

Research Abstracts: Day One, 8th July 2015

9.45am	KEYNOTE: "Personal Best (PB) Approaches to School and Schoolwork: Motivational Strategies to Optimise Students' Academic Development" <i>Dr Andrew Martin</i>
	<p><i>How do we help students strive to reach their potential? How do we help them to do a bit more rather than less in the classroom? How do we implement strategies that switch on ALL students, regardless of their ability? This presentation outlines latest research and strategies aimed at promoting 'personal best' (PB) approaches in the classroom. Dr Martin also identifies some of the key issues relevant to realising the personal potential of students with particular focus on ways to maximise academic success, build persistence and control, and reduce fear of failure. Dr Martin concludes by presenting a new framework – 'connective instruction' – that harnesses the power of teacher-student relationships to optimise students' academic outcomes.</i></p>
11.00am	Re-imagining learning spaces <i>Dr Derek Bland, Dr Hilary Hughes & Dr Jill Willis</i>
	<p><i>Rocket-powered libraries, a doorway to Narnia and a 'room of imagination'. These were among the exciting ideas that primary school students contributed to the 'Re-imagining Learning Spaces' project. They may sound like pure fantasy but behind them are insights about how children want to connect to education - through learning environments that engage their imaginations. While the project investigated the down-to-earth realities of new school libraries constructed under the BER scheme, students' views provided additional insights of social imagination: "the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be [...] in our schools" (Greene, 1995, p. 5). It showed that collaborating with children in school and classroom design has the potential to enrich teaching and learning for everyone.</i></p>
11.20am	Engagement in context: local innovations and student engagement <i>A/Prof Linda Graham with Mr John Goh, Ms Solange Cruz & Ms Ashleigh Catanzariti</i>
	<p><i>This presentation outlines ongoing research into the impacts of school-based innovations on student engagement and school liking. The study began in 2013 when Merrylands East Public School opted to change their school hours to 8am-1.15pm under the NSW Government's "Local Schools, Local Decisions" policy. The aim of the project was to research the impacts of those changes and others in pedagogy, learning spaces and technology, with a specific focus on student engagement. Between pre- and post-test time-points, there was a significant increase in school liking. Analysis of a range of data, however, told us that this was not simply due to the changes in school hours and that increases in school liking came from a particular student cohort: boys in upper primary. <i>So what happened to switch these students onto school and, even more importantly, onto learning?</i></i></p>
	<p><i>In the two school presentations following this research presentation, "Knocking down walls" and "Learning never stops", Principal John Goh and MEPS teachers discuss the beliefs, practices and pedagogies that underpin and guide approaches to teaching and learning at Merrylands East Public School.</i></p>

1.15pm	National Exceptional Teachers for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS), A/Prof Bruce Burnett & A/Prof Jo Lampert with NETDS schools & teachers
	<p>The NETDS program began 6 years ago at QUT with the main aims of better preparing high-achieving pre-service teachers to work in low SES schools, and to re-distribute these highly-effective, specialised teachers to high poverty schools that need them the most. In 2015, with the support of both philanthropy and an ARC Linkage, the program has grown to 7 other universities around the country and is proving successful in its aims. The panel following our initial research presentation – comprising teacher educators, principals and NETDS teachers – will discuss the crucial partnerships that are necessary in making systemic change.</p>
2.45pm	Valuing Indigenous heritage through multimodal literacy <i>Dr Kathy Mills with Hymba Yumba principal John Davis & Hymba Yumba teachers</i>
	<p>The study on which this presentation is based focuses on the particular ways in which students' counter-narratives about race were embedded in multimodal and digital design in the development of a digital cultural heritage. The multimodal texts were analysed as a site for students' views of Indigenous oppression in relation to the colonial powers and ownership of the land in Australian history. In this presentation, Kathy will demonstrate how pedagogies that explore counter-narratives of cultural heritage in the official curriculum can encourage students to reframe their own racial identity, while challenging dominant white, historical narratives of colonial conquest, race, and power.</p>
	<p>In the session following this research presentation, Indigenous Principal, John Davis and teachers from HymbaYumba Community Hub will provide a school-based, Indigenous panel to inspire educators with authentic ways to embed Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum.</p>
4.00pm	KEYNOTE: HOW to "Teach like a PIRATE, increase student engagement, boost your creativity, and transform your life as an educator" <i>Dave Burgess</i>
	<p>Join New York Times Best-Selling author Dave Burgess for a high-energy, entertaining, and inspirational program that will transform the way you look at your role as an educator. Learn how to dramatically increase student engagement, design wildly creative lessons, and build a course that is a life-changing experience for your students. Using a unique combination of magic and humour, he will reignite your passion for the education profession and show you exactly how to make school an amazing place that has students wanting to knock down the walls to get in.</p>
6.00pm	KEYNOTE: "A Class Act for all - Success and Challenge in Australian schooling" <i>Maxine McKew</i>
	<p>Following the success of her political memoir, <i>Tales from the Political Trenches</i>, published in 2012, Maxine McKew's new book <i>Class Act</i> looks at some of the most important questions in Australian education. For the past two years Maxine has been a Vice Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne. Located in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education she has drawn on the expertise and substantial research of the school to inform her stories of success and challenge in Australian education.</p> <p><i>Maxine's presentation will be followed by a complimentary reception sponsored by QUT Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Coaldrake.</i></p>

Research Abstracts: Day Two, 9th July 2015

9.00am	KEYNOTE: Building the “Relational School” – or how to move beyond the way we have ‘blown it’, educationally <i>Professor John Smyth</i>
	Education and the schooling of young people in western countries are coming to be defined by a common language: student achievement, school improvement, national test results, school autonomy, league tables, and a provided curriculum. There may well be merit to some of these ideas, but this paper asks the pertinent question: ‘is there more?’ Drawing from a background of 40 years of listening to what the most alienated and disaffected young people have to say about their experience of schooling, this paper offers up a perspective that can no longer be ignored—that of young people themselves! Summarised as the ‘relational school’, young people are very clear about the set of conditions that has to exist if they are to ‘hang in’ with school and benefit from what school has to offer. Against this backdrop, this paper asks: given the gravity of what is at stake, can we afford not to listen?
10.00am	Strategies for increasing high school completion rates in low-retention regions: Findings from the “Staying on at School Study” <i>Dr Katrina Barker & Professor Margaret Vickers</i>
	The 4-year-long Staying On research project, supported by NSW DEC and ARC funding, has identified teaching practices, social-relational contexts, and school programs that can effectively facilitate students’ re-engagement. Our findings are based on a large scale mixed methods approach across three geographic regions of NSW where retention rates to Year 12 are persistently low. Unlike most other engagement studies, we specifically recruited young people who were actually disengaged during their early high school years (Years 7, 8 and 9) and sought to understand how these young people can be turned around over time to re-engage. This presentation will focus on both the triggers that initiate change and importantly the processes through which new commitments to learning are consolidated.
11.00am	Challenging the ‘dictatorship of no alternative’: What can we learn from flexi schools? <i>Prof Martin Mills, Dr Glenda McGregor, A/Prof Debra Hayes, A/Prof Kitty Te Riele & Dr Aspa Baroutsis</i>
	This presentation will draw on data from a range of ‘flexi schools’ and flexible learning centres’ to explore the ways in which schools can address the needs of disenfranchised young people. These schools regularly cater to young people who experience severe social and economic disadvantage through, for example, poverty, homelessness and caring responsibilities. Many of these young people have rejected or been rejected by the mainstream education system, yet now demonstrate a great enthusiasm for learning. The presentation will thus challenge the notion that these young people are ‘unteachable’ and will explore the ways in which such schools keep these young people engaged in schooling <i>and</i> learning. It will then seek to demonstrate what <i>all</i> schools can learn from these schools’ achievements. It will also suggest that a failure to consider ‘alternative’ ways of meeting the needs of those students who have not ‘engaged’ with schooling constitutes an injustice against them.

12.00pm	<p>The power of positive teacher-student relationships: students' perspectives <i>Dr Penny Van Bergen & Dr Naomi Sweller, A/Prof Linda Graham</i></p>
	<p>This presentation begins by outlining findings from a three-year ARC research project examining the educational experiences of students who have been referred to special schools for disruptive behaviour. Findings indicate that positive teacher-student relationships <i>can</i> be developed with behaviourally challenging young people but that there is a critical need to enhance the ability of teachers and principals to form productive bonds with their most difficult students before it is “too late.”</p> <p>The session after this research presentation – presented by members of the leadership team from Lomandra School, one of the behaviour schools that participated in the research – is dedicated to understanding what is involved in building positive relationships with students who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties, how teachers and principals can avoid teacher-student conflict, and the benefits that can accrue for both staff and students.</p>
1.00pm	<p>A tale of two engaged classrooms: ‘It was the best of times ...’ <i>A/Prof Geoff Munns</i></p>
	<p>This presentation reports on action research undertaken in two low SES classrooms in Sydney’s South West. The research is part of the Fair Go Bridges project that is implementing the Fair Go Program’s student engagement framework using a co-researching and mentoring model. The paper discusses the pedagogical changes implemented, the reasons they were put into place, the impact on the engagement of individual learners and the processes around building classrooms as ‘insider’ learning communities.</p>
2.00pm	<p>Supporting Behaviour in the Early Years <i>A/Prof Linda Graham, Dr Kathy Cologon, Prof Susan Walker</i></p>
	<p>Disruptive behaviour has been identified as one of the most significant issues confronting Australian schools. However, it is often viewed as a consequence of poor parenting, which obscures the contribution made by school culture, classroom climates, teacher-student relationships, and the provision of appropriate and timely supports. In this presentation we report findings from the first year of a longitudinal study that is tracking the language, learning, relationships, experiences, attitudes and behaviour of 250 Queensland prep children. The aim of the project is to understand why some students begin to engage in severely disruptive behaviour, which child factors are involved, and what contributions are made by pedagogical contexts over time. Our results indicate that there is an association between pedagogical contexts and disruptive student behaviour but that the solutions most often considered (e.g., more/better behaviour management, stricter discipline) may not be what is needed.</p> <p>This research presentation is followed by a panel discussion with participating teachers.</p>