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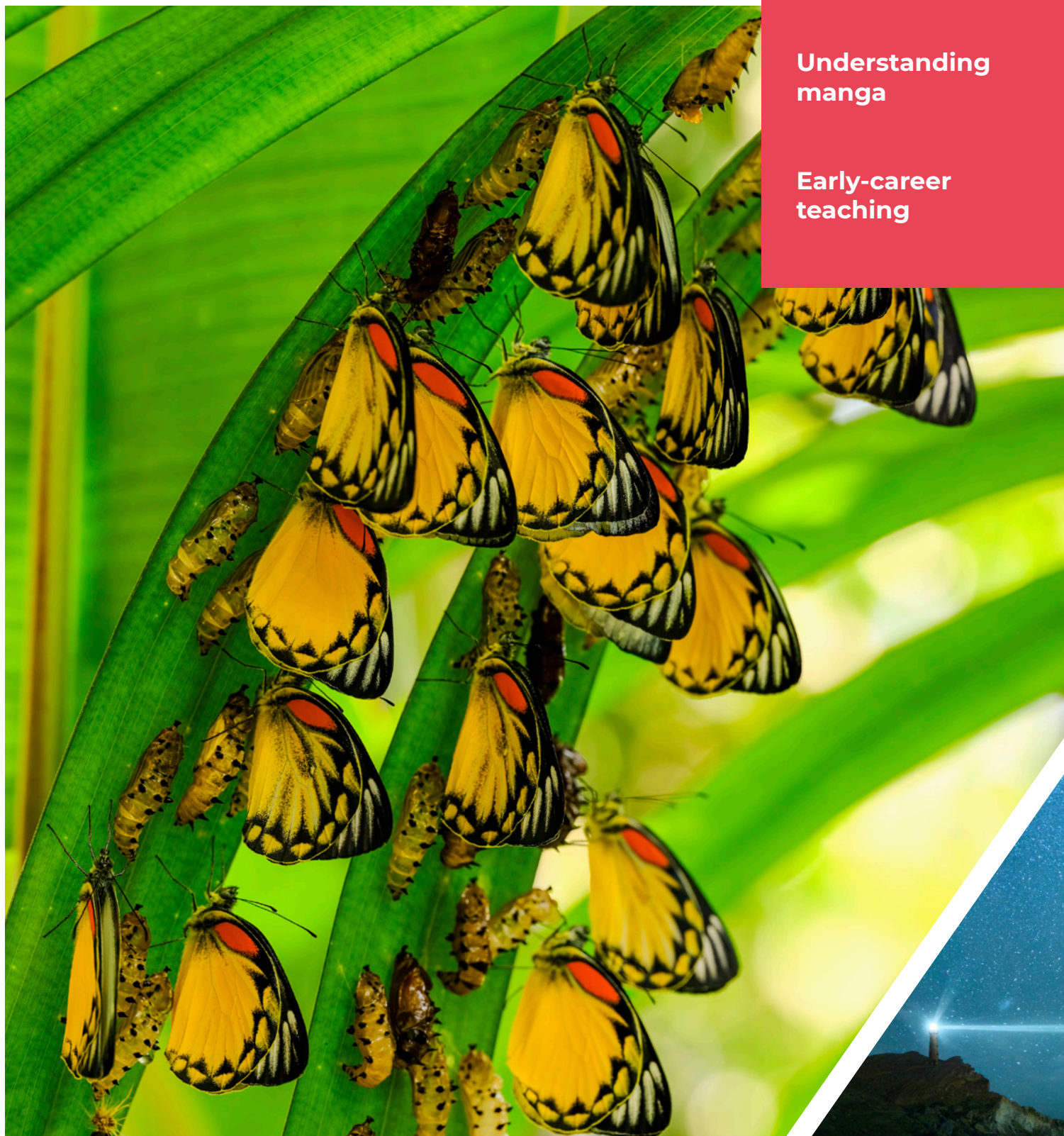
Scan

The journal for educators

**Early childhood
continuity of
learning**

**Understanding
manga**

**Early-career
teaching**



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Scan is a leading refereed journal, published monthly between February and November. Scan aims to bring innovative change to the lives and learning of contemporary educators and students. Through Scan, teachers' practice is informed by critical engagement with peer reviewed research that drives improved school and student outcomes across NSW, Australia and the world. Scan aims to leave teachers inspired, equipped and empowered, and students prepared.

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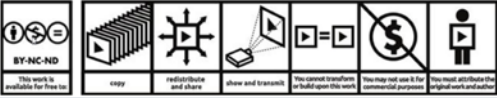
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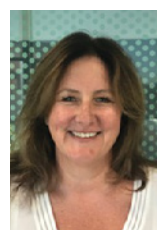
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Continuity of learning in the transition to school: What does it look like in practice?



Jacqui Ward

Early Learning Coordinator, Curriculum, Early Years and Primary Learners, NSW Department of Education

Jacqui Ward explores the concept of continuity of learning as a key factor in supporting a strong start to school. She explores transition practices from systemic requirements through to what it looks like in the classroom and the early childhood setting.

Transition to school - a system priority

This article explores ways of achieving continuity of learning as children transition from preschool or home to Kindergarten. It explores how children can experience a strong start to school when teachers and educators create connections for the child in their learning. The article analyses some of the local and international evidence that highlights the correlation between positive transitions and lifelong improved outcomes.

In their analysis of international trends, Boyle, Petriwskyj and Grieshaber (2018) call out the need

to 'reframe' transition as continuity practices. They propose that transition to school planning and implementation should be considered in terms of structural, developmental and contextual continuities in order for children to experience a positive transition to school. This article aims to provoke some reflection on what practices can be prioritised to achieve continuity in learning in a child's transition to school.

So, what is transition and what do high-quality transition practices look like? Transition to school refers to the period of change that children experience as they move from an early childhood setting or from being cared for at home into the school system. It is a time of great change in terms of expectations, experiences and relationships, and even wardrobe!

Transition to school is a high priority for the NSW Department of Education, featuring as the first outcome of its [Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#): 'All children make a strong start in life and make a successful transition to school.' In her introduction to the department's [Strong and successful start to school: Transition guidelines](#), the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Honourable Sarah Mitchell said that 'One of the most crucial moments in education is the transition period from preschool to kindergarten. And as teachers, you have the privilege and responsibility to set students up for success from an early age.'



Brightcove video: [Address from the Minister, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell](#), launching the 'Strong and successful start to school: Transition guidelines' [1:12 minutes]

Transition is further embedded as a system priority within three guiding frameworks that span the education continuum – the [School Excellence Framework](#), the [National Quality Framework](#) and

the [Early Years Learning Framework](#). All three frameworks set expectations for schools and early childhood services to implement high-quality transition practices, including sharing information about children's learning in ways that support continuity of learning.

The School Excellence Framework (SEF) provides schools with explicit guidance on what excellence in transitions and continuity of learning looks like. Schools that excel in this area engage with evidence that they have collected and analysed to assess the effectiveness of their transition practices. Excelling schools also actively collaborate with community to ensure tailored approaches and allow for early initiation of learning and support processes. Community engagement is also called out as a measure of the school having high expectations and achieving a 'cohesive educational community' (SEF, 2017).

For early childhood services, the National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services across Australia (ACECQA, 2021). Quality area 6 of the National Quality Standard calls out the importance of collaborative partnerships which support children's continuity of education and transitions by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.

Early childhood services that exceed the standard:

'(E)ngage in robust debate and discussion about the service's approach to building community partnerships and supporting inclusion and transitions. As part of this debate and discussion, personal, professional and organisational values that influence practice are identified, discussed and challenged.' (NQF, 2020)

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is the mandated curriculum framework for all Australian early childhood services. Transition and continuity of

learning are identified within the framework as one of the eight key pedagogical practices. The emphasis is on drawing on children's funds of knowledge and 'family community ways of being, belonging and becoming' to 'help all children feel secure, confident and included and to experience continuity in how to be and how to learn' (EYLF, 2009).

'Different places and spaces have their own purposes, expectations and ways of doing things. Building on children's prior and current experiences helps them to feel secure, confident and connected to familiar people, places, events and understandings' (EYLF, 2009, p 16).

The department has produced two sets of guidelines to help early childhood services and schools understand how to make transition to school best for children.

The [Transition to school guide for early childhood education](#) identifies key skills and attributes critical for children to thrive in 21st century learning environments, and provides accompanying sample learning experiences.

The [Strong and successful start to school: Transition guidelines](#) provide advice for schools to support principals, leadership teams and Early Stage 1 teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating transition practices.

Why is continuity of learning so important?

Continuity of learning is when educators (in both spaces), families, allied health professionals and community support agencies communicate about what children know, understand and can do, and how different teaching, wellbeing and inclusion practices have supported each child's learning. When key people in children's lives collaborate and share information, children experience a seamless or scaffolded experience of education.

Conversely, when there is no connection, information sharing or meaningful engagement, children are more likely to experience a disjointed transition where all things are new

and different and they are not supported to manage the change. Children in this situation may encounter adults in the new learning space who don't know anything about them, how they learn best and what supports have been put in place to get them to where they are now in their educational journey.

The OECD [Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education](#) (2017) presents findings from an analysis of 30 countries around the world and identifies the following as good transition practices:

- shared views on transition including flexible, tailored approaches
- shared understanding of what and how children learn in both early childhood and school
- collaborative practices with educators (both early childhood and school), families and community, including written communication, that are based on reciprocity, trust and inclusivity.

Heckman's (2021) research suggests that the social and economic investment of governments in early intervention has the highest return on each dollar invested. So, it makes sense that investing in high-quality transition practices is a good use of both our time and money in ensuring children make a strong start, particularly for our most vulnerable students.

Challenges to achieving continuity across contexts

There are many barriers to establishing effective transition partnerships that centre on sharing information about children's learning and effective teaching strategies. Not the least is the time to engage with pedagogy and curriculum in each other's space, particularly when the structure and intent is so different.

The Early Years Learning Framework speaks to creating dispositions for learning and is not age or stage related. Key learning area content is embedded across the learning outcomes and pedagogy is very child-centred and delivered through a range of pedagogical

... the social and economic investment of governments in early intervention has the highest return on each dollar invested.

practices, such as learning through play and the environment itself being a potent 'teacher'.

In schools, the NSW syllabus documents guide teaching and learning, with a focus on children (referred to now as 'students' to capture the wide range of ages through to high school) achieving a range of skills, knowledge and understanding of content across seven key learning areas and eight capabilities. Pedagogy is differentiated to cater for individual children's learning needs. There is a strong focus on assessing children's progress against syllabus outcomes and literacy and numeracy progressions.

There are however, strong connections between the EYLF and the NSW syllabuses. These connections can be explored through an analysis of the two and rigorous pedagogical discussions where early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers can share their ways of fostering learning and the curriculum decisions behind their approaches.

The use of different curricula across early childhood services and schools can create barriers to teachers and educators connecting and sharing information. It could be thought about using an analogy of two people speaking different languages and the communication difficulties that presents.

Running parallel to the challenges in finding common ground in pedagogy and curriculum is a common discourse that transition to school equates to or should focus on 'school readiness'. This is influenced by community perceptions that 'readiness' is demonstrated by, for example, children being able to follow directions, complete stencils, write their name and count to twenty. When this is the focus for transition practices, there are missed opportunities for transition to be more about all stakeholders being ready and prepared for individual children to experience a strong start to school.

A school ready, family ready and child ready approach allows each stakeholder to contribute to children being known, valued and cared for – another of the department's strategic outcomes. Each stakeholder experiences a real sense of partnerships, and families and children feel like they belong to the school community.

Having the child at the centre of our work in relation to transitions and seeing family engagement as an integral part of the child's success in starting school is how we create lifelong learners.

The way we view children is another critical discourse that influences our approach to transition. Having the child at the centre of our work in relation to transitions and seeing family engagement as an integral part of the child's success in starting school is how we create lifelong learners. If we see young children as capable and confident learners who bring rich funds of knowledge to school, then the door to enabling continuity of learning is wide open. The problem or the challenge of effective transition is that it is relational as well as structural and so, without relationships being the centre or loci of our work in relation to transition, children are at risk of not experiencing a strong and successful start to school.

Success measures for effective continuity of learning

Is it reasonable to think, given what we have covered so far, that perhaps the lack of effective engagement stems from the complexity of 'continuity of learning' as a concept and how it fits with high-quality transition practices?

Bob Perry and Sue Dockett are renowned academics in the transition space, with decades of research and work with jurisdictions across Australia. They were invited by the department to participate in [a series of conversations](#) about the concept of continuity and how it is a crucial piece in the puzzle for supporting effective transition to school.



Brightcove video: [Conversation 3. Continuity of learning](#) [13:47 mins]

Some of the key points from this conversation that might guide us to make continuity of learning a reality in our practice include acknowledging:

- the key role families play in facilitating continuity
- the importance of intimate knowledge of children
- the expertise of teachers and educators in the way children learn and how to foster that
- that there needs to be a focus on continuity of relationships
- that play-based pedagogy is a great way to support engagement with learning and provides a great opportunity for integrated teaching in the early stages of school
- that nuanced intentional teaching is challenging but it's worthwhile to unpack these strategies and communicate them to the child's next teacher
- that critical reflection on each other's curriculum is an opportunity for relationship building
- that integrated learning – across both learning spaces – is an opportunity to maximise teaching and interweave department priorities.

How do we achieve successful continuity of learning?

How and where do we, as educators, whether we work in early childhood services or in schools, start on the journey to make continuity of learning a key feature in our transition practices? The following section outlines three important steps to support continuity of learning in a child's transition to school.

1. Collaborative relationships

A good starting point is to focus on building relationships; getting to know who are the early childhood services or schools in your area, getting to know the educators in those, and finally getting to know each other's teaching and learning contexts (curriculum, pedagogy, professional standards and system requirements). As mentioned previously, families, community groups and support agencies are key stakeholders as well.

Establishing a shared understanding of what and how children learn in both early childhood and school is a great starting point in building relationships. It brings with it an opportunity to share expertise and ways of learning, and to value multiple perspectives. It gives people a

voice in the process and an opportunity to provide context for children at a critical 'handing over' point in their lives. It also allows preparation time for any children that might have inclusion needs that take time to put in place.

This list may provide the 'starting point' for connection and conversations about quality curriculum delivery in early childhood services and schools:

- the Early Years Learning Framework
- the NSW syllabuses
- the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are the same across the education continuum
- the teaching and learning cycle is consistent in both spaces; assessing learning, planning for learning, implementing learning experiences, and evaluating learning and reflecting on teaching practices
- the developmental stage and cognitive processes of children in the 'early childhood' phase of development spans from birth to eight years of age.

2. Making connections between curricula – EYLF and NSW syllabuses

The next step involves taking an in-depth look at pedagogy and curriculum links between the EYLF and NSW syllabuses. This will help to make continuity of learning visible. This is demonstrated in the following example.

In the early childhood service, teachers foster children's learning in two key components of outcome 5 in the EYLF, 'Children are effective communicators': 'Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts' and 'Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work'. Following is a list of some examples of teaching and learning opportunities aligned with this outcome.

... taking an in-depth look at pedagogy and curriculum links between the EYLF and NSW syllabuses ... will help to make continuity of learning visible.

Teachers and educators:

- provide a literacy-enriched environment including display print in home languages and Standard Australian English
- sing and chant rhymes, jingles and songs; engage children in play with words and sounds; and read and share a range of books and other texts with children
- talk explicitly about concepts such as rhyme and letters and sounds when sharing texts with children
- join in children's play and engage children in conversations about the meanings of images and print
- engage children in discussions about books and other texts that promote consideration of diverse perspectives
- support children to analyse ways in which texts are constructed to present particular views and to sell products
- teach art as language and explore how artists can use the elements and principles to construct visual/musical/dance/media texts
- provide opportunities for children to engage with familiar and unfamiliar culturally constructed text and told stories (EYLF, 2009).

With children demonstrating their learning by:

- listening and responding to sounds and patterns in speech, stories, rhymes and song in context
- viewing and listening to printed, visual and multimedia texts and responding with relevant gestures, actions, comments and/or questions
- taking on roles of literacy and numeracy users in their play, including beginning to understand key literacy and numeracy concepts and processes, such as the sounds of language, letter-sound relationships, concepts of print and the ways that texts are structured
- exploring texts from a range of different perspectives and beginning to analyse their meanings
- actively using, engaging with and sharing the enjoyment of language and texts in a range of ways
- recognising and engaging with written and oral culturally constructed texts
- beginning to be aware of the relationships between oral, written and visual representations
- beginning to recognise patterns and relationships and the connections between them

- drawing on memory of a sequence to complete a task
- drawing on their experiences in constructing meaning using symbols (EYLF, 2009).

In Kindergarten, Early Stage 1 teachers are concerned with the knowledge, skills, understanding and dispositions that children need to learn to read. They draw on assessments of children's current understandings and capabilities and provide a range of experiences in relation to the NSW English syllabus outcomes (2012). The following outcomes support continuity of learning in relation to EYLF learning outcome 5.

Phonological awareness: Outcome: ENe-4A
A student demonstrates developing skills and strategies to read, view and comprehend short, predictable texts on familiar topics in different media and technologies.

Content
Students develop and apply phonemic knowledge:

- join in rhymes and chants
- understand that spoken words are made up of sounds
- recognise rhymes, syllables and sounds (phonemes) in spoken words

Understanding text – process: Outcome: ENe-4A
Content
Students understand and apply knowledge of language forms and features:

- recognise basic book conventions, eg open and hold books correctly, turn pages
- understand direction of print, return sweeps and spaces between words

Listening: Outcome ENe-1A
A student communicates with peers and known adults in informal and guided activities demonstrating emerging skills of group interaction.

Content
Students respond to and compose texts:

- listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations
- retell familiar stories, including in home language

Interacting and listening: Outcome ENe-1A

Content

- Students understand and apply knowledge of language forms and features:
 - communicate appropriately within the classroom using agreed conventions
- Students respond to and compose texts:
 - communicate with peers and familiar adults about personal experience
 - respond to simple questions either verbally or non-verbally (NSW English K-10 Syllabus, 2012).

In both spaces, children engage with a range of texts, sing songs and play rhyming games, and teachers model reading and writing to support children to engage with words, letters and sentences.

3. Effective use of data and evidence

The [Transition to School Statement \(TSS\)](#) can be used to discuss with schools what individual children can do, know and understand, and is a great way to support continuity of learning across context. For example, within the TSS an early

When key people in children's lives collaborate and share information, children experience a seamless or scaffolded experience of education.

childhood educator would note, among other things, a child's progress towards learning outcome 5, referring to skills such as engagement with text, phonemic knowledge and so on, to enable the teacher to make that connection to the relevant Early Stage 1 outcome.

A true commitment to providing continuity of learning is valuing the funds of knowledge, cultural learning and individual learning preferences that children bring to school. It means Early Stage 1 teachers spending time observing (in and out of the classroom; interacting with family, on the playground) and questioning children and families, and providing some familiar learning environments that allow play-based opportunities that children are familiar with.

It also means triangulating data from Best Start Kindergarten Assessment (BSKA) and data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to get a thorough picture of children's learning strengths and areas for improvement to inform teaching as well as community trends in early childhood development.

Continuity of learning is supported when all three of these key practices are combined, allowing both sectors to see and engage with the strong parallels between curricula and pedagogy. It is just a matter of taking the leap, making connections and sharing information about teaching and learning.

Ensuring every child makes a strong start

In summing up, this article has explored the evidence base around effective transition to school practices with a particular focus on continuity of learning. It has highlighted that continuity of learning is a system priority in NSW. The department supports early childhood services and schools to meet this outcome by providing guidance, professional learning and resources.

There have been provocations to rethink ways of achieving continuity of learning as children transition from preschool or home to Kindergarten. These approaches include analysing challenges and barriers, and exploring opportunities for collaborative practices (including written communication) with families, community and educators (both early childhood and school) that are based on reciprocity, trust and inclusivity. Practical examples of how children can experience a strong start to school when teachers and educators create connections in their learning have been included to prompt the reader to envisage putting policy into practice.

It is hoped that readers will be well equipped to realise improved outcomes for all of our young learners but particularly our most vulnerable, by investing time in building relationships that create continuity of learning for children. Collaborative approaches where we prioritise connecting, understanding each other's space, and communicating and sharing important information are found to promote positive transition experience for children and their families. These approaches allow a child to experience a genuinely successful transition since the school values their learning and makes them feel like they belong in their new school.

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Guide to a better understanding and appreciation of manga texts



Dr Cathy Sly
Researcher and writer

Dr Cathy Sly provides an overview of the enchanting manga format, and suggests ideas for teaching its specific codes and conventions.

What is Manga?

'Manga' is a Japanese word meaning whimsical pictures and it refers especially to Japanese comics. They are created by 'mangaka', writers and/or illustrators of manga texts. In Japan, manga is produced in many different genres, and can be either fiction or nonfiction. Interest and age-appropriate manga are read by people from all walks of life.

Background on the history and development of manga and its cultural contribution can be found in references such as 'Manga! Manga!' (1983) and 'Dreamland Japan' (1996) by Frederik L Schodt, 'Manga: 60 Years of Japanese Comics' (2004) by Paul Gravett, 'Understanding Manga and Anime' (2007)

by Robin E Brenner, 'Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives' (2009) edited by Toni Johnson-Woods, and 'Mangatopia: Essays on Manga and Anime in the Modern World' (2011) edited by Martha Cornog and Timothy Perper. These books focus on cultural differences, the complexity and depth of the manga tradition, and the effect of the medium on the Western world.

Growing popularity of manga in the West

As with comics in the Western world, manga has contestable origins. Some theorists trace manga back to Buddhist scrolls of the 12th century (Gravett, 2004). Narratives in the comics format have grown in popularity in Japan since the 1950s. At the end of World War II, during the allied occupation of Japan, there was a period of cross fertilisation with USA comics. The revered mangaka and author of 'The Mighty Atom' ('Astro Boy'), Osamu Tezuka, claims to have been strongly influenced by American comics and Walt Disney's animated cartoons. Interest in manga in the USA, Britain, Europe, and other westernised nations followed on the heels of the introduction of 'anime' (Japanese animated cartoons) such as 'Astro Boy' and 'Kimba the White Lion', created by Osamu Tezuka and shown on Western television in the 1960s. Since the turn of the century, strong links to the gaming industry has propelled a significant growth of both anime and manga as examples of popular culture across the world.

Manga categories

While the manga style is used for the presentation of fiction and nonfiction, the focus of this article is on fictional tales. As with other narratives created in the comics format, manga covers a wide range of genres including action, comedy, drama, fantasy, supernatural, historical, horror, mystery, romance, and science fiction. Teachers and teacher librarians need to select manga with care. While manga narratives frequently feature cute, childish characters, this does not mean they are necessarily appropriate for children. Manga are often categorised in terms of their intended readership and a knowledge of these categories is particularly important when selecting manga for children and young adults.

Many manga elements and stylistics differ from those of Western comics or graphic novels.

The main manga categories are:

- **Shōnen** – which involves action packed, often humorous, tales and is targeted towards teenage boys. Examples include 'Dragon Ball' by Akira Toriyama and 'Naruto' by Masashi Kishimoto.
- **Shōjo** – with its focus on emotions and interpersonal relationships is targeted towards teenage girls, with series such as 'Sailor Moon' by Naoko Takeuchi and 'Fruits Basket' by Natsuki Takaya.
- **Kodomo** – which is intended for young children under 12 years old and often involves stories about families and friends or cute animals, like 'Pokémon Adventures' by Hidenori Kusaka and Satoshi Mato Yamamoto, 'Hikaru no Go' by Yumi Hotta and Takeshi Obata, and 'Cowa' by Akira Toriyama.

Other categories, such as those listed below, are intended for adults and are not appropriate for general consumption in schools:

- **Seinen** – is targeted at adult men and includes mature content
- **Josei** – is targeted at adult women and includes mature content

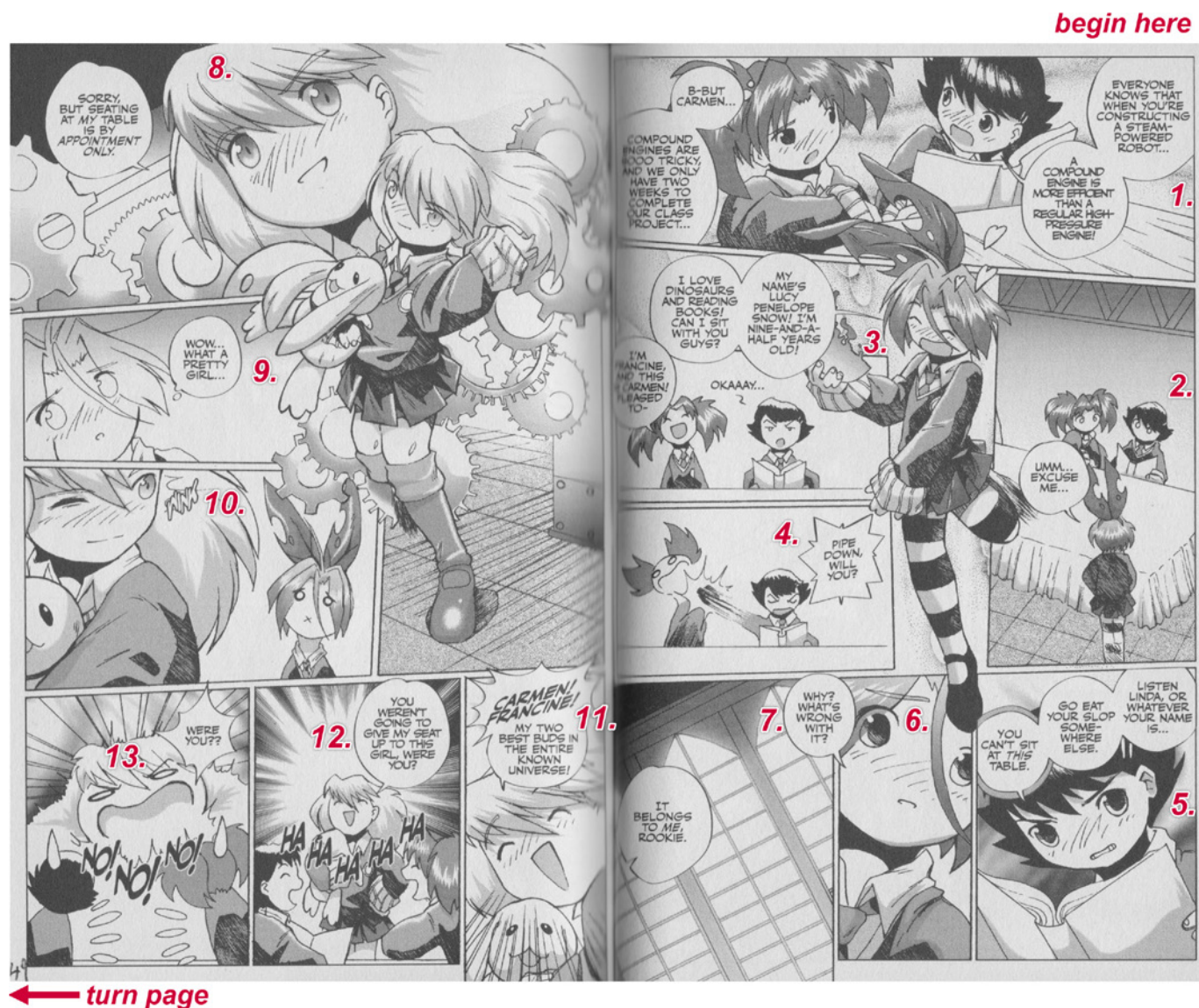
Careful consideration and selection is also recommended for:

- **LGBTIQ+ Manga** – Yaoi or Boys' Love (for males) and Yuri or Girls' Love (for females)

Medium specific codes and conventions

Many manga elements and stylistics differ from those of Western comics or graphic novels. The following offers an introduction to particular codes and conventions of manga. Readers can research these aspects in greater depth as required.

Manga publications in the traditional Japanese style need to be read from right to left, and the



Unflipped manga reading path superimposed on an extract from 'Hollow Fields' by Madelaine Rosca

back to the front of the book. Pages of manga in the traditional layout can initially be a little tricky for Western readers since pages, panels, and the verbal track must be read 'backwards'. The diagram above indicates the reading path for unflipped manga.

However, many manga translations are published in a 'flipped' format, reading from left to right and front to back, as would be the case for a Western graphic novel. In manga created by Original English language (OEL) authors, the flipped format is frequently used.

Panels

In contrast to the generally static layout of panels in Western comics/graphic novels, the layout of manga panels is usually far more dynamic. The use of panels varying in size and shape, diagonal panels,

and overlaid panels are more typical of manga. Images within the panels are often highly active, fast moving, 'noisy' and overtly emotional. Various layouts for pages and panels are demonstrated in the video [Top 10 panel/page layout methods](#).



YouTube video: '[Top 10 panel/page layout methods](#)' by Mark Crilley [12:52 minutes]

begin here

Transitions

In manga, movement from panel to panel frequently follows rapid subject-to-subject, action-to-action or scene-to-scene transitions. However, the rapid pace is punctuated at times by the slow movement of aspect-to-aspect transitions, which focus on different elements of the same scene at the same point in time. Details of various panel transitions can be found in 'Understanding Comics' by Scott McCloud. A YouTube video, [Comic panel transitions](#) details the various McCloud transitions with a variety of visual samples.



YouTube video: '[Comic panel transitions](#)' by M.G. Comics [9:16 minutes]

The webpage, [Making Comics with Salgood Sam: Transitions](#) also explains McCloud's ideas on panels. In addition, this website outlines the notion of 'rolling transitions', another technique which is used in manga publications.

Angles

Shots and angles in manga are often cinematographic and include a juxtaposition of overhead shots, close-ups, longshots, low angle shots, over the shoulder shots, and so on, offering a range of perspectives on the action. [Making comics: POV/camera angles](#) is a useful YouTube video for showing angles and aspects.



YouTube video: '[Making comics: POV/camera angles](#)' by Mark Crilley [15:45 minutes]

Symbolism

Apart from visual images and verbal content, most comics include a vast array of symbols, flourishes, runes, or indices which become part of the vernacular for experienced readers of comics. These visual symbols include variously shaped caption boxes and balloons which may contain a narrative voice, direct speech, inner thoughts, or onomatopoeic words. Lettering style or typology can be quite pictorial, especially for diegetic sounds (those occurring within the story) conveyed through onomatopoeic words. In addition, there are devices such as speed or motion lines; radiating lines or bursts which represent motion or explosion; and flourishes referred to as 'emanata' which provide information about characters' emotions or the state of a subject. Examples of emanata include wavy lines wafting from something hot, clouds of steam emanating from an angry character, or droplets of sweat or tears conveying exhaustion or distress. Manga makes abundant use of these icons, some of which are pointed out in the 'Analysis model' later in this article. A useful reference to some of the quirky ideograms found in comics is 'The Lexicon of Comicana' by Mort Walker (1980).

Manga has also developed a range of medium specific symbols to express a character's emotional state. Understanding the meaning of such symbols can enhance a reader's appreciation of a narrative. These symbols may be included in the background, in facial expressions, or in bodily gestures. For instance, apart from showing movement, a predominance of motion lines within a panel background may also suggest a character's physical ability, strength, courage or determination. A background incorporating flowers, spirals, stars or hearts usually implies a character's joy, light heartedness or romantic feelings. Manga backgrounds may be impressionistic or highly detailed, but all aim to create atmosphere and evoke an emotional response in the reader.

Eyes and mouths of manga characters are often overtly exaggerated to convey characters' attitudes, feelings or emotions. Frequently childlike faces are used to key into what ethologist, Konrad Lorenz (1943) labelled the 'baby schema', whereby 'certain infant characteristics evoke a positive affective response in the human ... and elicit caretaking behavior...' (Glocker

Manga has also developed a range of medium specific symbols to express a character's emotional state.

et al., 2009). Thus, larger eyes often indicate beauty, innocence, or purity, while smaller eyes suggest cool calculation or evil. Osama Tezuka, and mangaka who followed his style, perceive wide eyes as a way of capturing child-like innocence as well as being able to reflect the external world or to project the internal hopes and dreams of their characters. Symbols within the eyes also provide information. For example, hearts suggest infatuation or love, flames mean anger, and spirals indicate confusion, bewilderment or madness. Darkened or blank eyes suggest possession or death.

Mouths are frequently small but become exaggeratedly large when shouting or screaming in anger or pain. Large mouths may contain strands of saliva or may emit saliva droplets to convey extreme anger, agony or hysteria. Noses are also usually small but may emit symbols such as a mucus drop which indicates sleep, or a nosebleed that suggests sexual arousal. Another visual convention around the face and head area is the cruciform 'popping vein' on the head or forehead, which conveys anger – as do puffs of smoke emanating from ears or head. Prominent tears indicate grief or sweat, and hatched blushing on cheeks suggests embarrassment.

Symbolic conventions in manga extend to physical gestures and/or pictorial elements emanating from a character, some of which are noted below:

- lightning bolts or sparks may be seen emanating from the eyes of angry characters or combatants
- swellings from injuries are often greatly exaggerated
- multiple limbs (usually arms), drawn as if moving rapidly, indicate panic
- speech bubbles containing a vertical ellipsis indicate something unsaid
- tightly tied hair may represent repression, while flowing, unrestrained hair suggests freedom
- an exhaled, mushroom-shaped breath represents relief
- super deformed (SD) is a unique element of manga iconography. SD includes chibi characters

and other types of deformed physicality with embedded meaning. Chibi are the characters of the manga world with oversized heads and small bodies. They may be used to convey a childlike cuteness or humorous caricature. When experiencing heightened emotions, such as anger, regular characters may be depicted in chibi style to indicate their loss of control. Characters losing control can also be depicted without hands or feet. In more extreme cases, characters experiencing heightened emotions may transform into beast-like images.

Onomatopoeia

A study of onomatopoeia in manga is intriguing. When translated from Japanese, or even created by OEL authors, manga style onomatopoeia is often different to the words readers are familiar with as onomatopoeia in English texts. Manga translated into English and even manga created in English frequently use replications of the Japanese sounds, such as *nyanya* (a cat's meow) or *wanwan* (a dog's woof). As with Western comics, manga includes onomatopoeia to represent vocal utterances like *kayaa* (ahhh!), *iyaa* (no!) and *ototo* (oops); and environmental sounds, such as *zaazaa* (the sound of heavy rain), *sawasawa* (a rustling sound) or *chichichi* (a bird's chirp). However, manga takes onomatopoeia further by using it to represent a feeling. Examples of this *gitaigo* category of onomatopoeia include: *niyaniaya* (smiling ironically), *sororisori* (tip toeing), or *zuuuuun* (depression). More information on Japanese onomatopoeia can be found at [Manga sound effects guide](#).

Adaptation of the manga style



'Romeo and Juliet', illustrated by Sonia Leong (2007, Manga Shakespeare)

While many countries have developed their own unique comics conventions, the popularity of the manga style has led to its being adopted by comics creators and publishers beyond Japan. For instance, the British publisher, Self Made Hero, produces a

variety of Shakespeare's plays in manga format while using the traditional Shakespearean language. The North American publisher, Manga Classics, publishes adaptations of many of the classics including Shakespeare's plays. This type of manga, along with contemporary OEL manga narratives, provides a valuable introduction to both the manga style and to a range of Western literary classics.

In terms of contemporary manga fiction, two Australian comics artists producing compelling manga for children and young adults are Madelaine Rosca and Queenie Chan. Their narratives are presented in the traditional form of black line prints on coarse newsprint-style paper. Panel images incorporate detailed backgrounds which convey a sense of time, place, and atmosphere. Teachers looking for engaging manga stories for Stage 3 or Stage 4 students could consider titles by Rosca or Chan.

A study of onomatopoeia in manga is intriguing ... manga takes onomatopoeia further by using it to represent a feeling.

Reading manga and meaning making

Some of the idiosyncrasies of the manga style can be discovered by taking a closer look at 'Hollow Fields' by Madeleine Rosca. Both 'Hollow Fields' and 'The Dreaming' by Queenie Chan are set in boarding schools. This is a trope often associated with stories in the shōjo genre. It provides young readers with the familiarity of a school setting while situating the protagonists in an environment in which they are freed from immediate parental control, and where they find opportunities to explore their frequently old, rambling, mysterious surroundings undeterred. In order to explain some of the idiosyncrasies of the manga form, the following section focuses on a segment from 'Hollow Fields' by Madeleine Rosca.



'Hollow Fields' volumes 1-3 by Madeleine Rosca (2007-2009)

Hollow Fields

Although 'Hollow Fields' is an OEL manga creation, Rosca's trilogy uses the Japanese unflipped convention of right to left reading orientation. This may prove tricky at first for uninitiated Western readers, but it is a way of encouraging students to become acquainted with the difference of the Japanese style. As Adam Schwartz and Eliane Rubinstein-Ávila note, 'the multimodal and iconographic features of manga attract consumers across age groups, cultures, languages, and genders [and] the skills manga readers use may transfer well to other media, and vice versa' (2006). Apart from its general popularity with children and young adults, manga reading can foster 'critical and multidimensional thinking' (Schwartz & Rubinstein-Ávila, 2006).

'Hollow Fields' is a highly creative manga narrative that delivers an engrossing tale while raising questions about interpersonal relationships, adult authority, ethical science, and what should be taught and learnt in a school. The story combines adventure, steampunk and science fiction genres and is appropriate for upper primary or lower secondary students.

At the beginning of 'Hollow Fields', Lucy Snow is off to her new boarding school. However, after being lost in a storm she finds herself mistakenly admitted to and enrolled in the wrong school. Apart from its appeal of having no fees and large individual bedrooms

with ensuite bathrooms, Hollow Fields is a very strange institution. Promoted as an 'Academy for the Scientifically Gifted and Ethically Unfettered', it is a school which, as readers later learn, caters for the mad scientists and evil geniuses of the future. From her first day, Lucy is made to feel unwelcome and soon discovers that there is something very sinister afoot in the school.

By placing children in a menacing steampunk setting, with its crumbling buildings, pipes, cogs, and clockwork or steam driven utilities, Rosca raises concerns about ethics and scientific experimentation. The teachers, referred to as Engineers, are part human and part robot, and the curriculum includes subjects such as the Fundamentals of grave robbing, Cross-species transplantation, Live taxidermy, and Zombie construction. This satirical narrative is both humorous and chilling, and provides a springboard for deep thinking and critical engagement.

Analysis model

As a means of indicating some of the elements that may be considered in the analysis of manga works, a two-page extract has been selected for close attention. The following analysis indicates some of the manga specific codes and conventions that assist readers in their meaning making process.

The right to left orientation of this unflipped manga extract is indicated by the insertion of numbers 1-10 within the panels to indicate the reading order. Early in 'Hollow Fields' volume 3 the protagonist, Lucy Snow, and her classmate, Claude McGinty, find themselves imprisoned in a deep cell in the old windmill. While Lucy is contemplating a way out of their predicament, Claude is looking to blame someone. Although these are only two pages of an extensive trilogy, they provide a useful model of the way images, words, and manga specific conventions offer evidence for a reader in the meaning making process.



Extract from 'Hollow Fields' volume 3 by Madeleine Rosca (2009)

While each reader will have her/his unique perception and understanding of these pages, the following outline offers a guide to aspects that can be considered. In panel 1, a cute, pensive Lucy Snow is presented as a close-up clutching her much loved soft toy, Dino, which has been with her since the beginning of the narrative. Those familiar with the 'kawaii' or cute face in manga will understand that 'Japan's cute face has nothing to do with projecting cuteness – but everything to do with framing all it conceals' (Brophy, 2010). Lucy's time at Hollow Fields has been extremely challenging and while she appears cute and innocent, she has been forced to come to terms with some disturbing challenges. Given that her 'closest friend', Dino, has shared these traumas with her, the stitches and tape on Dino may be seen to tell part of the story. It is worth considering the significance of the cuddly toy throughout the narrative. For example, has Dino been neglected while Lucy has been ensuring her own survival at Hollow Fields, or does Dino represent the psychological trauma Lucy has endured there?

Panel 2 is not confined on its left and bleeds across into panel 7. Readers might like to discuss reasons for this design choice and its significance to the meaning of the excerpt. Panels 3 and 4 present close ups of the concerned faces of Claude and Lucy respectively as they voice their growing concerns in linked speech balloons. The emotions Claude experiences at the mention of Dr Bleak is visualised through his jagged teeth in panel 5 and the use of question mark and exclamation mark together when he utters Dr Bleak's name. Claude's heightened emotions are even more visually obvious in panel 6. He goes into a 'complete flap' and his loss of control is enhanced by the manga style super deformed figure of Claude gesticulating wildly. The furious faces of Lucy and Claude in panel 7 indicate their anger towards one another which is reinforced by Lucy's vacant eyes, their jagged teeth, and the cruciform pulsing veins on each of their heads.

After their raging argument, Claude and Lucy are presented from an overhead angle in panel 8, giving the viewer a sense of equilibrium that has been established between the two rivals who forthrightly face each other at some distance. Lucy's determination to resolve their problems is enhanced

... explicit teaching of medium specific codes and conventions will assist readers with their understanding.

by her diagonal image in panel 9 where she resolutely punches her right fist into her open left hand with the strength and sound conveyed by emanating puffs. The final panel in this excerpt uses a low angle perspective to focus the characters' attention on the unexpected voice coming from the grate in the floor of their cell.

This close investigation of a brief excerpt from the 'Hollow Fields' trilogy indicates the detail and depth that can be discovered in manga. Obviously, individual readers will have different interpretations to share, but explicit teaching of medium specific codes and conventions will assist readers with their understanding. In turn, such meaning making skills enable readers to enrich their comprehension and enhance their enjoyment of the medium.

Manga titles

While there are many manga titles to choose from, some popular titles are listed below. Most manga narratives are written in a series of several episodes. The publication dates below refer to the first volume in a series, and a guide to reading ages is indicated by the stage suggestions provided. There is a great deal to learn, understand and appreciate about the manga format. Hopefully, this article will provide a useful springboard for initiating readers into the enchanting aspects of the manga style.

Children's manga

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- Chan, Q. (2014). *Fabled kingdom trilogy*. Bento Comics. (Stage 3, Stage 4)
- Chan, Q. (2019). *Women who were kings* [series]. Bento Comics. (Stage 2, Stage 3). Titles in series:
 - *Hatshepsut* (2019)
 - *Wu Zetian* (2019)
 - *Elizabeth I* (2020)
- Hotta, Y. & Obata, T. (2004). *Hikaru no go* [series]. VIZ Media. (Stage 3)

- Kanata, K. (2015). *Chi's sweet home* [series]. Random House. (Stage 2)
- Kibuishi, K. (2005). *Amulet* [series]. Scholastic. (Stage 2, Stage 3)
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- Konishi, N. (2015). *Yo-Kai Watch* [series]. VIZ Media. (Stage 2)
- Rosca, M. (2012). *The clockwork sky*, parts 1 and 2. Tor Books. (Stage 3, Stage 4)
- Rosca, M. (2007). *Hollow Fields* trilogy. Seven Seas. (Stage 3, Stage 4)
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Young adult manga

- Arakawa, H. (2005). *Fullmetal alchemist* [series]. VIZ Media. (Stage 4, Stage 5)
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Early-career teaching: an opportunity for reflection and self-development



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Anna Rumjahn reflects on the challenges of being an early-career teacher and describes the ways philosophical and meditative practices have shaped her practitioner identity.

The attrition rate of teachers within their first 5 years is frequently given attention in the media. School teaching is often presented as a 'profession in crisis', and concerns around teacher retention cannot be ignored (Sydney Morning Herald, 2019).

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) reports that common reasons for leaving the workforce are the 'high workload, and a lack of support from leadership' (AITSL, 2016, p 9). Attrition rates in Australia are currently not well-defined, vastly ranging anywhere between 8% and 50% (Queensland College of Teachers, 2013).

Researchers are now acknowledging the need for closer examination of retention rates of Australian teachers

in their beginning years. It is believed such studies will help to ease shortages in nonmetropolitan areas and within certain disciplines such as mathematics and the sciences (Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2015). Professor Robyn Ewing from the University of Sydney, a researcher in teacher attrition, agrees with this. However, she notes that she has only been following permanent teachers. The disparity in data on teacher attrition occurs because many beginning teachers are in temporary or casual positions (Stroud, 2017).

Qualitative research on the experiences of early career teachers has detailed additional responsibilities, student behavioural issues and lack of support to be persistent obstacles whereby novices end up ‘relying on their everyday capacity for resilience when circumstances are adverse’ (Schuck et al., 2018, p 9). The introduction of the Beginning Teachers Support Funding Policy in 2016 aimed to support early career teachers by pairing them with a mentor and providing extra release from face-to-face teaching (NSW Government Education, updated 2021). Other programs such as BRITE, a series of online interactive learning modules are also available, created to build the skills needed for resilience in the teaching profession. However, Schuck et al. (2018) have shown that even with the implementation of new initiatives, its effectiveness varies between schools and attrition rates are still a major issue. Personal anecdotes from teachers early in their early career have also received much attention in the public sphere. Gabrielle Stroud is well known for her 2018 memoir, ‘Teacher’, which details her frustration and distress generated by trying to balance a seemingly boundless workload while maintaining her physical and mental health.

The oxygen mask

The following is a personal story, shared in the hope that it will encourage others to seek positive ways of caring for their own well-being while finding their feet in the teaching profession.

I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder in my first year of teaching. Too proud, scared and ashamed to ask for help, I fashioned a narrative in my mind that I could continue functioning as normal. I was there for students when times were tough, for parents when they were apprehensive about their child’s education, and for colleagues who needed reassurance in

adapting to online teaching during a pandemic. It was like being in an aeroplane cabin during an emergency and not having an oxygen mask on. The envisaged plummeting cabin air pressure symbolised my growing anxiety as I frantically helped others to put their masks on, before having one on myself. I realised that to survive I had to put my own oxygen mask on! So, I reached out to a psychologist.

Through regular sessions, I began to understand my sensitivities and worked hard to implement various strategies to manage my symptoms. After experimenting with a few, I found journaling to be most effective in mindfully organising my thoughts. As an inspiration, I drew on ‘The Daily Stoic’ by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman (2016) for day-to-day guidance. This text provided meditations which drew on the ancient Greek and Roman philosophical school of Stoicism that embraced wisdom, perseverance, and the art of living.

Philosophy as a way of life

‘Philosophy’ stems from the Greek word, *philosophia* meaning the ‘love of wisdom’. For thousands of years, philosophers have been trying to make sense of the world around them by asking life’s biggest questions. How can we be happy? What does it mean to live a good life? What is success and how do we measure it?

During the rise of the Roman Empire, philosophers such as Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius became part of a new philosophical movement known as Stoicism, aimed at attaining not only ‘a greater understanding of the human condition, but also to learn more about human psychopathology’ (Holowchak, 2009, p 167). By removing emotions that were pathological, such as fear and unnatural desires, individuals would undergo a journey of self-cultivation, helping them achieve ‘a state of calmness and peace of mind’ (Peters, 2020, p 1). The Stoics believed that philosophy was something to be lived out day to day, rather than theoretical knowledge that existed in books and, hence, they sought to live out the four virtues of justice, temperance, courage and wisdom, as well as reflecting on their actions to attain inner peace (Hadot et.al, 1997). Their goal was to properly align what they believed, what they said, and what they did. This they maintained would allow them to lead coherent and meaningful lives.

Are these ancient teachings still relevant today? I believe so. Modern as we may be, we too, strive for a happy and fulfilling life where our values, words, and actions line up. This is ever more important in the 21st century, where information is ubiquitous and data has become a commodity. Stoicism demonstrated that education is about self-knowing and thus enables people to better shape their communities through inclusivity, tolerance and peace (Holowchak, 2009; Whiting et al. 2018). To learn from these teachings of the past is to gain insight into how to carry out a values-driven life and practice wisdom in our daily work as teachers.

Using philosophy to reflect inwardly

The Stoics stressed that healing the soul requires us to meditate and return to the self through continual reflection (Hadot, 1997). As part of a newfound morning routine to improve my well-being, I reflected on a meditation from ‘The Daily Stoic’ and wrote a short paragraph of my musings. Following this, I picked a phrase which resonated with me and repeatedly wrote it till the end of the page. This meditative practice would ingrain the key phrase in my mind like a mantra, which I would take with me into the teaching day. Examples include: Happiness has all that it wants. Be in control of your thoughts. How you do anything, is how you do everything.

Over time, I was able to see major shifts in my perspective on life and this lessened the stressful responses to my work. By practising the ability to see things less reactively, I was visibly calmer and able to understand what was or was not in my control. I then found it practical to be open to different perspectives in pursuit of higher quality wellbeing, rather than wishing the world would mould itself to fit what I wanted in each instance. When coupled with weekly Flow Yoga or Pilates classes which focused my breathing, it was evident that my wellbeing benefitted from these combined mind and body practices.

As a human, being flexible in how we think and act is fundamental to living a good life. As a teacher, being flexible in the classroom is fundamental to good practice. The ways in which we manage our emotional responses to external events and contexts influences how we construct

our teacher identity (Hong et al., 2018). Being able to recalibrate how I made sense of myself in relation to things that were happening in my life minimised the struggles I faced as an educator. No longer was I criticising every lesson I taught or trying to tick off everything on a never-ending to-do list. Instead, I was appreciating every moment I had with my students, making my nature the most recognisable part about myself and acknowledging my strengths, like kindness.

By living out my individuality in my teaching, my students were also positively affected. They too, began to display kindness in the classroom by selflessly sharing their knowledge with each other, helping their peers when needed, and working collaboratively during project-based learning. As a class, we would have ongoing meaningful discussions about their own character strengths, whether it be curiosity or perseverance, and explore how they could use that in their learning or everyday life.

Leah Guenther (2018), a secondary English teacher in Chicago USA, has also explored and used Stoicism to attain more tranquillity in her personal life. Then through meaningful activities with her students, she would ‘add a behavioural awareness component to a rigorous, standards-based English language arts curriculum’ (Guenther. 2018, p. 209). This included using Stoicism as a lens for literacy analysis with Shakespeare’s ‘Othello’, literature circles and vocabulary studies on nuanced emotional words. As a result, she opened her classroom environment to vulnerability and a deeper level of self-awareness, typically ‘not recognised in our modern definition of Stoicism, which leads many people to ignore its powerful advice’ (Guenther, 2018, p 225). This research, paralleled with my personal observations, demonstrates that Stoicism can profoundly impact on students’ identity as young people, positively affecting their educational experiences. It brings meaning and purpose back into their daily routines and it makes teachers’ work not only bearable, but enjoyable.

Values are like fingerprints. Nobody’s are the same, but you leave ‘em all over everything you do. (Elvis Presley)

No matter where you are in your teaching career, what values will ground you in leading a coherent and meaningful life? Courage? Integrity? Peace?

In order to bring out the best in our students, we need teachers 'who are able to bring their best intellectual and emotional commitments to their work' (Hong et al., 2018, p 2). Take the time to reflect deeply about what is most important to you and your wellbeing. Put the oxygen mask on yourself before attending to those around you. It is of utmost importance to do this for yourself first before helping anyone else.

By shaping your own character through mindful changes – aligning your values with your words and actions – those around you will notice the subtle differences. When discussions spark in the classroom or staffroom, share your values and inspire others to reflect deeply too. If we can help others to positively manage the trials of teaching, rather than leaving them to cope on their own, they are more likely to build their own teacher identity and demonstrate a sustained professional commitment (Hong et al., 2018). I find so much joy in sharing my reflections particularly with pre-service teachers who are anxious about entering the workforce and are struggling to grasp their teacher identity. How can we give them the best chance to stay in the profession? I suggest that by prompting them to look inwardly first, they will then be able to outwardly demonstrate a more grounded and coherent sense of self as they start their careers.

Give yourself space to grow

The following exercises may be useful in helping you navigate through the struggles of early career teaching by reflecting deeply. It will provide support as you travel along on the path of constructing your professional identity.

Reflective Exercise

Read and reflect on the passage and reflection question in the morning. You can write your thoughts in a journal, teacher planner or on your phone. Come back to it at the end of the day and examine how you went.

Wellbeing is realised by small steps but is truly no small thing. (Zeno, quoted by Diogenes Laertius in 'Lives of the Eminent Philosophers')

Our mental landscape is the most important thing to take care of. For educators, no day is the same. We face new challenges when understanding what is best for our students, school community and society as a whole. The stress can quickly escalate from the many external forces which demand our attention. An inner voice often claims we are not good enough, we could have used an alternative strategy, we should have said this in that conversation. These negative, self-criticising thoughts are not uncommon, but over time, our wellbeing suffers from it. Therefore, we must rewrite the narratives we tell ourselves. Think positively and embrace each situation as a chance to grow. Our mind, and in turn, our souls, will then be nourished.

Reflection question: What small step am I taking for my wellbeing today?

Visualisation Exercise

Take yourself outside your body for a moment. Imagine hovering above yourself and looking down at your body.

Proceed to progressively zoom out so that you can see yourself surrounded by buildings, then see the buildings surrounded by other suburbs, then suburbs surrounded by other cities. You are a speck by now. Zoom out even further, till you can see the countries, then the Earth in space, then the Solar System. You are definitely a minuscule speck now. Zoom out one last time until you are at the edge of the universe.

How small does your ego look now? How about your problems? Worries? Fears?

Next time you feel overconfident or overwhelmed, zoom out to the edge of the universe. This will give you a different perspective.

Practical Exercise

Name one thing in our profession that is not essential. I am sure that every educator would have an answer. Paperwork? Administration? Meetings that could have been an email? These add extra stress to our workload. Can the essential tasks be done more efficiently?

Carve out some time today to evaluate and prioritise the jobs that can fit within your time frame. For each task, ask yourself is this

necessary? If not, cross it off your to do list and free up your time so that your mind has space to breathe, to rejuvenate, to rest.

Parting Words

Stoicism emphasised that 'doing philosophy meant practising how to live, that is, how to live freely and consciously' at all times (Hadot et al., 1997, p 86). In order to achieve this, it became important to constantly remind myself of my values and define what standards of speech and behaviour I wanted to hold myself to, such as honesty, standing up for what is just, treating each situation as an opportunity to have meaningful interactions with people, and acting with kindness. I believe this has not only helped me become a better teacher, but also a better person. In every situation in and out of the classroom, I am more able to align my values with my words and actions,

which has brought me clarity and consistency when faced with challenging circumstances.

While educational research is rightly beginning to explore teacher attrition in Australia and its causes, we might also look to the ancient schools of philosophy for guidance about how to stem it. These ancients offer a breadth of wisdom that still has the power to improve our lives as teachers and educational leaders in the present.

Philosophy's gift is to remind us about what fundamentally matters to us, helping us to better understand who we are, and as such align what we believe with our sayings and doings. Ultimately, what matters is how we, both as individuals and as a society, handle hardships, embrace change, and shape the future in our everyday lives. And it is here that philosophy remains a rich resource.

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Writer biographies



Jacqui Ward

Jacqui Ward is a passionate advocate for early childhood education as an impactful way to improve lifelong outcomes for children. Jacqui has had a range of experience in early childhood services and schools as a teacher, trainer and educational leader. This experience has been strengthened by a commitment to ongoing learning and has seen Jacqui complete her Masters in Educational Leadership specialising in Early Childhood, an Advanced Diploma in Community services management and Certificate IV in workplace training and assessment.



Dr Cathy Sly

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



Anna Rumjahn

Anna Rumjahn is a classroom teacher in Sydney's northwest. In her early career phase, she has welcomed the challenges of teaching during a pandemic and has shaped her teacher identity through cultural responsiveness and contemplative practices. Her research interests include teacher wellbeing, mindfulness in education and investigation into how philosophy can influence the landscape of education.

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