2024 VATE
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

FRIDAY 3 MAY, AEU BUILDING, ABBOTSFORD, AND ONLINE

We asked: 'What are the biggest concerns facing you as an aspiring, new, or senior English leader?' – and you answered! The **2024 VATE Leadership Conference** has been built around the concerns facing you and your English department this year. From how to develop policies to address the use of AI; how to use data to inform meaningful student learning; mentoring out of field and early career teachers; and the best strategies for managing an English department that is varied in their experience levels, opinions, and personalities – the Leadership Conference hopes to soothe your concerns and inspire you in your leadership. Register to attend the Conference in-person or online.

Breakfast Keynote

Associate Professor Amanda McGraw, Federation University

Sustaining the English Leader:
Tensions, opportunities, strengthening resilience and maintaining integrity

This keynote draws upon an ongoing mixed methods study supported by VATE and conducted by researchers across four universities that investigates the work of English teachers and what sustains them in challenging times. In survey and interview data, teachers speak about the nature of collegial relationships with colleagues and professional networks, what leaders do to build cohesion and respect, and how good relationships affect resilience. Teachers also discuss tensions between teachers and leaders and highlight the emotional toll of working in environments where division and disrespect exist. Significantly, the study reveals how a strong sense of professional identity as an English teacher helps to sustain teachers in their work. Drawing upon teachers' narratives, this keynote will examine the implications for leaders as they work to build a collegial teaching and learning culture, sometimes in challenging circumstances. This will be an interactive workshop that aims to involve participants in reflection, creative thinking, and critique.

Closing Keynote

Dr Kathryn Richardson, Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

Creating narratives of learning and growth in the English classroom

English classrooms are filled with words that weave to create narratives of learning and growth. Yet, as teachers, how well do we capture and harness these words, turning them into stories that inform our teaching and support the next steps in learning? Traditionally, quantitative data have been valued to support teachers to make these judgements (often in the form of scores and averages) with little emphasis on what these numbers mean. However, it is through qualitative approaches that we can identify what a student knows and can do, predict their next steps and plan to support subsequent learning. In this keynote address, our focus turns to the types of data that fill the English classroom. We will consider how we might capture evanescent moments, harness words and language to paint detailed and accurate images of our students' learning and development. We will discuss the value in utilising teaching teams to engage with our students' data. We will consider strategies and techniques that enable our students to become partners in collecting and analysing meaningful data, working together to improve learning.

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Program overview

8.00am		Registration, tea and coffee, networking
8:30am – 9.30am	**Breakfast Keynote**	**Sustaining the English Leader: Tensions, opportunities, strengthening resilience and maintaining integrity** Associate Professor Amanda McGraw, Federation University
9:45am – 11:00am	**Session 1**	**1a: English departments leading the adoption of Generative AI** Leon Furze, Furze Smith Consulting **1b: Gathering, interpreting and using data** Dr Emily Frawley, Maribyrnong Secondary College **1c: How to foster change and transformation while managing your English department** Troy Edwards, Girton Grammar School **1d: Keeping the ship afloat: Managing an English department through a season of change** Caitey Wilton, Greater Shepparton Secondary College
11.05pm – 12:20pm	**Session 2**	**2a: Supporting out of field teachers** Rebekah Keenan-Mount **2b: Managing your English department** Dr Emily Frawley, Maribyrnong Secondary College **2c: Relationships are the True North: Navigating the human complexities of leading an English department** Chris Davies, VATE Project Officer **2d: Developing early career teachers** Dr Hugh Gundlach, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne
12:20pm – 1:10pm		Lunch and networking
1:15pm	**Pre-Keynote**	VATE Leadership Network
1:30pm – 2:30pm	**Closing Keynote**	**Creating narratives of learning and growth in the English classroom** Dr Kathryn Richardson, Australian Council for Educational Research
2:30pm		Networking
3.15pm		Conference concludes

Cost and registration

2024 Individual Member $225 | Organisational Member $255 | Concession Member $225

Register to attend the Conference in-person or online. If financial barriers prevent you from attending the conference, please email Kate Gillespie: executiveofficer@vate.org.au.

Venue

AEU Building, 126 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford. Location and directions available here.

Workshop details

Session 1

1a: English departments leading the adoption of Generative AI

Since the release of ChatGPT, English teachers and department leaders have borne the brunt of the work in dealing with Generative AI. With news articles spelling 'The End of High School English' and 'The Death of the Essay', it's hardly surprising. But in reality, the response from English teachers has been the same as with earlier technologies: teachers are creating engaging, exciting resources with GenAI, as well as grappling with the ethical complexities of the technology. This workshop demonstrates some of those approaches, and offers suggestions for English leaders working with GenAI.

Leon Furze, Furze Smith Consulting

1b: Gathering, interpreting and using data

This workshop details a consideration of what 'data' can mean in the context of an English department and how a department can meaningfully work with it. Participants will engage in a reflection and prioritisation of the key needs of their own department in order to identify a goal before planning a set of interventions to manage and track the success of the goal. A model will be presented as a potential template for conceiving of and reflecting on the data.

Dr Emily Frawley, Maribyrnong Secondary College

1c: How to foster change and transformation while managing your English department

Are you an early career leader or a leader who is looking to drive change in an ever-evolving educational landscape? Are you looking for some tips to gather a culture of change and ensure your team is 'on-board'? In an era of constant evolution, effective leadership within an English department requires not only a deep understanding of literary and linguistic principles but also the ability to navigate and drive transformative change. This workshop is designed for English department leaders who aspire to foster innovation, inspire their teams, and successfully manage the dynamics of change. Join me for an engaging and interactive workshop that will equip you with the skills and knowledge needed to lead your English department through a successful transformation. Embrace change, inspire innovation, and become a visionary leader in the realm of education.

Troy Edwards, Girton Grammar School

1d: Keeping the ship afloat: Managing an English department through a season of change

Everybody has an improvement initiative and needs the help of the English department to make it happen; 'our results aren't what they need to be and it's the job of the English department to boost them' or 'We've got this fabulous idea to revolutionise teaching, let's start with the English department.' Whether you're new to leading a departmental team or you're wanting to move your colleagues forward and don't know where to start, the aim of this workshop is to provide some key waypoints to look out for on the journey through change. We will look at how to identify your staff's capacity for change, such as identifying early adopters vs the sceptical observers, how to support your teachers through the setbacks and discomfort, and how to get staff through the learning dip without abandoning the ship.

Caitey Wilton, Greater Shepparton Secondary College

Session 2

2a: Supporting out of field teachers

Every student in every school must study English every year; however, with current teacher shortages, a significant number of students across the state are not being taught English by English teachers. This situation is stressful for both teachers and students, potentially impacting educational and wellbeing outcomes. How do we best support colleagues who are working outside their area of expertise? This workshop aims to support department leaders to build the disciplinary knowledge and skill of out-of-field English teachers. We will focus on the teaching of English at Levels 7 and 8 and consider core pedagogical approaches for reading comprehension, writing development and teaching language in context. We will also discuss the potential of collaborative practices to build out-of-field teachers' confidence and knowledge of the English curriculum.

Rebekah Keenan-Mount

2b: Managing your English department

This workshop provides participants with a chance to reflect on and articulate the core values that drive their work in managing an English department. Practical strategies and resources will be provided for conceptualising the logistics, politics, mentoring and wellbeing considerations for leading a purposeful and considered department.

Dr Emily Frawley, Maribynong Secondary College

2c: Relationships are the True North: Navigating the human complexities of leading an English department

Being a middle leader in a school can be really challenging and it is too easy to feel burned out. This workshop is framed around a therapeutic framework and how we can use ideas from psychotherapy in holding together some of those really tricky situations and relationships. The idea presented in this workshop is that that relationality is the true north for middle leaders in schools. It's how we navigate the currents that run through schools, how we build trust, how we work through those challenging and difficult moments (the bits that feel spiky, upsetting, or dissonant), and how we hold space for those experiences, in the ethical positioning of ourselves alongside others in our team.

Chris Davies, VATE Project Officer

2d: Developing early career teachers

Drawing on initial teacher education practice and research in early-career teacher wellbeing and retention, this workshop will help you support your new starters in their practice and careers. Material covered includes ideas for developing classroom management, relationship building, lesson planning, resource creation, time management, feedback and reporting, workload, and professionalism. A variety of mentoring modes and initiatives will be shared, and delegates are encouraged to contribute their ideas and success stories.

Dr Hugh Gundlach, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne

Speaker details

Associate Professor Amanda McGraw

Associate Professor Amanda McGraw coordinates the Master of Teaching (Secondary) program at Federation University Australia. Her research interests include reading in English, dispositions in teaching, and teachers' professional learning. Amanda works two days a week as an Academic Advisor for the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership. She has expertise in teacher practitioner inquiry and leads VATE's Collaborative Community Inquiry. Amanda was awarded an Australian Government Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. She taught for nearly 20 years in Victorian schools and held several leadership positions including Deputy Principal. Amanda is a life member of VATE and is currently Vice President of VATE's Council.

Dr Kathryn Richardson

Dr Kathryn Richardson is a Senior Research Fellow with the Centre for School and System Improvement at the Australian Council for Educational Research. She is a teacher educator, with particular interest in educational assessment, curriculum and pedagogy, inclusion and international education. Using her experience as an English and EAL/D teacher, Katie has a keen interest in developing assessment and data analysis methods to support teachers to make professional educational decisions. Katie is passionate about empowering teachers by equipping them with skills and ideas to monitor their students' learning progress effectively and use the information they gather to inform learning and teaching.

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