



# IRSEA NEWS

WWW.IRSEA.ORG.AU

ABN: 78 259 388 090



*IRSEA enriches the lives of retired Senior Educational Administrators through engagement, collegiality, friendship, and support while deploying its intellectual capacity and educational expertise for the betterment of public education in New South Wales, Australia, and beyond.*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

LINDSAY WASSON



Dear Members,

As I write this final President's Report for 2025, I sit in awe of the wonders wrought by our colleague leaders on the Executive Committee. To say it's been productive does scant justice to the highly strategic and history-making progress your Committee has accomplished so far this year.

Significant developments include the:

- hugely successful two-day Northern Gathering at the Apollo in Newcastle which included dinner, formal meeting, presentation by Laureate Professor Jenny Gore and luncheon. Thank you, in particular, to Janina Sulikowski and Gerry McCloughan;
- early implementation of our ratified Strategic Plan and 'Plan-on-a Page' through the visionary work of Gerry McCloughan, Eric Jamieson plus Committee;
- awarding of Life Membership to our more than deserving and superlative Secretary, Dr Brian Davies;

## WHAT'S THE NEWS

- 1 *From the President*
- 6 *Department's Update*
- 7 *Updates from the Treasurer and Secretary*
- 8 *Stewart House Update*
- 9 *IRSEA Social Gathering & Luncheon*
- 11 *Member's Contribution Michael Murray*
- 15 *Member's Contribution Eric Jamieson*
- 17 *Vale: Professor Jackie Manuel*
- 18 *IRSEA Members' Luncheon Booking, 5 December 2025*

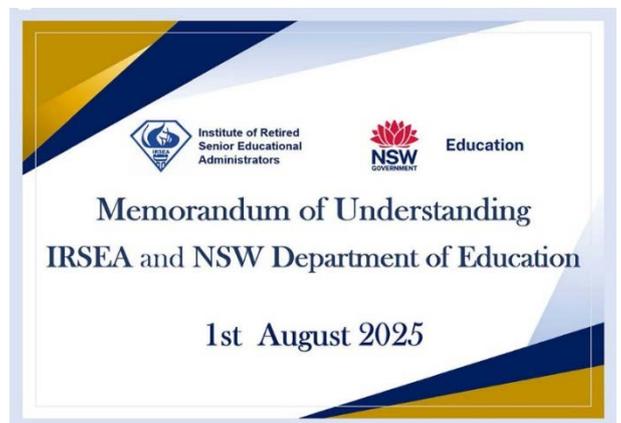
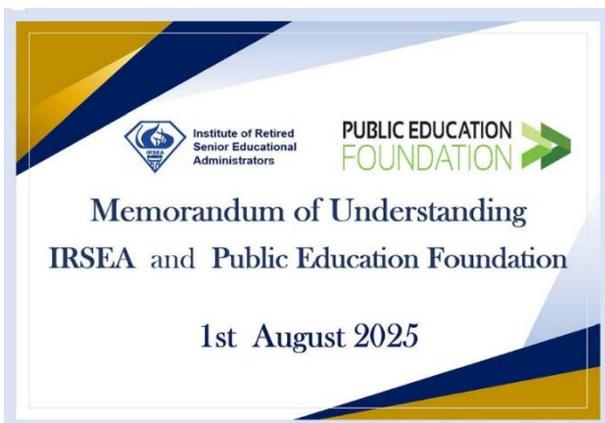
5 December 2025

Upcoming Event

IRSEA General Meeting  
& Luncheon

- finalisation and signing of the highly strategic MoU with the Public Education Foundation, a key partner in supporting worthy public education students and leaders (Eric Jamieson, Dr Alan Laughlin, Gerry McCloughan, David Riordan, Lindsay Wasson, Dr Manisha Amin and Miriam Valero);

- signing in August of our most important partnership document, the MoU with the NSW Department of Education (Deb Summerhayes, Nick Magriplis, Lindsay Wasson, Gerry McCloughan and Eric Jamieson);



- formal welcome to Kay Rigas, Executive Director, Metropolitan South and West Directorate, NSW DoE, as a full member of our Executive Committee as per the MoU;
- foundational work in identifying and confirming Plumpton High School as the first NSW public school for the World's Best Schools award (Eric Jamieson and Lindsay Wasson);
- selection of winning candidates for the inaugural IRSEA Fellowships, to be presented at the DoE Summit on 27 November at Accor Stadium, Parramatta (Dr Kerrie Ikin, Dr Alan Laughlin and Dr Graham Dawson along with three key DoE panelists); and
- joyous, enjoyable social luncheon at the Rowers Club on 30 October organised by our wonderful Welfare Co-ordinator, Kerryanne Knox.

### Special Acknowledgement

The more than cordial and collegial negotiation of the two MoUs signed this year could not have taken place without the extraordinary contribution of Geoff Baldwin. Their substance, accessibility, structure and elegance of turn of phrase hinged on Geoff's indispensable brilliance, legal expertise and unstinting commitment to the great cause all parties subscribe to. Thank you, Geoff Baldwin!

Despite these formidable achievements and history-making milestones in our forward journey, we have yet to see some of our planned work-streams and events fully developed, implemented and embedded as fixtures in our calendar. This is where our energies must now be applied. We must ensure that the fruitful future we have so clearly envisioned for a more influential Institute, including a more satisfying and enjoyable organisation for our members, comes to fruition as planned.

### TAFE strategic links and membership growth

With David Riordan and Kim Fillingham, I plan to meet with the new TAFE Managing Director,



Chloe Read, to begin a more systematic approach to linking with TAFE, formalising a relationship and growing our TAFE numbers. Here is a largely untapped resource and a formidable group of public educators/administrators whom we believe will find great satisfaction in joining IRSEA and who will add enormous intellectual clout and personable collegiality to our organisation and members.

### Social events

Building on the enormous success of the social events held to date - thank you Kerryanne Knox - we plan more and bigger events for 2026. Watch out for dates and venues in the soon to be published calendar.



### **Thought leadership seminars**

Much preliminary thought and discussion have occurred this year and 2026 will see our inaugural series of high interest, intellectually stimulating seminars delivered.

### **Links with the Retired Primary Principal and Secondary Principal groups**

Preliminary discussions have been held with Tom Croker, President of the Retired Primary Principals' group (Dr Alan Laughlin, Lindsay Wasson, Kerryanne Knox) towards closer links and coordinated activity. Before the end of 2025 we hope to announce a new, formal collaborative relationship.

In similar vein, we will approach the Retired Secondary Principals to establish closer formal ties for collaboration and jointly organised celebratory events.

### **The tertiary sector**

IRSEA has never really embraced the tertiary sector as collegial supporters but it is time we did. The absolutely wonderful Newcastle/Northern event on 13-14 June this year demonstrated perfectly how we can all benefit from the intellectual power and generous input of academics aligned with our mission, vision and values. Irrefutable evidence of this was demonstrated by Laureate Professor Jenny Gore who gave her weekend to us and delivered a brilliant presentation we will always treasure.

### **South Coast event**

Plans for a South Coast event, modelled on our great Northern venture, are underway. Details to follow soon.

These ideas and plans are not designed to disrupt the equanimity of members, nor are they to conflict, in any way, with our core remit. Collegiality, connectedness, collaboration along with enjoyment, entertainment and excitement will always be central to the membership value IRSEA strives to deliver.

However, our expanded initiatives will also be a focus for our future work while we carefully

and assiduously bed down and nurture the great work we have so far undertaken.

Thank you, Executive Committee members, for your extraordinary efforts and selfless contributions. And thank you, members, for your superb and positive support that enables us to '*thrive with all our candles burning*'.

**Lindsay Wasson**  
**IRSEA President**  
 November 2025



*"True fulfillment is never found in self-interest but rather in service to something larger than yourself." Arthur C. Brooks*

# NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS

### RAEHEL MCCARTHY, DEL AND IRSEA LIAISON



*Raechel McCarthy is the Director, Educational Leadership, Lake Illawarra North Principals Network. Raechel plays an important role in liaison between IRSEA and the Department. In this article she reports on an exciting development in public education.*

Hi all!

This report focuses on emerging Department developments in information technology and an update on my new relieving DEL role (you all know how much I enjoy exploring new opportunities within our Department!). Kathy Powzun has asked me to relieve for the remainder of the year as DEL Connected Communities Team 1, which includes the following schools: Bourke, Walgett, Coonamble, Gunnedah, Moree, Peel, Narooma, Shoalhaven, Airds, Kempsey, and Melville Community College High Schools. I commenced in this role on 3 November.

The Connected Communities Strategy aims to improve educational outcomes and strengthen community support for Aboriginal students and their families in schools with large Aboriginal populations. One particularly interesting project in this space is focused on improving processes for identifying students who speak Aboriginal English, ensuring they receive appropriate support (where needed) to learn Standard Australian English needed for academic success and future employment. Importantly, the project also recognises Aboriginal English as a valued dialect and a vital part of student identity and culture and that schools should be actively supporting students in retaining this language in addition to Standard Australian English. I look forward to informally discussing this further with you all at our 5 December luncheon—I've already told my administration officer that attending this event is non-negotiable!

#### Information technology updates in schools

##### *NSWEduChat student access – Years 5 to 12*

In recognition of our changing digital world and the growing use of AI tools, NSW public school students in Years 9–12 will gain access to NSWEduChat (student mode) from Monday 3 November. Students in Years 5–8 will have access from Monday 17 November.

Use of NSWEduChat remains optional for both staff and students. Staff have had access since Term 4, 2024, and schools are facilitating a brief 'Student Induction Session – Safe Use of NSWEduChat' for all Years 5–12 students.

##### *Videogame research survey for Year 9 and Year 10 students*

A selection of schools across the state are participating in a research project titled 'Level Up – Understanding Teens' Videogame Play'. Supported by the Screen Use and Addiction Research Fund, the project is being led by researchers from the University of Wollongong and Queensland University of Technology. The study will provide valuable data on the impact of video game use on student learning, cognition, and wellbeing—topics that continue to be of great interest to parents, carers, and schools.

I hope everyone is well and I look forward to catching up with some IRSEA members at the Public Schools Summit, and more of you at our 5 December luncheon.

Warm regards,

**Raechel McCarthy**

**IRSEA/Department Liaison**

## COMMITTEE REPORT UPDATES

### Treasurer's Update: Ray Gillies

On 31 October 2025, the IRSEA Society Account had a balance of \$9,127.17. This year, we received \$2,680 in members' annual subscriptions. Donations to Stewart House from members and IRSEA activities total \$4,162. Attendees' payments for general meeting lunches amounted to \$6,370, and we paid \$7,075 to Castlreagh Boutique Hotel, including guests and venue charges. The IRSEA NEWS has cost \$1,221.51. Other administrative costs come to \$251.10. Our Term Deposit is valued at \$10,775.51 (maturing 14 July 2025).

**Ray Gillies**

**IRSEA Treasurer**

### Website Update: Ray Gillies

I invite you to check out the IRSEA website for information on our purposes and activities, a gallery of meeting photos of colleagues, the newsletters file and more. Please send any comments and suggestions on the look and feel of the website to me at [webadmin@irsea.org.au](mailto:webadmin@irsea.org.au).

**Ray Gillies**

**IRSEA website administrator**

### Secretary's Update: Brian Davies

At our recent executive meeting, the calendar of events for 2026 was discussed. Importantly, our 2026 Annual General Meeting is to take place on Friday 20 March at the Castlreagh Boutique Hotel. The meeting will commence at noon. If you would like to bring any business to the meeting, please let me know by Tuesday 10 February 2026 at [secretary@irsea.org.au](mailto:secretary@irsea.org.au). We value input from our members and there might be something you think will help our organisation to serve the members.

The executive also decided that we will look at varying the days of the week of the general luncheon meetings so that not all are on a Friday. Another change is to have these meetings more evenly spread through the year. To

do this, we are considering moving the meeting usually held in May to June instead, and put the August meeting back to probably September - the December meeting will not change. Final dates will be published in the February newsletter but it would be good to hear from members as to what they think about these changes. Please contact me at [secretary@irsea.org.au](mailto:secretary@irsea.org.au). The calendar will also include dates for our social events and for regional meetings.

At the Annual General Meeting in March, we will also be electing the executive for 2026-27. Please consider whether you could help your organization by nominating. There are only four Executive meetings per year. This is an opportunity for members to join the Executive, share their perspective and hear about what is happening in the Department of Education with the Department now represented on the committee. The February newsletter will contain the nomination forms. If you would like to discuss joining the committee or need any assistance in completing the nomination forms, please contact me on the email address below.

Communication is important. Not only are invitations to general meetings and reminders emailed out, but emails also go out concerning such matters as our social events and the Department's ANZAC Day Remembrance Service. Please make sure that we have any changes to your email address. If you are not receiving emails, please let me know so that we can check what is happening. At times, particular email services have determined that I am a scammer and blocked my emails.

Finally, I hope as many as possible can make it to our Christmas luncheon on Friday 5 December at the Castlreagh Boutique Hotel. It is always a great, festive time with colleagues. Please complete the registration form in this newsletter as soon as possible.

With this being the last newsletter for the year, I would like to wish all members the best for Christmas and the New Year.

**Brian Davies**

**Secretary** ([secretary@irsea.org.au](mailto:secretary@irsea.org.au))

## Stewart House Update: Alan Laughlin



*This article gives a few insights into what is happening at Stewart House, some of our challenges, and recognition of the new CEO, Paul Somers.*

### Some Term 3 highlights

In Term 3 this year Stewart House offered 416 placements across five intake groups to students in public primary and high schools in New South Wales. The 12-day Stewart House Program provides each cohort with a consistent and supportive residential experience. Students came from both metropolitan and regional areas across the state.

Thanks to your generosity, children at Stewart House experience the joys of childhood in a caring environment. Each day brings nourishing meals, health screenings, and social and emotional learning activities that build confidence, resilience, and friendships.

This term, students enjoyed stronger community connections through visits from two experienced First Nations educators who worked alongside the SH Aboriginal Education Officer, Jack Hickey.

During each program group at Stewart House, children experience care, belonging, and support. Alumni often reflect on friendships and memories that shaped their futures. The photos show some of our kids, doing what they do best.

We are honoured when students reach out, like Maddie, whose story shows the lasting impact of each stay and why your support matters.

*"I attended Stewart House back in 2015... the 12 days I spent at Stewart House were some of my happiest memories as a kid... I am now studying a Bachelor of Social Work so I can help children in similar situations... You are giving these children so much opportunity in life simply by showing them that someone cares." – Maddie*



### Our new CEO

Last year long serving CEO, Graeme Philpotts, retired and, after a lengthy search for a replacement, Mr Paul Somers was appointed. Paul brings extensive leadership experience from senior roles at PwC, Google and the Public Education Foundation. Paul is committed to strengthening key partnerships, including those with the NSW Department of Education and the NSW Teachers Federation, as well as valued relationships with organisations like IRSEA.

### Challenges

Funding remains the biggest challenge for Stewart House. Stewart House continues as the Charity of Choice for the Department of Education. The major source of funding comes from some 6,500 staff contributing through the salary contribution scheme. Unfortunately, this generous commitment does not cover the costs of running Stewart House. The annual budget is significantly in the red. Fundraising remains a continued challenge and support from IRSEA members through donations and raffles is greatly appreciated. The Department and Principal groups are working hard to raise the numbers of staff who regularly contribute.

### Friends of Stewart House (FOSH)

The Friends of Stewart House run regular enjoyable social events that raise money toward Stewart House. Many IRSEA members are also part of this organisation. Of particular interest FOSH has approached Registered Clubs across NSW and some \$180,000 has been raised this year. Recently flyers of up-coming FOSH events were sent to all IRSEA members. You are encouraged to come to any of these very enjoyable and collegial events. If you are interested in working with this group, go to the Stewart House website and follow the link.

Of interest, and as sent out in the flyers, FOSH has a High Tea at the Breakfast Point Country Club on 20 November and our big end-of-year Xmas lunch at Massey Park Golf Club on 11 December. There is also a Xmas wine sale of quality Leogate Estate wines. Please send me a note if you are interested in these and I can provide further information. (alaughlin21@optusnet.com.au).

**Alan Laughlin**

**IRSEA Stewart House Contact Officer**

## IRSEA SOCIAL GATHERING & LUNCHEON



Our recent social luncheon, held on Thursday 30 October 2025 at the Sydney Rowers Club, Abbotsford, was a resounding success, with a lively contingent of members and guests enjoying exquisite cuisine,

beverages and company on a beautiful spring day in a superb, picturesque harbour location.

Thanks particularly to Laurie Murphy travelling down from Toronto to represent the Central Coast, and to Tom

Croker and Ray Gentles for joining us as colleagues of the Retired PPA.

Thank you to Kerryanne Knox for managing the event. Kerryanne added an interesting element to the gathering—she surprised us with a short quiz. Here is a copy.

We plan to establish a luncheon at the Sydney Rowers Club as a regular social meeting in October each year. The venue is quite central for Sydney residents and the ferry ride from the City to Abbotsford is a most enjoyable and scenic experience, and quick—Barangaroo to Abbotsford only takes about 25 minutes!

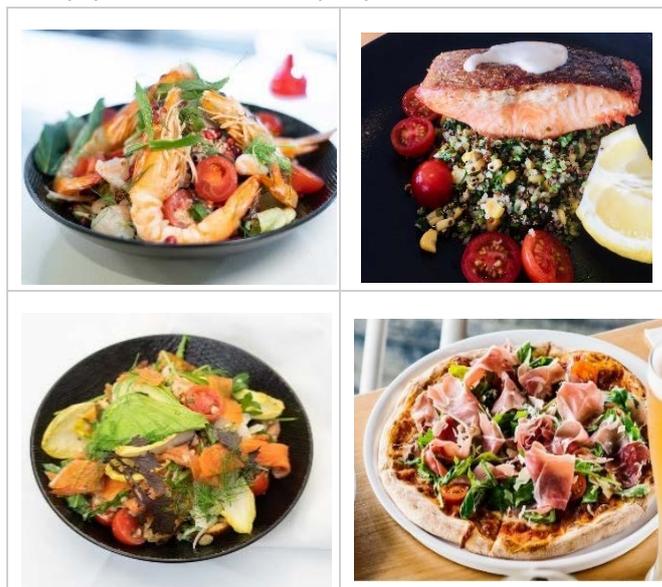


#### HOW'S YOUR MEMORY???

1. How many female permanent DGs have there been in the Department?
2. What was the name of the song that the Department used to promote public education in the 2000s?
3. Who were the original artists who performed that song?
4. What year was the Scott report released?
5. What is the name of the DG whose father looked after superannuation in the public service?
6. Who was the first female president of the NSW Teachers Federation?

**Answers to the quiz are on page 14.**  
*You might like to test your memory skills. The best quiz score at the Luncheon meeting was 2 out of 6! (Congratulations Alan Laughlin!)*

The in-house Watergrill by Dedes offers a wide and scrumptious range of snacks, share plates and full meals, while the service and ambience is great. A lovely place to enjoy each other's company.



## MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

# EXPLICIT TEACHING: BACK TO THE FUTURE

BY MICHAEL MURRAY

On 20 August, I had the honour of attending the Term 3 Public Schools 'Hub and Spoke' as a representative of IRSEA. This is the second time I have participated in one of these events, and I am again very appreciative of the warm welcome I received from Executive Director, Jan Green, and the Metro South team. I continue to be impressed by the quality of the discussion and planning generated at these events. The hot topics on this occasion were school excellence, Aboriginal education and explicit teaching – all very important, I'm sure you will agree, but the one that particularly sparked my interest was explicit teaching.

I've been hearing a lot about explicit teaching of late through my daily reading of the Sydney Morning Herald. Like most IRSEA members I suspect, the way I'm most likely to hear about an educational issue these days is through the media. It was a teacher who introduced me to the SMH in 3rd form (Year 9) – and I've been reading it ever since.

It was about two years ago I first noticed SMH items that focused on a new pedagogical approach: explicit teaching. Except, of course, it wasn't so new after all. After many years in the game, we tend to be a little cynical about the Latest Big Thing in Education. But explicit teaching was being heralded as 'a more traditional teaching style' that had somehow been forgotten, being 'overshadowed' in recent years by student-led inquiry, an approach that encourages students to investigate problems for themselves.

An article by education editor, Luci Carroll, 'The teaching style behind the state's top-performing schools' (SMH, 1 March 2024), reported an analysis of data derived from a survey of NSW public school students. This analysis revealed that students who experienced explicit teaching in Year 7 were four months ahead in their

learning by Year 9, compared to students who had not benefited by explicit teaching.

And yet, according to a survey of students at least, only 57% of high school teachers were using explicit teaching regularly, as against 78% of primary teachers.

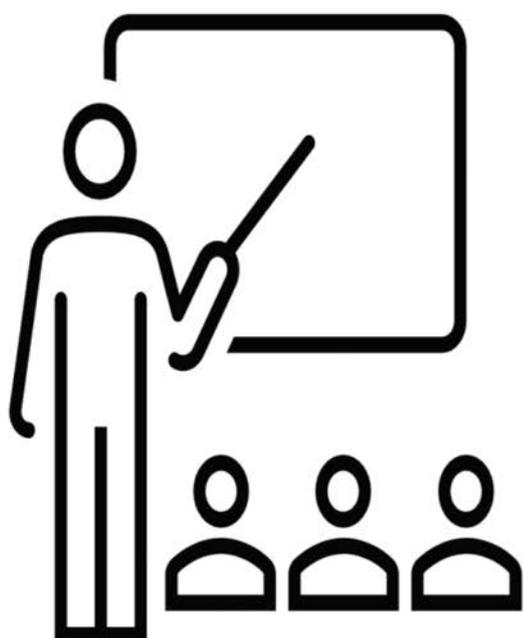
Not surprisingly, on the school development day (SDD), Day 1 of Term 2 in 2024, the NSW Department of Education required schools to provide all teachers with training in use of explicit teaching. In a subsequent SMH report, more opinion than news, 'Schools have been ordered to use this teaching method, Will they comply?', Christopher Harris (SMH, 21 April 2025) examined different perspectives on the issue of explicit teaching. Harris suggested that 'veteran' teachers would be very familiar with explicit teaching, whereas their younger colleagues would see explicit teaching as 'the industrial-era model of schooling their university lecturers taught them to fear'.

Harris further caricatured explicit teaching and inquiry-based learning as binary opposites:

*Explicit teaching typically involves telling students sitting in rows the steps required to perform a skill or task at the start of the lesson before allowing them to practise it. In contrast, inquiry learning means confronting students with a problem and asking them to try and work out the answers for themselves, similar to how a scientist might. Advocates say inquiry-based learning fosters more in-depth understanding and deep thinking. Explicit teaching adherents believe inquiry learning is ineffective, wastes time and unnecessarily confuses students.*

Right-wing think tanks, like the Centre for Independent Studies, tend to be strong proponents of explicit teaching, arguing students should rote learn key information, such as multiplication tables, particularly in primary years. However, many academics are critical of explicit teaching because it inhibits critical thinking and self-directed learning, key 21st century skills. Others, such as the Teachers Federation, hold that explicit teaching has merit but should not be mandatory, arguing that teachers should be able to use their

professional judgement about when and where explicit teaching might be effectively used. In a report earlier this year, 'How these schools are teaching their way out of a national maths crisis' (SMH, 15 April 2025), Luci Carroll refers to a study by the Grattan Institute of seven primary schools in NSW, Victoria and WA that have improved performance by adopting explicit, evidence-based approaches to maths teaching. A notable example of these K-6 stars is The Entrance Public School, which shifted to explicit teaching five years ago.



*“School-wide explicit teaching approaches incorporate modelled, guided and independent practice.”*

NSW Department of Education,  
*School Excellence Framework,*  
Teaching Domain, p11

A more recent article by Luci Carroll, 'What really works in raising students' academic results' (SMH, 4 August 2025), has brought explicit teaching back to our attention. Carroll refers to the updated What Works Best report from the Centre for Educational Statistics and Evaluation (CESE), which identifies explicit teaching as a highly effective classroom practice. In particular, she quotes CESE's example of Doonside High School, one of the state's biggest HSC improvers, successfully moving many students into higher bands after implementing explicit teaching in all faculties and classes five years ago.

CESE describes itself as 'Australia's first hub for education data and evaluation across early childhood, schooling, training and higher education' (<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/about-cese>). It operates with a high degree of independence within the NSW Department of Education. The Department relies on CESE to provide accurate data that will inform best practice in our public schools.

So, what is explicit teaching exactly? According to CESE (2020):

*Explicit teaching practices involve teachers clearly explaining to students why they are learning something, how it connects to what they already know, what they are expected to do, how to do it and what it looks like when they have succeeded. Students are given opportunities and time to check their understanding, ask questions and receive clear, effective feedback.*

Sometimes explicit teaching is referred to as 'direct instruction'.

In its What Works Best update (2020, 2025), CESE has identified explicit teaching as one of eight teaching practices most likely to impact student performance – the others being high expectations, effective feedback, use of data to inform practice, assessment, classroom management, wellbeing and collaboration. It is worth noting that these areas are not mutually exclusive – for example, effective feedback is considered to be an essential component of explicit teaching.

CESE cites evidence to support explicit teaching, including John Hattie's meta-analyses (2009) that attribute to explicit teaching an average effect size of 0.59. Hattie claims that any effect size equal to or greater than 0.40 is significant in its impact on student learning.

Hattie's research identifies several key steps for effective explicit instruction. These include clear learning intentions and success criteria, student engagement, modelling, checking for understanding, a review to clarify and consolidate understanding at the end of the lesson - all stated, or implied, in the CESE definition. However, they also include guided and independent practice, not identified by CESE in the 'key points' of its 2020 report.

Curiously, an analysis of the very research CESE cites to shore up its position shows that the situation is more nuanced than CESE seemed to suggest in its 2020 'key points':

- A meta-analysis of explicit teaching in mathematics by Przychodzin et al (2004) concludes that explicit teaching benefits all year groups and ability levels. However, gifted students were found to benefit

through explicit teaching mainly in the early stages of learning a new skill. Also, it is not clear if the findings for mathematics apply to other subject areas.

- An Australian study found that students in Years 9-11 mathematics benefited by explicit teaching in the early stages of learning, but that guided, enquiry-based learning was beneficial in later stages (Martin & Evans, 2018).
- McKinsey & Company (2017) found that a focus on inquiry-based teaching produced a weaker performance in science than a focus on explicit teaching. However, students achieved at their highest level when they experienced explicit teaching in most lessons, with inquiry-based teaching in some lessons, suggesting that as students gain mastery there may be less benefit in the explicit teaching approach.
- A subsequent American study (Doabler et al, 2019) calls into question McKinsey and Company's conclusion that most lessons need to include explicit teaching. The researchers found that kindergarten students with mathematics difficulties achieved best when they were given three individual practice lessons for every one explicit teaching session.

These studies suggest that CESE oversimplified the key points regarding explicit teaching in its What Works Best 2020 update. Not only did it overlook the complexity of the research in this messaging, but it seemed to be pushing for a more teacher-centred model of explicit teaching and recommending explicit teaching at the expense of alternative evidence-based pedagogical approaches.

Not surprisingly, CESE's simplistic and unqualified endorsement of explicit teaching came in for some roasting from academics. For example, in a blog for the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), entitled 'Explicit teaching mandate – a pushback now is needed' (20 April 2025), Jill Brown, an Associate Professor in Mathematics Education at Deakin University, argues that 'explicit teaching is not a magic bullet, nor should it be the single pedagogy in any classroom'. She says that explicit teaching is not the only evidence-based approach, nor is the evidence base for

explicit teaching consistent across all subjects. She also quibbles with the notion of explicit teaching as a teacher-centred approach, arguing it is possible to teach explicitly while still allowing for student voice and agency. Too much focus on explicit teaching, she contends, may prevent teachers from teaching curriculum effectively, particularly the focus on 21st century skills. Brown concludes that teaching is ‘complex and nuanced’ – teachers are in the best position to decide the most appropriate ways to teach their students.

To its great credit, CESE has reworked its key messaging in the What Works Best 2025 update released in August, perhaps in response to the criticism from academics like Brown. The key points now include the need to provide students with opportunities to ‘practise using skills and knowledge they have learnt’, inferring the need for guided and independent learning as part of the explicit teaching model. CESE also emphasises the idea that one size does not suit all, that although explicit teaching may benefit all students, teachers still need to be responsive to ‘the differences in time, repetition, pacing and guidance that different students may require’. Further, the key points conclude with this qualifying statement: ‘Explicit teaching does not exclude the use of other teaching strategies, but it should be used in most lessons, particularly when learning is new or complex’. This more nuanced messaging more accurately reflects the research and treats teachers with professional respect.

Explicit teaching, done well, has the capacity to transform learning in this state. However, it is not the only pedagogical approach supported by evidence and is not the answer to all learning situations. Nor does it preclude the use of student voice and agency, or the development of 21st century skills. And it certainly does not require students to be ‘sitting in rows’!

From my recent experience working with schools as an English/literacy consultant, many teachers have a false understanding of explicit teaching. The problem is partly the name itself, ‘explicit teaching’, which suggests a teacher-centred approach. On this question of nomenclature, my friend and colleague, Gerry McCloughan, former IRSEA President, suggests that ‘explicit and systematic teaching and learning’ might

better capture what is intended and needed across K-12 settings. Gerry further argues that explicit teaching and student-led inquiry are not mutually exclusive approaches, that ‘good student inquiry requires explicit and systematic teaching’.

While teacher direction at the start of a learning sequence is a no-brainer, this needs to be followed up with opportunities for guided and independent learning as students begin to master the targeted concept or skill. Only then will students be able to take responsibility for their own learning.

Of course, none of this is new. Pearson and Gallagher introduced the term ‘gradual release of responsibility’ (GRR) in 1983, although Vygotsky was juggling similar ideas decades earlier. The four phases of GRR are the focus lesson in which the teacher models the learning (‘I do it’), followed by guided instruction (‘we do it’), then collaborative learning (‘you do it together’) and finally independent learning (‘you do it alone’). This has always been sound practice. I can remember a wonderful mentor, Mandy Tunica, a recently deceased and highly respected IRSEA member, explaining this to me way back in the early years of my career. It made perfect sense then, and it has made perfect sense ever since.

So, it’s back to the future with explicit teaching. The expanded definition of explicit teaching embraced by CESE in its latest update goes some way to opening up a more balanced approach to explicit teaching, that still allows opportunities for guided and independent learning. Ultimately, we need to build the capacity of teachers to decide when explicit teaching should be best utilised in the classroom – and trust their professional judgement to make that call.

**Michael Murray**

**IRSEA Committee Member and IRSEA News Editor**

*This article reflects the view of the writer and does not necessarily reflect the views of IRSEA. Responses and feedback welcome – please contact the author at [michaeljfmurray@gmail.com](mailto:michaeljfmurray@gmail.com).*

**How’s Your Memory Quiz Answers (Page 10)**

1. Two
2. Teach your children well
3. Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young
4. 1996
5. Andrew Cappie-Wood
6. Jennie George

## ARTHUR C. BROOKS' SECOND CURVE

BY ERIC JAMIESON

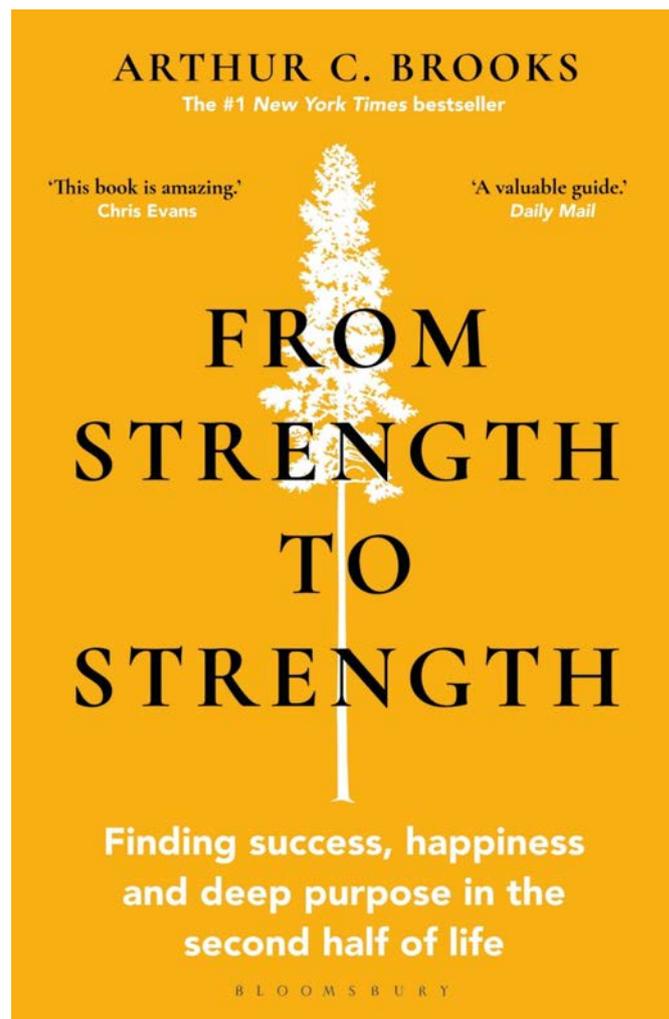
Following my wife's suggestion, I listened to a podcast earlier in the year featuring Arthur C. Brooks, author of and Professor at Harvard Business School. He specialises in the science of happiness, leadership, and social entrepreneurship, a curious mix one might not normally expect to find in a business school. We were both so intrigued by the podcast that we listened to the audio version of his book, 'From Strength to Strength', on one of our road trips. The book focuses on guiding people, especially high-achievers, through the transition from the early-career strengths of youth, which are rooted in fast thinking and ambition ("fluid intelligence"), to a deeper and more fulfilling second phase of life that draws on accumulated wisdom, experience, and the ability to help and teach others ("crystallized intelligence").

Given my less than youthful stage of life, I have been absolutely fascinated by this concept. Brooks found, through research and extensive examples, that professional decline typically begins much earlier than most people expect, often between the late 30s and early 50s, depending on the profession.

Brooks own personal experience as an outstanding French Horn player for top ensembles included membership of the Annapolis Brass Quintet and later the City Orchestra of Barcelona, led to several years of intense touring and performing about 100 concerts per year. In what Brooks semi-jokingly refers to his "quarter-life crisis", he realised in his late twenties that his playing had plateaued, with no further improvement despite increasing practice. This was devastating to him, and he began questioning his purpose as a musician, influenced by broader questions about meaning and impact of life in general.

While continuing to play and teach music at a conservatory, Brooks started studying economics through distance learning, ultimately leaving music in his early thirties to earn a PhD and transition into academia,

research, and public leadership. This journey set the stage for his later work on happiness, purpose, and personal transitions.



His study and research led to him developing his concept of the 2<sup>nd</sup> curve. In short, he explains the first curve of life is about achievement through fast thinking, innovation, and problem-solving, which tends to peak in early adulthood. By contrast, the second curve values wisdom, mentorship, and the ability to synthesise information, which grows stronger with age and experience. Transitioning to the second curve means prioritising meaningful relationships, teaching, guiding others, and seeking personal growth and happiness through contribution rather than ambition alone.



The shift is necessary because trying to depend indefinitely on the strengths of the first curve leads to dissatisfaction as those skills naturally wane over time. The second curve offers a more sustainable and fulfilling path, allowing people to find renewed purpose and satisfaction by leveraging their life experience and insight. Embracing this transition enables people to age more happily and meaningfully, allowing them to enrich society through mentorship, guidance, and wisdom, while also finding deep personal fulfillment in the positive impact they create for others and their communities. Clearly, this has enormous relevance to the importance and value of our contributions as IRSEA members.

*"Happiness comes not from more but from better—better relationships, better priorities, better faith."*

*Arthur C. Brooks*

For me, it was wonderful to have research to support beliefs that are otherwise intuitive. What really surprised me was the relatively early age of peak productivity, particularly in certain professions. Following are some examples:

- High-skill professions generally: Decline in “fluid intelligence” (creativity, innovation, problem-solving speed) tends to begin between the late 30s and early 50s.
- Scientists and medical researchers: Peak productivity is usually reached between ages 45–50, with decline starting soon after; physicists and chemists often peak around 46–50.

- Doctors: Often in decline by age 40.
- Writers: The decline tends to begin between ages 40–55.
- Financial professionals: Decline often starts between ages 36–40.
- Office workers: Decline can start between ages 35–44.
- Semiskilled assembly workers: Peak between ages 45–54.

*"The decline of professional ability is a feature, not a bug—it forces us to embrace what really matters."*

*Arthur C. Brooks*

Interestingly, professions relying on “crystallized intelligence” (wisdom, teaching, synthesis), such as historians, can peak much later, with the decline happening much later or even being less pronounced. That is indeed good news for our profession. Brooks also emphasizes that the earlier and sharper the rise, the earlier and more noticeable the decline can feel, especially for those who reach high achievements early in life.

I have recently been delighted to be deeply engaged in a 2<sup>nd</sup> curve experience of my own. I was invited to lecture in a Master of Teaching program and was assigned to 3 courses in mathematics and numeracy for Semester 2. Two were for primary students and the other for senior secondary mathematics students. I will write more about this ongoing adventure in the next edition of IRSEA News but wanted to take the opportunity now to make the connection with Brooks’ work. Teaching teachers has been one of life’s exhilarating experiences for me. There is a sense of freedom that comes with lived experience, confident in the knowledge that students develop much deeper understanding through meaning, purpose and exploration in learning. Developing a holistic approach rather than dutifully following a lesson-by-lesson script made for a richer, more invigorating experience of learning, for both students and lecturer alike. More to come next year!

## VALE: Professor Jackie Manuel

### Professor Jackie Manuel

(12<sup>th</sup> August 1963 – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2025)

On Thursday 25 September 2025 in Leura, NSW, I attended the sad funeral of **Professor Jackie Manuel**, BA (Hons I), DipEd, PhD; Professor of English Education; Curriculum Coordinator, Secondary English; Affiliate, Department of English, University of Sydney.

Jackie passed away on 13 September 2025 after an acute stroke that she suffered the day before. Jackie is survived by her parents, Paul and Vicki Manuel, her brother Michael Manuel, her two loving daughters, Sophie and Amelia, and adoring grandchildren Matilda and Phoebe. Although Jackie suffered a sudden and unexpected stroke, she battled for many hours before passing away peacefully with her mother and daughters by her side.

As many IRSEA members will know, Jackie was the beloved wife of the late Dr Paul Brock AM, who passed away in March 2016 after a long struggle with Motor Neurone Disease. Paul was Director, Learning and Development Research, with the NSW Department of Education at the time. Of course, Jackie was primary carer for Paul for many years. I was privileged to have been a close colleague and friend of Paul and met up with Paul, Jackie and children quite often during weekend shopping in Castle Hill.

Jackie's memorial service was ably led by Dr David Smith, University of Sydney, a very close friend of Jackie and Paul. David indicated that Jackie made a profound impact in education in NSW. She served as the Chief Examiner of HSC English and was a member of the NSW Board of Studies, where she played a crucial role in shaping curriculum. Jackie's research and teaching focused on the importance of literature in fostering students' reading experiences and language development.

Jackie's eulogy was delivered by Professor Emerita Robyn Ewing AM, Professor in Teacher Education and the Arts at the University of Sydney. Robyn acknowledged Jackie as a fierce advocate for retaining literature in the NSW Senior Secondary English curriculum, indicating that in 2017, Jackie argued



publicly that the removal or downgrading of mandatory novels and poetry in Year 12 would conflict with claims of stronger HSC English standards.

I can only describe Jackie's funeral as a deeply emotional farewell marked by both sorrow and gratitude — profound grief for Jackie's sudden loss was intertwined with heartfelt celebration of a life well-lived, full of goodness and purpose.

In 2004, Paul published a book, *A Passion for Life*, to share his life story. Now with Jackie's passing, it seems fitting to me that we revisit the last paragraph in Paul's book (page 274). It reads:

*“This book is lovingly dedicated to Jackie. She is at the heart and soul of my story. I have written much in this book about her and our relationship. Literally, and in a multiplicity of ways, there would have been no book without Jackie. She has been inspirer, editor, typist, researcher, organiser, imaginative initiator of and responder to a wealth of ideas and memories; and so much more. Thank you, Jackie.”*

### RIP Professor Jackie Manuel

Gerry McCloughan

**Immediate Past-President, IRSEA**



# IRSEA Invitation

[WWW.IRSEA.ORG.AU](http://WWW.IRSEA.ORG.AU)

## General Meeting and Luncheon

5 December 2025

@ Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

11:00am for the 11:45am meeting

**IRSEA members and guests, please join us to celebrate a new era of IRSEA.**

**We will be meeting in the impressive Cellos Grand Dining Room  
Level 4, Castlereagh Boutique Hotel**



We are currently finalising the meeting program. Be assured, we will be sharing the occasion with new partners in support of public education.

**Please add 5 December 2025 to your calendar.**





*Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators*

## **IRSEA General Meeting Booking**

Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh St, Sydney 2000

**Friday, 5 December 2025**

11:00-11:30am – Pre-meeting gathering and refreshments, Level 2

11:45am-2:30pm Formal meeting – Cellos Grand Dining Room, Level 4

Please return the booking slip below and make payment for the lunch meeting by **Friday 29 November**.

### **BOOKING SLIP**

Name (please print): .....

Guest's name/s (if applicable): .....

- I have transferred OR enclosed my payment of \$70.00 (or additional for my guest/s @ \$70.00 per head) for the above listed to attend the IRSEA luncheon, 11.45am for 12.00pm, at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel which includes a 2-course main meal with bread roll, coffee and tea.

Please indicate in the space provided if you require a special meal.

Meal type ..... Meals required .....

- I agree / do not agree** (cross out one) that photographs of me in professional or social situations may be published in IRSEA media and publications, including newsletters and on the website.

Signed: ..... Date: ..... Phone no. ....

### **NOTIFICATION and PAYMENT OPTIONS ~ Payment by direct deposit/bank transfer is preferred.**

- Payment by **Electronic Funds Transfer** – Details are:  
**BANK:** Commonwealth Bank of Australia  
**BSB:** 062300  
**ACCOUNT NUMBER:** 10466684  
**ACCOUNT NAME:** Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators (IRSEA)  
**YOUR REFERENCE:** Your **Surname, Initial**, and **'Meeting'**
- Email or message your booking slip to Ray Gillies, IRSEA Treasurer, at **rgillies@yahoo.com.au**  
 [Phone images or scans are acceptable]
- If paying by cheque**, please make the cheque payable to *Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators*, or *IRSEA* and cross it **'Not negotiable'**. Mail your cheque and booking slip to:  
**Ray Gillies, 79 Albyn Road, STRATHFIELD, NSW 2135**

**For further information or notification, please call or text Ray on mobile: 0412 763 242**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Money cannot be refunded for cancellations made after **Monday 29 November 2025**

