

Big Fish, Little Fish

Teaching and learning in the middle years

Big Fish, Little Fish: Teaching and learning in the middle years provides pre-service and early career teachers with a pathway to understanding the needs of students as they make the important transition from primary to secondary schooling.

The book explores contemporary challenges for teaching and learning in the middle years, with a focus on student experience, identity, engagement and resilience. Key issues, such as teaching academically at risk students, the impact of education policy on middle years students, and teacher preparation and identity, are given comprehensive coverage. Unique to this text is its focus on and analysis of the history of middle years education, as well as its in-depth discussion of the experiences of young Indigenous and Māori students.

Each chapter brings together learning and teaching theory and practice to challenge readers, providing opportunities to engage with the content via case studies, exercises and reflection questions. Drawing on the wide-ranging expertise of its contributors, *Big Fish, Little Fish* prepares pre-service teachers to best meet the needs of students as they enter the challenging middle years of their education.

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Teaching and learning in the
middle years

Edited by

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Nicole Mockler



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Contents

Contributors	xi
Preface	xvii
Part 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Challenges for teaching and learning in the middle years	3
<i>Susan Groundwater-Smith and Nicole Mockler</i>	
The challenges are considerable and ongoing	5
Losing and regaining the momentum	8
Assembling the evidence	11
Conclusion	12
References	13
Chapter 2: Thinking historically about the schooling of young people in the ‘middle years’	15
<i>Craig Campbell and Kay Whitehead</i>	
Age relations, adolescence and organising schools	16
The same age, but different courses and schools	17
Inventing the middle school(ing) movement	20
Rethinking the apparent needs of the adolescent	22
Conclusion	24
References	25
Part 2 The needs of learners in the middle years	27
Chapter 3: Teaching academically at risk students in middle school: The roles of explicit instruction and guided discovery learning	29
<i>Andrew J. Martin</i>	
Moving through the middle years at school: An escalation in cognitive demands	30

Students at academic risk and escalated cognitive demands	30
Instruction that addresses the escalation in cognitive demands	31
Human cognitive architecture: From explicit instruction to guided discovery learning	33
Explicit instruction	34
Guided discovery learning	36
From explicit instruction to guided discovery learning	37
Conclusion	38
References	39
Chapter 4: Success after (dis)continuous transfer? (Re)imaginative praxis for pedagogy, curriculum and assessment	44
<i>lisahunter</i>	
Context	46
So what?	49
Pedagogies of imaginative praxis	50
So what?	57
Conclusion	60
Extended reading list for Pierre Bourdieu's ideas	60
References	61
Chapter 5: A fair go and student agency in the middle years classroom	63
<i>Susan Groundwater-Smith</i>	
Consulting young people regarding their schooling, leading to participation in decision-making	65
Students as inquirers	67
Ethical considerations in participative inquiry by young people	73
Conclusion	74
References	74
Chapter 6: Consulting young people in the middle years in New Zealand	77
<i>Jenny Poskitt</i>	
New Zealand policy and national context for middle years students	78
Student voices on being consulted	82
Cultural perspectives	88
New Zealand research literature with middle years students	89
Conclusion	93
References	93
Chapter 7: High possibility classrooms in the middle years: A model for reform	95
<i>Jane Hunter</i>	
Research design	96
Background to the case study	97

What is 'big learning'?	98
The case study: <i>Big learning for the future</i>	99
Conclusion	107
References	107
Part 3 Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in the middle years	111
Chapter 8: Teaching strategies that encourage student effort in Years 8 and 9	113
<i>Sara Murray and Jane Mitchell</i>	
What do we mean by effort? And why is it important?	114
Cultural beliefs about the importance of effort	115
How can teachers encourage student effort in their classrooms?	117
Strategies for increasing student effort	118
Conclusion	124
References	124
Chapter 9: Visceral pedagogies: Learning to teach middle years in the margins	126
<i>Sam Sellar</i>	
Research evidence for the importance of teacher–student relationships	127
'Pedagogy is all about relationships': A simple formula	129
Visceral pedagogies: A thought experiment	132
Conclusion	136
References	137
Chapter 10: The challenges of testing accountability: Understanding limitations and negotiating consequences	139
<i>Greg Thompson</i>	
NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy)	140
The language of tests	142
What do we mean by 'reliability' and 'validity', and why are they important?	143
What is a high-stakes test? How is it different from a low-stakes test?	146
What can we do?	149
References	152
Chapter 11: Engaging Indigenous students: The important relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their teachers	155
<i>Peter Buckskin</i>	
Cultural competency	158
Languages other than standard Australian English	162
Middle school	164

The importance of listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators	166
Conclusion	169
References	170
Chapter 12: The experiences of Māori students in the middle years	175
<i>Angus Macfarlane</i>	
Theoretical understandings	176
The New Zealand context	178
Culture as the centre of teaching and learning	180
Classroom processes and practices	182
Conclusion	184
References	185
Chapter 13: Changing scenarios for teaching and learning in the middle years	189
<i>Margaret Mulcahy</i>	
Why the middle years?	191
The power of storytelling: Scenarios from across the globe	193
What these stories reveal	199
Conclusion	201
References	202
Part 4 Preparing teachers for the middle years	205
Chapter 14: Teacher identity in the middle years	207
<i>Donna Pendergast</i>	
Teacher professional identity	208
Middle years teacher identity	212
Visual images and teacher identity	215
Conclusion	218
References	219
Chapter 15: A generic teacher education program that meets contemporary schools' needs	223
<i>Sally Knipe</i>	
Teacher preparation in Australia	224
Expansion of teacher education into universities	226
Adolescent education	227
Adolescence and middle schooling	229
Innovation required for teacher qualifications	229
Constraints of school staffing and teacher qualifications	230
Conclusion	232
References	232

Chapter 16: Leading teacher professional learning in the middle years	236
<i>Lyn Kirkby</i>	
The middle years teacher and professional learning	237
Compliance and professional learning	238
Connecting teacher and student learning in the middle years	239
The place of external professional learning	245
Conclusion	246
References	247
 Part 5 Conclusion	 251
 Chapter 17: The middle years as a site for reform: From local to global	 253
<i>Nicole Mockler</i>	
The middle years as a site for innovation	254
The Global Education Reform Movement (GERM)	257
Sustaining the GERM	262
‘Innovation’ and ‘reform’: Walking the line	263
References	265
 <i>Index</i>	 269

Contributors

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Nicole Mockler is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Newcastle. She is a former teacher and school leader, and the current focus of her research and writing is teacher professional identity, teacher professional learning and the politics of education. Her most recent books are *Engaging with Student Voice in Research, Education and Community: Beyond legitimization and guardianship* (with Susan Groundwater-Smith, Springer 2015), *Facilitating Practitioner Research: Developing transformational partnerships* (co-authored with Susan Groundwater-Smith, Jane Mitchell, Petra Ponte and Karin Ronnerman, Routledge 2013) and *Rethinking Educational Practice Through Reflexive Inquiry* (edited with Judyth Sachs, Springer 2011).

About the authors

Peter Buckskin is a Narungga man from the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia. He is currently the Dean: Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research at the University of South Australia. As an educator and professional bureaucrat for more than 35 years, Peter's passion has been the pursuit of educational excellence for Aboriginal students. His international work has included being appointed to the Australian National Commission to UNESCO for a term, and to the 2009 Working Group of Experts to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples responsible to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. He is currently an Executive Member of the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. Professor Buckskin's current research projects include increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and leaders in Australian schools; developing an Online Teacher Education Course for Pre-service Teachers 'Respect-Relationships-Reconciliation' for the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership; and an Australian Maths and Science Partnerships Program (AMSPP) project to foster Mathematics excellence and equity in schooling and tertiary education choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Craig Campbell writes social histories of schooling and age relations. *A History of Australian Schooling* (2014) is the first such history in nearly 40 years. He has been a teacher in public high schools in South Australia, and a teacher union leader. As an Associate Professor of Educational History at the University of Sydney, he has authored and co-authored eight books. Currently, he writes for the online Dictionary of Educational History in Australia and New Zealand (dehantz.net.au), edits the journal *History of Education Review* and as an honorary associate of the University of Sydney, is researching and writing a biography of the Australian socialist feminist educator, Jean Blackburn.

Jane Hunter is an early career researcher at the Centre for Educational Research in the School of Education at the University of Western Sydney. She has received several major teaching awards for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning and is now on an international team of educators providing Technology Enriched Instruction around the world. Her doctoral work developed a new model for technology integration in schools; the book from the thesis, titled *Technology Integration and High Possibility Classrooms*, will be published in 2015. Invited to speak at education conferences, she publishes in the areas of pedagogy and professional development.

A passionate teacher of Economics, **Lyn Kirkby** has made a significant contribution to teacher accreditation and professional review policy development processes at the state and national level. She has been a member of national and state committees responsible for shaping this agenda to ensure consistent quality outcomes for teachers. Lyn's expertise is grounded in both theory and practice, as

she has led implementation processes at the school and independent sector level in NSW. A recipient of the Deans Medal for her MEd at the University of Western Sydney in 2010, she is now a doctoral candidate. Lyn works as a Senior Policy Officer at the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards, and as a tutor at the University of Sydney.

Sally Knipe is Associate Professor (Education) in the Faculty of Education at La Trobe University. Sally is an experienced teacher and academic with an extensive background in leadership and in the development of teacher education programs, including working as a national assessor of initial teacher education programs. Sally has published in the area of teacher education, and is on the executive of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA), a major professional association for teacher educators in Australia. Sally draws on existing data and data mining techniques in a range of research projects.

lisahunter's previous research, including the project reported in this book, included transition from primary to secondary school, middle schooling, and middle years teacher education. She now researches in areas associated with sexualities, pedagogy, physical culture, and embodied subjectivities. Employing ethnography, narrative, visual and sensory methodologies, her current projects include female surfing participation, normativity in teacher education, digital literacies in academic work, schooling and sexualities, and surf festivals.

Angus Hikairo Macfarlane affiliates to the Te Arawa confederation of tribes in the central north island of New Zealand. His research activities focus on the exploration of cultural concepts and strategies that influence educational practice and sociocultural theorising. He has a prolific publications portfolio and has international standing in the education-psychology community. He has been the recipient of a number of prestigious awards, most of which note his accomplishment of a sustained record of research of the highest quality. He is passionate about Indigenous advancement in education. Dr Macfarlane is Professor of Māori Research at the University of Canterbury.

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Margaret Mulcahy was the inaugural Head of Middle School at Santa Sabina College in Sydney, a position she held for nine years. Her commitment to young adolescents was recognised with a Churchill Fellowship in 2012 which saw her travel to Finland, the United Kingdom and the United States to further investigate best practice in middle years education. She has worked with school communities across NSW supporting their endeavours to engage students and provide a positive transition from primary to secondary school. She has presented at local and international conferences and is a member of the Management Team of Adolescent Success, the association dedicated to the education, development and growth of young adolescents. Currently she is the Executive Principal at a remote school in NSW where she is working to enable staff and students, in partnership with the community, to reach their full potential.

Sara Murray lectures in Adolescent Psychology in the School of Teacher Education at Charles Sturt University. She has many years' experience as a psychologist working with young people.

Donna Pendergast is Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. She has an international profile in the field of middle years education. Her work focuses on school leadership for middle years reform, along with developing capabilities to enhance teacher efficacy in teaching young adolescents. Her journey in middle years education has included: leading and developing the first dedicated teacher education program in Australia; influencing state and national policy directions; conducting state and national evaluations; developing a reform model which is currently employed by several Australian states to guide teaching and learning in the middle years; leadership of competitive research tenders commissioned by state and federal authorities valued at more than \$1.5 million; more than 100 publications.

Jenny Poskitt a New Zealander, began her career as a primary school teacher and taught in three schools. She was seconded to work as a researcher in schools committed to parent-school-curriculum relationships, and was subsequently appointed to Massey University. Jenny researches and teaches in the areas of assessment, professional learning, research methods, and adolescent learning and engagement. She has led multiple research projects and serves on numerous Ministry of Education Advisory Groups. With three school-aged children (two of whom are teenagers) keeping her grounded, Jenny is renowned for bridging theory and practice.

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Greg Thompson is Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Murdoch University. His research interests include large-scale standardised assessment programs, education policy, teacher and student subjectivities. Since 2012 he has been an Australian Research Council Fellow investigating the effects of Australia’s NAPLAN testing regime on school communities. He is the Associate Editor of *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* and Series Co-Editor of the AARE’s book series *Local/Global Issues in Education*.

Kay Whitehead is a Professor and Deputy Dean in the School of Education at Flinders University. Her historical research focuses on transnational discourses to do with 19th and early 20th century women educators in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. Additionally, she has several publications in the area of contemporary middle schooling.

Preface

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When we imagined the structure and content of this book we asked ourselves these questions:

- How has our understanding of provisions for learning in the middle years of schooling evolved over time?
- What are the needs of learners during these critical years?
- What specific issues are associated with curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for students from Australia and New Zealand in the middle years?
- How might teachers, both in initial and continuing teacher education, be best prepared to teach students in the middle years of schooling?

Together, we examined not only the current research and practices that lie behind today’s policies but also the ways in which this has undergone change and development, particularly in relation to the reconstruction and reconfiguration of ‘adolescence’ in contemporary times. As well, we wanted to place these policies in a socio-political context beyond state boundaries and ask critical questions regarding their viability.

To these ends we sought researchers and scholars who have specialised in various aspects of education and schooling that hold particular implications for students in the middle years as contributors to *Big Fish, Little Fish*. In writing for this book, they drew upon those aspects of their academic work that would inform the reader, in clear and well-defined terms, of the ways in which these characteristics could make sense in the complex world of schooling.

At the same time the contributors have avoided the portrayal of simple, recipe-like solutions; rather, they have aimed to challenge the reader to connect the text to their own experiences and transform the information into personal, professional knowledge. As Lawrence Stenhouse is quoted as saying, ‘Information is not knowledge until the factor of error in it is appropriately estimated’ (cited in Rudduck et al. 1983, p. 141). By this it is meant that what you will find in the various chapters in this book important and well-constructed information, but it will be a matter for you as the reader to come to it with a critical eye and connect it to what you already know and understand.

It is possible, in fact highly likely, that you may find no ‘error in it’, but by approaching the chapters in this way you will more intensely interrogate the text and, with your peers and colleagues, ask of it and of each other good critical questions. To this end we have requested that each contributor embed in their chapters reflective prompts to encourage you and your colleagues to pause and engage in conversation and debate.

While most chapters have been written by university-based academics, we have also included some that are from practitioners in the field, thus bringing together the academic and practical voices. We see this incorporation as a form of enrichment.

Finally, a word regarding the title ... Over the years we have had the opportunity to interview many young people regarding the transition from primary schooling to the secondary school world, not only with regard to learning, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, but also in relation to managing the social context in which they find themselves. In most of these encounters the phrase ‘going from big fish to little fish’ has occurred – the transition is indeed a critical one in identity formation and should be regarded as such when you consider teaching and learning in the middle years.

Susan Groundwater-Smith
Nicole Mockler

Reference

Stenhouse, L. (1979). Cited in Rudduck, J., Hopkins, D., Groundwater-Smith, S. & Labbett, B. (1983). Independent study, books and libraries and the academic sixth form. A Report to the British Library Research and Development Department.