School avoidance rarely reflects a single cause, instead emerging from an interplay of individual, relational, school, and family factors — many of which are rooted in experiences of stress, anxiety, and trauma.

Relevance:

The presentation applies a trauma-informed lens to school avoidance, moving beyond punitive or attendance-focused responses. The Reconnect to School Kit supports educators and clinicians to identify the drivers of a student's avoidance and choose targeted, evidence-based interventions to address them.

Contribution:

This work offers a cross-sector framework for collaborative, evidence-based responses to EBSA, and introduces a completely free digital case formulation tool that translates trauma-informed principles into everyday school and clinical practice.

Description:

Practitioners work through a structured set of questions about the student's presenting situation, drawing on information gathered from the student, family, and school. The tool analyses these responses to generate tailored intervention recommendations that can guide planning across home, school, and clinical settings.

Engagement:

Attendees will be invited to explore the digital tool and reflect on case-based examples, leaving with practical strategies for identifying and managing drivers of school avoidance.

311

Trauma-Informed Primary School-Based Support for Families with Service Mistrust is Crucial for Successful Cultural Partnerships

Taylor S¹, Ashman M

¹Berry Street, ²Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency

Aim:

Side By Side (SBS) is a school-based early intervention program grounded in trauma-informed practice and genuine partnership to offer a culturally safe, non-stigmatising pathway to support vulnerable children and families. Our strengths-based approach asks educators and service providers to plan for the impacts of intergenerational trauma, and histories of institutional harm on families' capacity to engage with schools and external services.

Background/Context:

Many vulnerable families carry deep mistrust of services arising from histories of over-surveillance, removal, and repeated system failures. First Nations families in particular, intergenerational experiences of institutional harm have shaped initial responses to support. When cultural safety isn't considered, families disengage. With 30% of participants in the program identifying as First Nations, cultural safety was foundational, not incidental.

Contribution:

SBS, delivered by Berry Street Yooralla in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency, supported approximately 300 students across nine Victorian schools — First Nations students and families, alongside refugee families, those experiencing intergenerational poverty, and families impacted by family violence. The program's three-tiered design integrated whole-school trauma-informed transformation, direct student literacy and social-emotional support, and meaningful family engagement. Trauma-informed professional development and termly consultations were sustained across the five-year pilot, embedding culturally safe practice as schoolwide norms.

Engagement: Participants will learn:

- How to work collaboratively with First Nations organisations to ensure cultural perspectives shape engagement from the ground up.
- How to build strengths-based partnerships with families experiencing disadvantage.
- How the three-tiered model improved student learning, wellbeing, and family connection.

312

Seen, Heard, and Beyond Statistics: A Trauma-Aware Outreach Model in a Rural Flexible School

Mitchell B¹

¹Carinity Education – Glendyne

Carinity Education Glendyne is a Special Assistance School (SAS) in regional Queensland, serving a community shaped by low socio-economic conditions, limited youth engagement opportunities, and intergenerational enrolment. Located in Hervey Bay, young people often describe the area as offering “nothing to do,” contributing to disengagement and, for some, involvement in antisocial behaviour.

Over nearly 30 years, Glendyne has developed into a relational, adaptive setting. We are now seeing former students return to enrol their own children, reflecting both continuity and entrenched cycles of trauma and system disengagement.

Our cohort includes many young people diagnosed with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and other neurodiverse profiles, alongside a significant number who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. This reinforces the need for inclusive, trauma-aware environments grounded in safety, belonging, and high expectations.

In response, we developed the Outreach Program, a four-day-per-week trauma-aware initiative supporting students unable to engage even in flexible schooling. The model prioritises connection, dignity, and agency, with learning delivered through functional literacy, numeracy, and real-world community engagement.

This interactive workshop shares the program’s design and impact through de-identified case studies. Participants will co-design trauma-aware responses relevant to their own contexts, drawing on practitioner knowledge, lived experience, and regional insight.

Outcomes include improved engagement, reduced justice involvement, and increased pathways into employment and training. The session reframes success as connection, dignity, and sustainable life outcomes.

313

Emotional Regulation: The embodied journey of containment & curiously learning

Lyons K¹¹Active OT for Kids

Background:

When children experience safety, the mind operates as a curious and adaptive network, integrating cognition, emotion, and action. The body—through sensation, rhythm, and movement—is central to creating this sense of safety and supporting engagement in learning and relationships. Trauma disrupts this mind–body flow, often limiting access to grounding, curiosity, self-regulation, and connection in educational contexts.

Aim:

This workshop aims to explore how embodied grounding and sensory awareness can restore conditions of safety that support curiosity, learning, and relational connection for children impacted by trauma.

Relevance to Trauma and Education:

In schools and learning environments, trauma commonly presents as difficulties with attention, behavior, emotional regulation, and social engagement. Cognitive or behavior-focused strategies alone may be ineffective when the nervous system remains dysregulated. This workshop emphasizes the body as a primary entry point for trauma-responsive education, offering practical approaches that align with children’s neurobiological and developmental needs.

Description and Engagement:

The workshop conceptualizes the body as a container for sensation and emotion and examines how embodied, sensory-based practices can reopen pathways to learning and connection. Participants will engage in experiential activities that cultivate sensory awareness, grounding, and rhythm, deepening understanding of how embodied experiences foster safety, regulation, and adaptive engagement.

Contribution to the Field:

By integrating principles from multi-sensory learning and trauma-informed practice, this workshop contributes an embodied framework that bridges learning and healing. It offers educators and practitioners practical, experiential strategies that position the body as a critical mediator of safety, curiosity, and meaningful educational participation.

314

From Behaviour to Belonging: Reframing Student Support Through Inclusion

Gundogan S¹¹Hester Hornbrook Academy

Aim

This session advocates for a trauma-informed approach that moves beyond awareness to transformation by challenging deficit based interpretations of behaviour and centring safety, identity, belonging, and student voice.

Background

Grounded in practice within a flexible learning context, it focuses on learners in out-of-home care, those identifying as LGBTQIA+, from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and individuals with lived experience of trauma, systemic inequity, and disrupted educational pathways. Too often, behaviour is interpreted in isolation from identity, culture, and context, reinforcing exclusionary practices and disengagement, particularly where schools fail to engage with research, community members or adopt culturally responsive approaches.

Relevance

Positioned across policy and systems perspectives and practice reflections, this session highlights the need for whole-school, cross-sector approaches that embed inclusive, trauma-informed practice while remaining grounded in practitioner insight.

Contribution

Our healing-oriented approach presents a scalable framework to reframe behaviour as communication, amplify student voice, and create predictable, relational environments that reduce re-traumatisation. We share how this and the equal focus on Wellbeing and Learning can maximise positive impacts for students and their pathways.

Description

The session addresses trauma-informed educator wellbeing, recognising that sustainable change requires building staff capacity, confidence, and care. This workshop aims to equip participants with practical strategies that can be immediately applied and sustained, while incorporating futures thinking to respond to social change and increasingly diverse student identities.

Engagement

The audience will be engaged through case studies, professional learning models, and interactive scenario based reflection.

315

Willunga High School: A journey of improvement through Trauma Informed Practice

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¹Willunga High School

Aim:

To share a five-year whole-school journey of embedding trauma-informed education practices within a secondary school, highlighting the processes that led to improved student outcomes and staff wellbeing.

Background/Context:

Willunga High School implemented trauma-informed practices guided by the Berry Street Education Model and South Australia's Trauma Aware Schools Initiative. The approach focused on staged implementation, ongoing professional learning, and consistent classroom practices centred on relationship-building, emotional regulation, and predictability across all year levels. A strong emphasis was placed on process, recognising that sustainable change requires time, clarity, and consistency.

Relevance:

This work directly aligns with trauma awareness and trauma-informed practice by creating safe, predictable learning environments that support student regulation, engagement, and wellbeing while strengthening staff capacity and confidence.

Contribution:

The initiative demonstrates measurable impact, including a 75% reduction in behavioural incidents, improved GPA, and increased student engagement and wellbeing. It also highlights improved staff confidence, satisfaction, and collective efficacy, offering a scalable model for sustainable school improvement.

Description:

The presentation outlines a staged implementation model supported by ongoing professional learning, data monitoring, and structured opportunities for reflection. Continuous consultation with staff, students, and the wider community informed iterative refinement and ensured alignment across the school.

Engagement:

Participants will engage through practical examples, data insights, and reflective prompts to support application in their own contexts, alongside opportunities to consider implementation strategies suited to their settings.

Keywords:

staff capacity building; changing culture within complexity;

316

Transforming lives: Using Relational Maps as Tools for Agency, Connection and Repair

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This presentation highlights the importance of explicitly supporting relationships and restoration for students experiencing school exclusion and disconnection through Relational Mapping.

South Australian Behaviour and Learning Centres work with students excluded or disconnected from school due to behaviour and complex learning needs. These students often have experiences of complex trauma, exacerbated through school and family relational ruptures. By focusing on relationships with the Relational Mapping tool (contextualised by Learning and Behaviour units), students are encouraged to narrate their lived experiences, bringing to light both strengths and gaps within their relational networks.

Relational Mapping is a student-centred practice that makes psychological safety foundational, enabling students to candidly map their connections with adults and peers. The stories that emerge reveal where support and repair are needed and possibilities for developing new, positive connections. Insights gained do more than paint a picture; they inform the co-design of tailored intervention plans, directing attention to repairing ruptured/stressed/uncertain relationships while strengthening and leveraging existing bonds. This process provides a roadmap for healing, growth, and genuine transformation.

This presentation will explain the underlying importance of relationships to trauma-informed education and how this has been actioned through the Relational Mapping tool. Participants will develop an understanding of this strategy that brings relational practice to life. Schools adopting this approach create environments where every student's voice matters and opportunities for connection and wellbeing are actively pursued. Participants will see actual mapping undertaken with students and practise using the relational mapping exercise at their own sites.

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