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2026 Learning Centre Series

# The Future of Education: Positive Perspectives

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Hills  
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## The Learning Centre Series | 2026

### The Future of Education: Positive Perspectives

## Welcome to our 2026 Series

Join The Learning Centre on a journey to explore, consider and reflect upon *The Future of Education: Positive Perspectives*.

The latest research points to the cogent nexus between positivity and purpose when making our way towards what education could look in the future.

Join single sessions live or virtual, or sign up for the entire series, navigating your way through a range of perspectives and provocations provided by outstanding academics, educational leaders and directors of corporate and research organisations.

## Why These Speakers?

We have chosen an eclectic mix of exceptional Professors from key universities including UNSW, Sydney, Newcastle, and Canberra. In addition, we welcome Executive Educators and Directors from key organisations. As a result, the topics in the Series are captivating, and embrace higher order and innovative thinking in relation to:

- Teacher voices and professional freedom
- Journeys of hope
- Leveraging technology towards a bright future
- Great opportunities for Generation Beta

## 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 positivity and the future of education
- Consider new research and ideas
- Delve deeply into the importance of teacher and student agency
- Be challenged to imagine the schools of the future where learning, wellbeing and innovation flourish

## Attendance

- All sessions are free and can be attended live in our Learning Centre at Hills Grammar, Kenthurst, Sydney or virtually, from anywhere! All welcome – educators, professionals, leaders and interested organisations across the local, national and global community



## Summary of Sessions and Speakers

Date   Time	Session	Speaker	Role   Organisation
<b>TERM ONE   Optimism: Teacher voices and professional freedom</b>			
Tuesday 24 February   4-5pm	The Gift of Capturing the Authentic Voices of Teachers	Karen Yager	School Principal and PhD Candidate   Hills Grammar
Tuesday 17 March   4-5pm	Teacher Thriving: Personal Capacities to Build Your Own Sense of Wellbeing	Associate Professor Rebecca J. Collie	Scientia Associate Professor of Educational Psychology   UNSW
<b>TERM TWO   Journeys of Hope</b>			
Tuesday 28 April   4-5pm	The Power of Hope for Educators	Laureate Professor Jenny Gore AM, FASSA, FAERA	Laureate Professor   University of Newcastle Director   Teachers and Teaching Research Centre President   Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE)
Tuesday 12 May   4-5pm	Creativity is Booming! Lessons from a Premier Award Journey	Dr Geoff Gates	Director of Learning & Teaching   Hills Grammar
<b>TERM THREE   Leveraging technology towards a bright future</b>			
Tuesday 18 August   4-5pm	AI, Integrity and Innovation: Positive Pathways for Teaching and Learning	Dr Beth Chapman Ryan Elwell	Professor   University of Canberra Director   Digital Pedagogies and Online Safety Education ACT Education Directorate Adjunct University of Canberra
Tuesday 8 September   4-5pm	Diffusing Technological Innovation: Distributing The Future of Education More Evenly	Professor Danny Liu Lee Barrett	Professor   University of Sydney Prompt Engineer and AI Advocacy Project Officer   CENet
<b>TERM FOUR   Great opportunities for Generation Beta</b>			
Tuesday 27 October   4-5pm	The Data Looks Good for Generation Beta: Reimagining Education Towards 2035	Sophie Renton	Managing Director, Social Researcher and Trends Analyst   McCrindle



## The Gift of Capturing the Authentic Voices of Teachers

### Session Information

Join Karen Yager, Principal of The Hills Grammar School and PhD Candidate as she emphasises the importance of teacher voice and agency within the educational landscape. She will share her PhD study to this point, that adopts a qualitative research methodology, underpinned by insights gained from an initial pilot study. The driving rationale for using qualitative research is the importance of capturing the authentic voices of teachers (Graebner, Martin and Roundy, 2012; Lim, 2024). Thus, the focus is centred on the teacher and whether the perception of teachers is that participation in effective professional learning informed by research-based practices has the propensity to influence a teacher's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes resulting in improved capabilities and pedagogical practices. The theoretical frameworks of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2009) and Communities of Practice theory (Wenber, 1998) that underpin this research, emphasise the importance of the human at the centre of the lifelong learning experience.

### 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

### Attendance

When | Tuesday 24 February | 4-5pm

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

[Register to attend](#)



## Teacher Thriving: Personal Capacities to Build Your Own Sense of Wellbeing

### Session Information

Join Associate Professor Rebecca Collie as she explores how self-determination theory can be applied within schools to create optimism and to further boost teacher wellbeing. As we look to the future, there are positive and exciting possibilities to enhance the resilience, creativity and wellness of our educators, leveraging the “learning profession” to enrich their own lives, the profession, and ultimately, our learning communities.

### Associate Professor Rebecca J. Collie | UNSW

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.

### Attendance

When | Tuesday 17 March | 4-5pm

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

[Register to attend](#)



## The Power of Hope for Educators

### Session Information

At a time when school leaders face a relentless array of new and enduring challenges, where is hope to be found? This presentation touches on the unfounded assumptions, unhelpful binary distinctions and untested simplistic solutions that dominate the current field of school improvement. It highlights how inspiring hope among educators requires more than blind optimism and wishful thinking. Nurturing hope depends on evidence of genuine change brought about by processes that respect school leaders, teachers, and their work. This argument is illustrated with evidence from rigorous research that puts pedagogy at the centre of educational reform. It demonstrates positive effects on teacher morale and efficacy, teacher collaboration and collegiality, school culture, the quality of teaching and, most importantly, student achievement and equity. Conceptually, hope matters. Practically, it can be realised.

### Laureate Professor Jenny Gore AM, FASSA, FAERA | University of Newcastle

Laureate Professor Jenny Gore is Director of the Teachers and Teaching Research Centre at the University of Newcastle. Her research tackles persistent educational challenges through comprehensive programs of research on teacher development, pedagogical reform, enhancing student outcomes, and the formation of student aspirations. Jenny's ongoing work on Quality Teaching and Quality Teaching Rounds, conducted with colleagues over the last decade, has shown how this framework can effectively support teacher professional development, increase teacher satisfaction, enhance teaching quality in schools, and improve student achievement while also narrowing equity gaps. She has been awarded more than \$38 million in research funding and her publications have been cited more than 18,000 times. A recipient of the Paul Brock Memorial Medal in 2018 for outstanding contributions to social justice and evidence-informed policy, practice, and research, Jenny was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of NSW in 2021, recognising NSW leaders in their fields. She has also been recognised by the Australian Council for Deans of Education for outstanding contributions to education reform and as an elected Fellow of the American Educational Research Association for her expertise across diverse research traditions and as a Fellow of The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. Jenny was named Australia's leading researcher in 2022 in the field of teaching and teacher education, an award that filters for both quality and impact, and was most recently awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2024 Australia Day Honours for significant service to tertiary education.

### Attendance

When | Tuesday 28 April | 4-5pm

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

[Register to attend](#)



## Creativity is Booming! Lessons from a Premier Award Journey

### Session Information

Let's celebrate and learn from the creative learning that is happening in our schools – locally and globally.

Dr Geoff Gates, winner of The NSW 2025 Premier Award for Education, shares insights from a global study tour exploring how schools and universities cultivate creativity across disciplines. Funded by the NSW Premier's Creativity Across the Curriculum Scholarship, the research spans twelve schools, four universities, and the OECD, highlighting five key approaches: Connected Curriculum, Creative Leadership, Pedagogies for Creativity, Deep Disciplinary Knowledge, and Learning Labs.

### Dr Geoff Gates | Director of Learning and Teaching of 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).

### Attendance

When | Tuesday 12 May| 4-5pm

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

[Register to attend](#)



## AI, Integrity and Innovation: Positive Pathways for Teaching and Learning

### Session Information

Since the emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in late 2022, educators have faced a critical choice: view it as a threat to be managed or embrace it as a powerful tool to be leveraged.

In this session, Dr Beth Chapman from the University of Canberra's Faculty of Education and Ryan Elwell, Director of Digital Pedagogies and Online Safety Education at the ACT Education Directorate, invite participants to explore how schools and systems can position themselves to make the most of AI's potential while navigating its challenges.

Beth's research highlights the significant issues of academic integrity, ethics, and assessment design, while Ryan brings a wealth of practical insight from working with schools to implement AI in authentic and responsible ways. Together they will share examples of how AI is being used innovatively to enhance teaching and learning, alongside the dilemmas educators must grapple with.

Participants will unpack what it means to uphold academic integrity, embrace authenticity, and use thoughtful applications of AI that can help them design, adapt, and amplify teaching and learning—all while building a teacher toolkit that supports practice, enhances student engagement, and personalises learning experiences.

### Dr Beth Chapman | Professor at University of Canberra

Dr Beth Chapman is a strategic educator and researcher whose work reimagines how teachers and systems engage with data, assessment, and generative AI. At the University of Canberra, she leads postgraduate program design with a focus on flexible, stackable, and future-ready pathways for teachers. Beth's research brings design thinking and strategic foresight into education, exploring how AI can be used authentically and ethically to enhance learning. She partners with schools, systems, and industry to create innovative professional learning ecosystems that bridge classroom practice, policy, and postgraduate study.

### Ryall Elwell | Director of Digital Pedagogies and Online Safety Education

Ryan Elwell is a 20-year veteran of the classroom, teaching physics, engineering, and STEM in three countries before shifting to his current role as Director of Digital Education in the ACT. Ryan develops extensive programs and resources to support teachers, using his PhD studies to inform his work. With a passion for human-centered digital pedagogies, he brings a focus on connecting people to Google tools and Artificial Intelligence in ways that amplify teaching practice. Ryan works to reveal innovative uses of technology to improve accessibility and equity, supports ethical and safe integration of tech into classrooms, and builds connections to accomplish shared goals.

### Attendance

When | Tuesday 18 August | 4-5pm

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

[Register to attend](#)



## Diffusing Technological Innovation: Distributing the Future of Education More Evenly

### Session Information

Technological advancements take time to diffuse through society and organisations - but can the same be said about generative AI? In this session, we'll look at examples of how practices and strategies around AI have diffused through Australian schools and universities, through the lens of diffusion of innovations. We share lessons learnt from our experiences of trying to ensure the future of education is distributed more evenly to benefit all learners.

### Professor Danny Liu | University of Sydney

Professor Danny Liu is a molecular biologist by training, programmer by night, researcher and faculty developer by day, and educator at heart. A multiple international and national teaching award winner, he is Professor of Educational Technologies at the University of Sydney where he co-chairs the University's AI in Education working group and leads the Cogniti.ai initiative that puts educators in the driver's seat of AI.

### Lee Barrett | Prompt Engineer and AI Advocacy Project Officer | CEnet

Lee is an experienced educator and advocate for innovative teaching practices, specialising in the integration of AI in education. She is a passionate educator with 23 years' experience across a variety of sectors and in three countries. As the Prompt Engineer and AI Advocacy Project Officer at CEnet, Lee has helped lead the rollout of the cechat tool, collaborating with educators and tech designers to enhance classroom and organisational practices.

### Attendance

When | Tuesday 8 September | 4-5pm

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

[Register to attend](#)



## The Data Looks Good for Generation Beta: Reimagining Education Towards 2035

### Session Information

As we move towards education in 2035, we will need to meet the needs of Generation Beta students. With the projected multi-career outlook and the lifelong learning that this will entail, individualised education, hybrid schooling involving online and real-world classrooms, global pathways and AI-integrated environments are all having an impact on education today. This session, grounded in the latest insights from McCrindle's education report, explores the emerging educational trends and the upcoming generation of learners, and will assist education professionals to innovatively prepare for these changes. It will look at key topics such as:

- A new wave of students
- Engaging the next generation of parents
- Navigating mental health and resilience
- Increasing academic focus in a wellbeing era
- Learning in the digital age
- Redefined classrooms
- Career focussed learning for futureproofing

### Sophie Renton | Managing Director, Social Researcher and Trends Analyst at McCrindle

Sophie Renton is a social researcher, trends analyst and Managing Director at the internationally recognised McCrindle Research. As an experienced researcher, Sophie understands how evidence-based insights can inform strategy and help organisations to thrive amidst change.

Sophie's passion for discovery springs from her background in education. She leads and guides McCrindle's team of researchers in search of clear, strategic insights. Using a wide range of methodologies, she manages projects from end-to-end and brings strong organisational, communication and leadership skills to the challenge of finding the unknown.

### Attendance

When | Tuesday 27 October | 4-5pm

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

[Register to attend](#)