



Hills Grammar

Hills Grammar | Living And Learning | 2025

The Learning Centre



Welcome to our 2025 Program

Join The learning Centre on a journey to explore, consider and reflect upon “Living and Learning” in schools.

The latest research points to the strong nexus between wellbeing and learning in ways that we all know and have experienced in our everyday lives - as captured in the adage- You can only learn as “well” as you are.

Join single sessions live or virtual, or sign up for the entire series, navigating your way through a consideration of teacher wellbeing and learning, and then onto student wellbeing and learning. Then consider the critical nature of teacher and student relationships to both wellbeing and learning and finally how the nexus of wellbeing and learning impacts on the future of education.

Why These Speakers?

We have chosen a mix of experienced family and organisational psychologists, school leaders and university professors who are conducting current research in this area to invite us to consider “living and learning”.

What Will Participants Get Out Of It?

- The chance to network, collaborate, meet new people and learn in a relaxing and inclusive environment – live or virtual
- Reflect on the crucial relationship between wellbeing and learning
- Consider the latest on teacher wellbeing and how to help yourself and your colleagues
- Ponder the teen years and how parents and schools can boost student wellbeing and learning
- Delve deeply into the importance of teacher/ student relationships
- Be challenged to imagine the schools of the future where wellbeing and learning flourish side by side



Summary of Sessions and Speakers

The Learning Centre invites educators and parents on a journey to explore, reflect and unlock the powerful connection between wellbeing and learning in our schools. Together, we'll delve into how this essential link shapes teachers, students, and entire school communities. Research confirms what many of us instinctively know and have felt firsthand: wellbeing and learning are inseparably intertwined.

It's a truth captured in the adage: "You can only learn as 'well' as you are." Join us as we discover how fostering wellbeing can transform classrooms, empower teachers, and ignite the potential of every student - because when we nurture wellbeing, learning thrives.

[2025 Series Highlights](#)



The AWARE Teacher: Well Ways of Working in the Classroom

Melinda Philips | Organisational Psychologist

Melinda is an organisational psychologist and teacher with over twenty years' experience supporting schools. She has established "Compassionate Schools" to support teachers and schools to adopt and integrate well ways of working for their staff. Services include supervision, coaching, and psychology support for teachers and school leaders; staff wellbeing workshops, and school leader/whole staff programs. Melinda also draws on her org psych training to provide support to school leaders when required.

Melinda's psychology honours and Masters research focused on workplace wellbeing, specifically burnout, compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress following critical incidents, and the protective factors that lead to resilience and wellbeing.

Melinda has taught K-12 and has held roles including Senior Consultant with headspace schools/Be You; Consultant: School Innovation with the Association of Independent Schools of NSW; Teaching Educator with Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta; and Lead - Program Content and Evaluation and General Manager with Good Grief/MacKillop Seasons. Melinda has also practiced as a school counsellor with the Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Broken Bay. Melinda is an accredited coach with the International Coach Federation as an Associate Certified Coach and utilises coaching in her practice.

Session Information

The AWARE Teacher: Well ways to work in the classroom

School life has changed, and teachers and leaders can consider new skills to cope well and flourish. The AWARE Teacher workshop shares Australian evidence-based, real-time strategies that teachers and leaders can use in their workspaces to maintain and grow their wellbeing amidst ongoing challenges, and build a sustainable hope-filled, compassionate approach to their working life.

The AWARE Teacher workshop will be interactive and enable discussion, questions and answers and scenarios. Participants will consider five research backed strategies focused on well ways of working while they are at school:

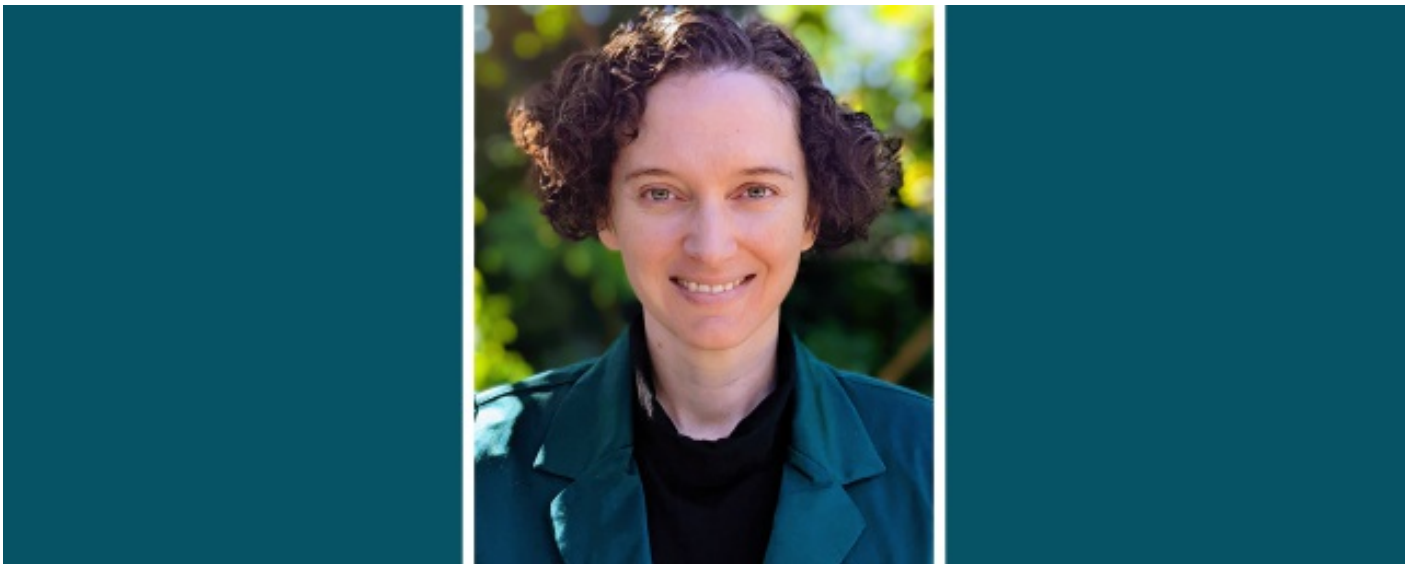
- How to tune in to thoughts, feelings and body messages
- How to apply the neurobiology of stress and coping in the classroom
- The importance of 'compassion satisfaction' and knowing what is enough
- Key real-time restoration strategies
- How to engage well with others to support wellbeing

Attendance

When | Tuesday 25 February, 4pm

Where | Join us in person at Hills Grammar, Kenthurst, Sydney, or attend virtually

[Click here to RSVP](#)



How We Can All Boost Teacher Wellbeing in our Schools: As Colleagues, Leaders and Whole School Communities

Rebecca J. Collie, Ph.D., is a Scientia Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of New South Wales, Australia. Rebecca conducts research in the broad areas of wellbeing, motivation, and social-emotional development using quantitative research methods. Previously, Rebecca worked as a primary school teacher in Melbourne.

Session Information

How We Can All Boost Teacher Wellbeing in Our Schools: As Colleagues | Leaders | Whole School

In this talk, Associate Professor Rebecca Collie will explore the connection between research and practice, outlining key strategies that teachers, leaders, and the entire school community can implement to foster a supportive working environment for teacher wellbeing. Attendees will discover how to leverage existing resources within their schools. Rebecca will present the latest research findings on the subject and encourage a broader conversation among attendees.

Attendance

When | Tuesday 18 March, 4pm

Where | Join us in person at Hills Grammar, Kenthurst, Sydney, or attend virtually

[Click here to RSVP](#)



Supporting Teenagers Through Key Transition Points

David Hamper | Hills Grammar Deputy And Head Of Senior School

With almost 3 decades of experience in education David has held a number of senior roles in diverse independent schools across Sydney with portfolios including teaching and learning, wellbeing, innovation, staff development, human resources and school operations. Across his career David has also held a number of special advisory appointments including in curriculum design and assessment with state and national curriculum authorities, teacher education with universities in Australia and the United States and in teacher professional learning with a number of professional associations. He is a prolific writer having authored, edited and contributed to numerous books, journal articles and atlases across diverse topics from the humanities and within professional domains.

Kelly Boyd | Hills Grammar Head Of Student Wellbeing Year 7 – 12

Kelly Boyd is currently the Head of Student Wellbeing, Years 7-12 at Hills Grammar. Kelly has over ten years' experience working in the Design and Innovation Department teaching a range of subjects. From 2009 – 2016 Kelly was also employed at Western Sydney University working as both a lecturer and a tutor and was involved in the development and implementation of curriculum content for pre-service teachers undertaking their Master of Teaching degree. During her time at Hills Grammar, she has worked in a number of leadership positions including Head of House. In her role as Head of Student Wellbeing 7-12 she has been involved in providing advocacy and practical support and referral to other services, such as the Learning Enrichment Team & School Psychologists, for the students in Senior School. Kelly enjoys working with students and their families through difficulties, triumphs and transition periods, using the school's wellbeing model to guide her way.

Session Information

This short course is designed for educators and parents alike and considers how we can support adolescents through key-points of transition in their schooling to maintain high levels of wellbeing. We will consider the three main transitions for young people in secondary schooling – the transition from primary into secondary education, the move into the last 2 years of schooling and the transition into post school destinations. Each transition is very different and brings with it unique challenges and responses that we will explore together in this course.

Attendance

When | Tuesday 6 May, 4pm

Where | Join us in person at Hills Grammar, Kenthurst, Sydney, or attend virtually

[Click here to RSVP](#)



They'll Be Ok: Raising Teenagers Who Flourish

Collett Smart | Psychologist

Collett is a Sydney based psychologist, qualified teacher, speaker, researcher and internationally published author, with more than 25 years' experience working in private and public schools, as well as in private practice.

She currently works as a university academic, a consultant psychologist and also appears in the media as an expert in teen and family well-being. Collett is a panellist on 'Helping Hands' (Channel 9) and is the host of a podcast called 'Raising Teens'. She is 'mum' to 3 children, ages 16, 22 and 24 years old.

Her parenting book, 'They'll be Okay: 15 Conversations to help your child through troubled times' is available in Australia and she is the editor of the parenting website – [Raising Teenagers](#), the heart of which, is to bring Hope to parents of tweens and teens.

Session Information

This session will assist both parents and educators to better understand teens and how to support their wellbeing in both home and school contexts. Collette's interactive workshop will enable group discussion, questions and answers and scenario building around topics such as:

- Understanding teen emotion and behaviour
- The factors that develop resilience in teens
- Who matters to teens and why?
- What leads to teen flourishing?
- Ideas on HOW to communicate with young people when things go wrong.
- Practical tips for connecting with teenagers.

Attendance

When | Tuesday 20 May, 4pm

Where | Join us in person at Hills Grammar, Kenthurst, Sydney, or attend virtually

[Click here to RSVP](#)



The Importance of Student-Teacher Relationships for the Wellbeing and Learning of Both

Professor Penny Van Bergen, PhD | Head Of School Education At University Of Wollongong

Penny Van Bergen is Associate Professor in Educational Psychology in the School of Education at Macquarie University and Honorary Professor in the School of Education at University of Wollongong. She has a PhD in Developmental Psychology from the University of New South Wales and expertise in the science of learning. In one line of research she focuses on memory development across the lifespan. In a second line of research she considers the teacher-student relationships factors that best support learning and development.

Session Information

Blurb: Teacher-student relationships play an important role in supporting student and staff wellbeing, learning, and connection. But what makes a successful relationship? In this workshop I step through the key components of a positive teacher-student relationship, the characteristics of complicated or mixed relationships, the mutual relationships between student behaviour, student-teacher relationships, and wellbeing, and key steps for fostering close relationships in the classroom.

Attendance

When | Tuesday 19 August, 4pm

Where | Join us in person at Hills Grammar, Kenthurst, Sydney, or attend virtually

[Click here to RSVP](#)



Let's Prepare Students for Their Future, Not Our Past

Professor John Fischetti PhD | Professor Of Leadership And School Transformation At University Of Newcastle

John Fischetti is Professor of Leadership and School Transformation at the University of Newcastle, Australia. His 40-year career in education includes transforming initial teacher education, school and university leadership, and innovating in equity-based research into pedagogies of empowerment. John was most recently Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Education. www.johnfischetti.com for more information.

Session Information

The way we “do school” is based on a design that comes straight out of the assembly-line era and is mostly obsolete. Our goal in schooling is prepare and inspire our young people to have great lives. In this session, John will share the opportunity to reconsider the ways we might transform learning, teaching, and assessment simultaneously and embrace emerging GenAI technologies to assist us. The challenges include our own professional learning and our philosophical commitment each day to providing an equity-based approach to our work with children and their families.

Attendance

When | Tuesday 9 September, 7:30am

Where | Join us in person at Hills Grammar, Kenthurst, Sydney, or attend virtually

[Click here to RSVP](#)



A Symphony of Pedagogy for Student Wellbeing and Learning

Karen Yager | Principal Of Hills Grammar

A progressive and creative leader, Karen brings more than 26 years' experience to our School, most recently as Deputy Headmaster K-12 at Knox Grammar. Her work in the education and academic world has been recognised with numerous awards, including the NSW Professional Teachers Council Award for Outstanding Service to Education in 2019.

With an emphasis on developing each student's unique strengths, agency and voice, Mrs Yager will continue to nurture, grow and inspire our Hills Originals to achieve their potential for greatness.

Karen commenced as Hills Grammar's fifth Principal in January 2022 and is enjoying meeting the Hills Grammar community – students, staff and families.

Dr Geoff Gates | Director Of Learning And Teaching At Hills Grammar

As the Director of Learning and Teaching Pre K to 12, Geoff works closely with the Heads of ECEC, Junior School and Senior School, to ensure a high quality curriculum is in place across the School. He also works closely with both curriculum leaders and teachers on projects such as Cultures of Thinking and Deep Learning, where the aim is to develop innovative, 21st century approaches to learning and teaching.

Geoff started teaching at Hills Grammar in 2004. Prior to Hills, he worked in Sydney, London and Hamburg and has taught HSC, GCSE, IGCSE and IB Diploma courses. His past leadership roles have included Literacy Coordinator, Student Services Coordinator, and Head of English. Geoff has presented at education and university conferences on pedagogy, literature and creative writing practice.

Geoff completed a Master of Arts (Creative Writing) in 2007, and a Master of Education (Leadership) in 2013 and a Doctor of Creative Arts degree in 2023. He is the author of two novels, and has written for both professional publications and literary journals. Geoff completed the AIS Flagship Leadership Program in 2023 and awarded a Premier's Teacher Scholarship for 2025 (Creativity Across the Curriculum).

Session Information

Join our Principal and Director of Learning and Teaching at Hills Grammar and be challenged in your thinking around pedagogy, learning and wellbeing.

Amid debates about direct instruction and inquiry learning, and in the context of the introduction of a 'knowledge-rich curriculum' in NSW, we argue that great teaching requires not one approach but a symphony of pedagogies. The Hills Grammar 'Guided Inquiry' approach includes explicit instruction, big ideas, lines of inquiry and application of knowledge in real-world contexts. We combine strong disciplinary learning with interdisciplinary opportunities, including entrepreneurial and passion projects. This holistic approach strengthens traditional academic outcomes while building student wellbeing and preparing them for the future.

Attendance

When | Tuesday 28 October, 4pm

Where | Join us in person at Hills Grammar, Kenthurst, Sydney, or attend virtually

[Click here to RSVP](#)
