

Teacher Staffroom Episode 9: Spotlight on podcasts

Rebecca Vukovic

This podcast from *Teacher* is supported by Bank First – the customer owned bank proudly supporting the education community since 1972. Visit bankfirst.com.au to find out how they can help you reach your financial goals.

Thanks for downloading this episode of *Teacher* Staffroom, where we catch you up on the latest evidence, insight and action. I'm Rebecca Vukovic.

It's been another exciting month here at *Teacher* magazine and I'm thrilled to share with you just some of what we've been working on here at the publication. Today, I've decided to shine a spotlight on the podcasts we've published this month, because they're packed with some really practical strategies that you could apply to your work in the classroom. In this episode, I'll also be highlighting some of the interesting research that we covered, as well as sharing more about a new monthly series we launched here at the magazine. Let's get started.

The first podcast I'd like to highlight is one I recorded with Dr Claire Scoular, a Research Fellow here at ACER. She's leading a project that is working to develop an assessment framework for [measuring and monitoring general capabilities](#) in the classroom. The entire podcast centres around this question: How can we teach and assess general capabilities, including critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, and problem solving skills? Here's a short excerpt of Claire talking about the skill descriptions that have been developed to provide teachers with a common language to discuss these skills.

...The feedback from teachers is that, as they get to understand these skills from the skill descriptions, it does become more of a second nature to integrate the skills into the lesson plans. And, in fact, what we're finding is teachers are saying, particularly with these three skills, "we're already doing that, we just didn't identify those components of the lesson as being those skills". For example, many teachers use probing questioning to further interrogate students and service responses, and we see that very much under the umbrella of critical thinking. And so just making that more explicit in the lesson has really helped those teachers and students to get to grips with what critical thinking is.

Here's something to think about. How do you measure student success with general capabilities like collaboration, creativity and critical thinking? And what tools or resources do you find useful in teaching and assessing the General Capabilities?

My colleague Dominique Russell attended the 2019 National Education Summit in Melbourne and, while she was there, she sat down with Dr Rowena Conroy – a clinical psychologist who works with children, adolescents and families at the Children's Private Medical Group in Victoria – to record a podcast. It's a fascinating discussion that explores practical ways educators can [identify and manage anxiety in their classrooms](#). Here's a short excerpt from the podcast.

Children with anxiety often do, do a lot of reassurance seeking and this can look like asking lots of questions of their parents, of their teachers. Questions about things that are coming up, sometimes questions about "what ifs" and "whys" as well. And we would understand this in children with anxiety, if they're engaging in this excessive questioning and reassurance seeking, we would understand it as their way of perhaps trying to alleviate their anxiety about uncertainty. We know that children with anxiety disorders often don't like not knowing, or don't like uncertainty, so their questioning or their reassurance seeking can at times represent their effort to try and stop being in that position of being unsure.

Dr Rowena Conroy says it can be useful for teachers to encourage students who tend to seek reassurance to be more independent in their thinking. As an educator, how do you usually respond to the repeated question of 'is this right?' from a student? Is there room to make your response more constructive?

While at the National Education Summit, Dominique also spoke with Danni Rowlands, the National Manager of Prevention Services at The Butterfly Foundation about [body image issues and eating disorders, particularly in boys](#). Make sure you check out the full article on the *Teacher* magazine website.

This month I drove out to Scoresby Secondary College to meet with Murray Cronin – Head of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the school – to record a podcast episode for our School Improvement series. The school has been on a mission to improve instructional practice by embedding student voice in the school's improvement cycle. Here's a short excerpt where Murray discusses how students and teachers worked collaboratively to reflect on and improve instructional practice.

As a leader, traditionally we are presented with the responsibility of teacher improvement and we know that leaders have such an impact on teachers and the achievement of students. But something that I discovered personally is just the wealth of information and knowledge that students could generate. As I said, traditionally it's come down to individuals supporting other individuals and coming up with ideas for effective practice. But the students came up with so many and so many more than I could have come up with as an individual leader.

'So it's really got me thinking about, what if we conceptualise leadership as not just the adults in the place? Because leadership is the ability to influence and if we're incorporating students in that image of leadership, all of a sudden we have every individual in the school trying to influence and change and improve. So, by tapping into students we could have a community of leaders that are supporting teachers to improve.

Here's something to think about: As a leader, do you engage students in decision making and improvement-related processes at your school? How does this impact on your overall school culture?

We've published some really interesting research on the site this month on a whole range of educational topics. I've sifted through the lot and have picked three pieces that I'd like to point out to you. And just a reminder, the full transcript of this podcast is available on the *Teacher* magazine website, with links to all the articles I've mentioned, to make it really easy for you to find what you're looking for.

Okay, the first piece I'd like to share came from a [Norwegian study](#), carried out in seven Oslo kindergartens that examined what it means to work musically in an early education setting. The study identified five informal roles – termed 'musical pathfinders' – that early years educators take on as they guide children, and share their cultures, using music.

The next one I'd like to share is this Q&A we conducted with [Dr Karen Tindall](#), a Senior Adviser at the Behavioural Insights Team Australia. Her work explores: Can simple prompts help encourage more trainee teachers to apply for placements in rural and remote schools? She discusses the aims of the program, the theory behind it, and shares more about the work she's doing with a rural teacher recruitment trial in New South Wales.

The next article I'd recommend on *Teacher* this month, is [a contribution](#) that questions, how can schools best work with parents, carers, grandparents and older siblings to support students and improve their learning? The authors explore two evidence-based recommendations from a new guidance report for Australian practitioners, and share practical examples of action.

In October we published the first edition of [Researching education: Five further readings ...](#) It's a monthly series where we take a look at some further readings available on a particular topic, including open access research papers from various online catalogues, and *Teacher* archive content that you may not have come across yet. The *Teacher* team is collaborating

with Jenny Trevitt a Senior Librarian at ACER's [Cunningham Library](#). This first edition focuses specifically on resources available on the theme of learning in the 21st Century.

This month our reader survey also concluded for another year, and we'd like to thank all of you for offering up your feedback and suggestions. In the survey, we asked you what topics you'd like to see us to cover in the future and [we've already been working through the comments](#) and planning how we'll bring more of those topics and themes over the coming months.

We also asked teachers, looking back on your experience as an educator, 'if you could share one piece of advice with your peers, what would it be?' We collated some of the responses on the topic of lifelong learning and [shared them in an infographic](#), which I'd encourage you to share with your colleagues in education. I'll leave you now with one of the quotes from the survey on the topic of lifelong learning. 'Teaching requires resilience and a lifelong commitment to learn and improve practice. It is also the most rewarding career you can choose.'

That's all from me, and you're all caught up on the latest evidence, insight and action. If you would like to take a closer look at anything I've mentioned in this episode, you'll find links to all you need in the transcript for this podcast at teachermagazine.com.au.

And, if you'd like to listen to more from Teacher, you'll find us by searching 'Teacher ACER' wherever you get your podcasts – on Apple Podcasts, SoundCloud or Spotify. And while you're there, make sure you subscribe to the channel by clicking on the purple 'Subscribe' button on Apple, the green 'Follow' button on Spotify or the orange 'Follow' button on SoundCloud. By subscribing, you ensure that new podcasts land in your feed as soon as they're available. You'll also get a notification straight to your device, which is really handy for making sure you never miss an episode.

You've been listening to a podcast from *Teacher*, supported by Bank First. Bank First has been committed to supporting the financial wellbeing of the education community since 1972. Visit bankfirst.com.au to find out how they can help you reach your financial goals.