

SMART MOVES

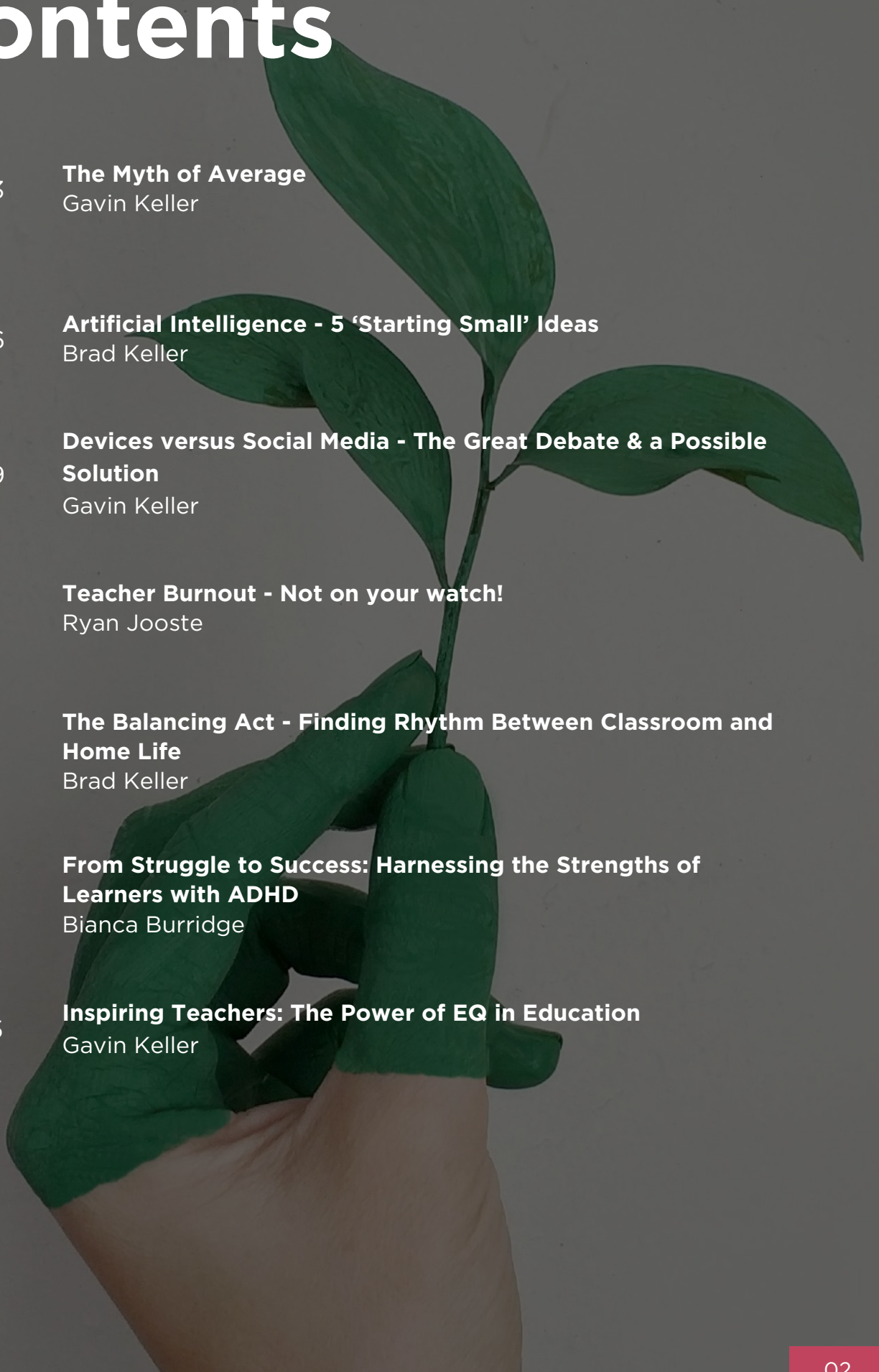
EDU-MAG



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The **Best** of 2024
Keller Education

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The Myth of Average

Gavin Keller

The Myth of Average & The Problem with Prize Giving

What is the purpose of prizegiving? We award prizes, certificates, trophies, or book vouchers to students who have been assessed by an educator against a rubric and then compared to a group who have done the same or similar assessment. Those that score highly in comparison to the rest are rewarded. This process, known as standardised assessment, is flawed. It is not only unscientific but also outright dangerous and damaging to children and students.

Understanding Ergodic Theory

Ergodic theory, used by physicists, is a set of mathematical principles that specify when you can use information about a

group to draw conclusions about individual members of that group. The rules are straightforward:

1. You can use a group average on a standardised test if every member of the group is identical.
2. Every member of the group will remain the same in the future. Such a group is called an "ergodic" group.

Schools do not meet the criteria for being ergodic. If we had a group of frozen human clones who were identical and unchanging, then we could use standardised testing, find an average, and rank the performance.

However, schools are learning spaces made up of unique individuals with a variety of combinations of intelligence, who learn at different speeds and develop at different rates.

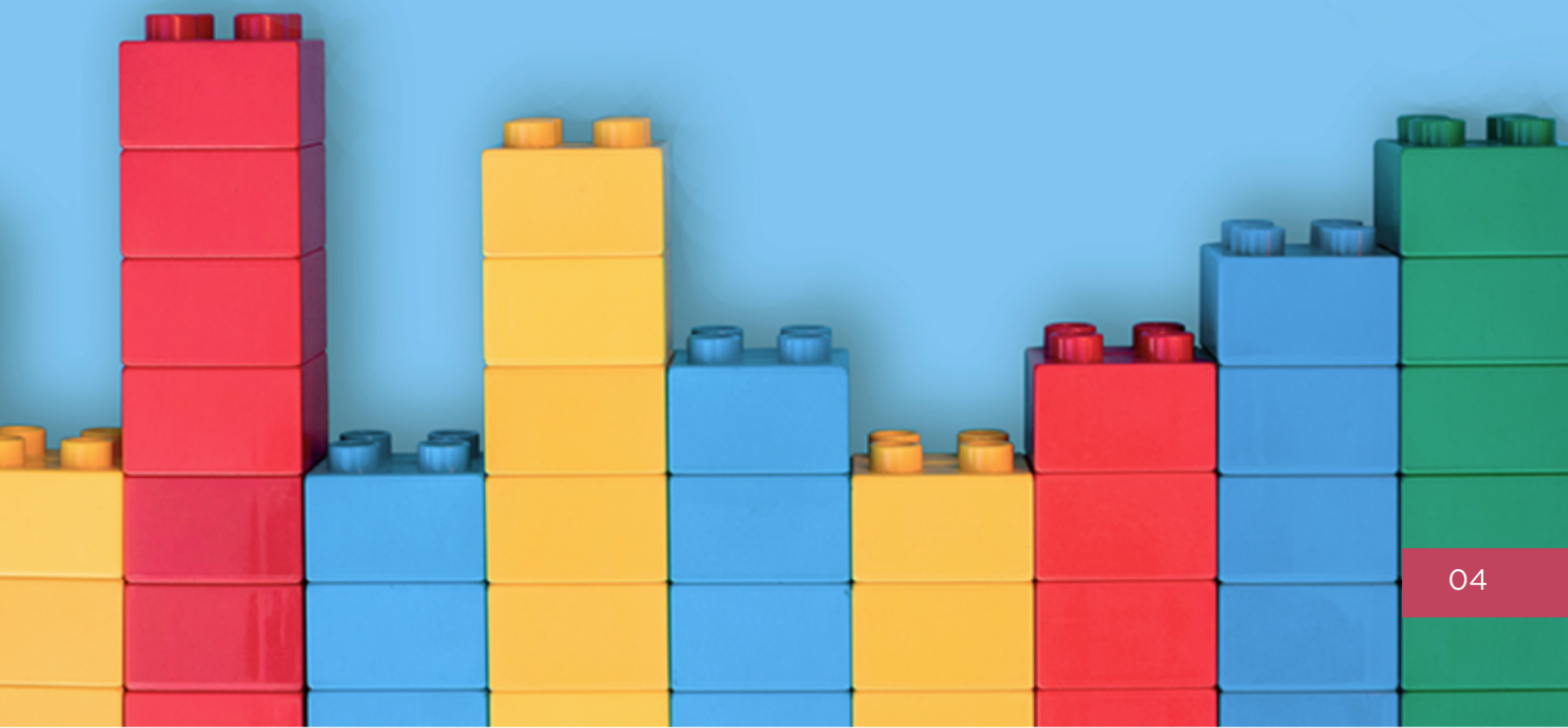
The Fallacy of Average-Based Norms

Peter Molenaar, an acclaimed scientist, believed in the concept of "the average."

He built his entire career relying heavily on average-based norms. However, towards the end of his career, in 2003, he had to teach a class on The Theory and Method of Mental Testing. It was based on the textbook "Statistical Theories of Mental Scores" by Frederick Lord and Melvin Novice (1968).

The textbook suggests that the best way to find out an individual's ability is to test them repeatedly on the same work and average their scores. However, Lord and Novice agreed that this was not possible with humans, as humans learn from testing and their scores improve each time until they achieve mastery. Instead, they suggested testing many people just once.

Molenaar instantly recognised the flaw in the theory he had used throughout his career. It called into question the validity of many scientific tools used for admission tests, selection processes, special needs diagnostics, and more. Group distribution of measurement cannot be safely substituted for an individual's distribution of measurement. Essentially, you cannot understand an individual by ignoring their individuality.





The individual is a high-dimensional system evolving over place and time."

- Peter Molenaar, Pennsylvania State University

Sadly, those who cannot think cannot learn. Education systems and schools know this truth, but it often falls on deaf ears, deemed as anarchy or too radical. "It's the way we've always done it," or "The department expects it like this," are common arguments. These same arguments were used during apartheid in South Africa, a painful reminder that we should have learnt from that experience.

The final argument against moving away from averages goes like this: "If you cannot use the average to model, evaluate, and select winners, then what can you use?"

Despite initial resistance, Molenaar approached Penn State University and was offered a tenure position. His work distinguished between statistics (working with static "frozen clones") and dynamics (the maths of changing, nonlinear, and dynamic values). This shift is crucial as we begin to understand brain development and the uniqueness of each individual. Teaching for 100% achievement for each child matters.

The Chubby Thighs Theory

A useful story that highlights individuality is the "Chubby Thighs Theory." In the 1960s, it became evident that the brain hardwires certain pathways at certain stages, a process called myelination. This

theory led paediatricians to diagnose neural disorders if a baby's stepping reflex did not appear or disappear at a certain time.

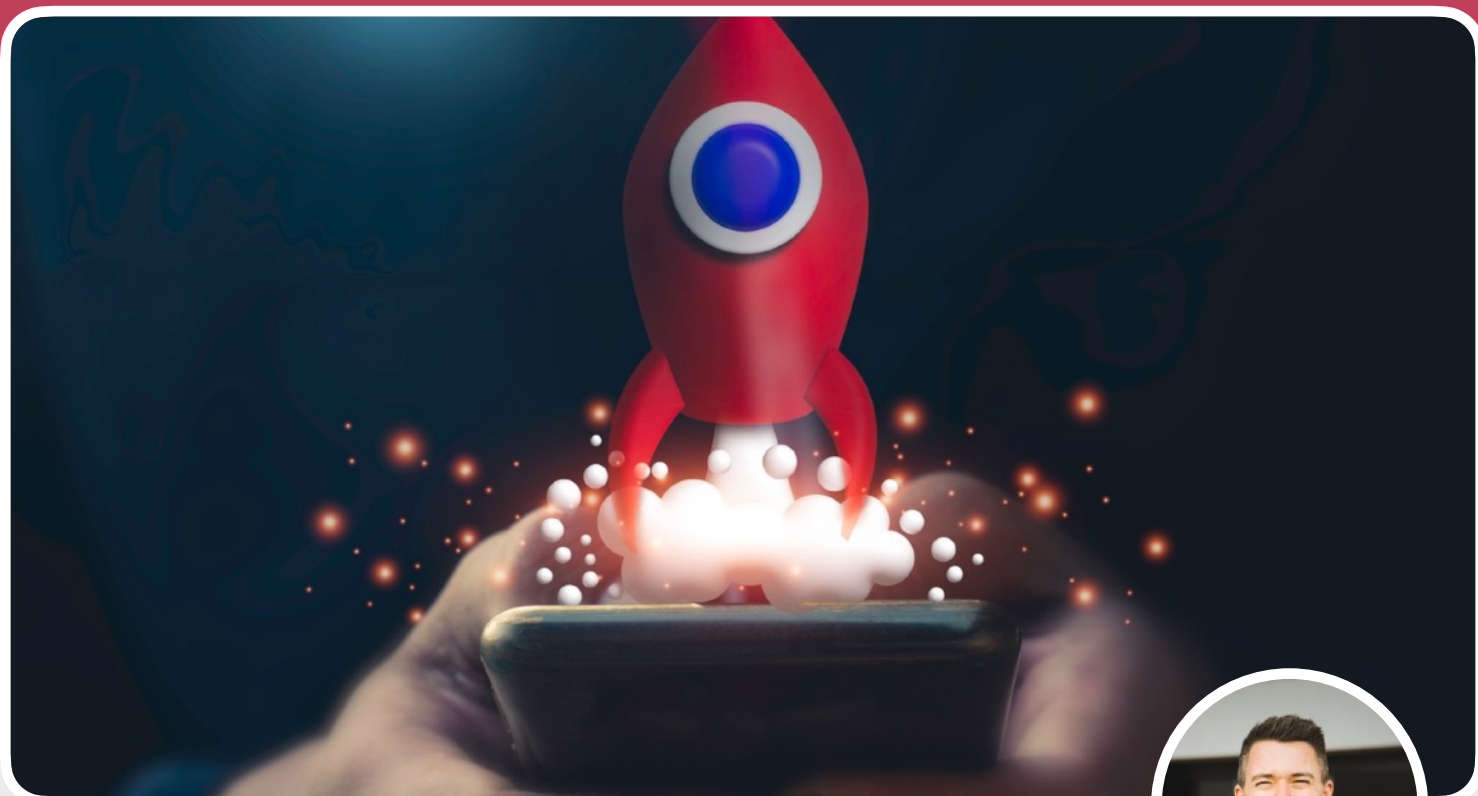
American psychologist Ester Thelen discovered that many of the fixed ages and stages of child development were highly variable, dependent on the individuality of the child. She

proved that the reason some babies' stepping reflex disappeared was because of "chubby thighs." Slow weight gainers moved their legs the most and for the longest period, while fast weight gainers lost their stepping reflex earlier because their muscles were not strong enough to lift their legs. What mattered was the amount of body fat relative to the development of muscle strength.

The world our children are growing up in is one of measurement based on a myth. We constantly judge ourselves against the average person. We judge our salary, buy an average car, and get married at the average age. Once we free children from the myth of average, they can discover their true worth.

The Question for Schools

Is our school based on average, or is it focused on growing unique individuals? We cannot have a prizegiving system based on average, as it rewards the wrong people.



Artificial Intelligence - Five 'Starting-Small' Ideas

Brad Keller

Are you starting small?

When it comes to an exciting, and at times intimidating tool such as AI, the key is to start small and gradually build your confidence.

Ioannis Anapliotis from Nea Paideia Schools in Athens, Greece, advises, "Begin with simple AI tools and applications, then expand as you grow more comfortable." We've intentionally followed this slow and steady approach during our AI course which many Partners are currently participating in. The goal is to give you time to explore AI without feeling overwhelmed.

That's why we've focused on just one or two key tools throughout the course. We encourage you to "play, play, and play some more."

"Begin with simple AI tools and applications, then expand as you grow more comfortable."

Once you feel confident with a tool, start exploring another one, and repeat the process.

So, at this stage of the Keller Education AI Course, what's your first step? Which AI tool will you try out first? We've provided a handy list of educators' favourite AI tools to help you begin your journey.

If you haven't been part of the course, don't fear. There are some great ideas for you below.

1

Personalisation and Efficiency: The AI Way

One of the most powerful ways AI can support your teaching is through personalisation. In Southern Africa, we often face the challenge of large classes with diverse needs, and AI can be a game-changer. Ioannis suggests using "AI-powered content creation tools to help develop engaging lesson materials and personalised learning resources." Imagine being able to differentiate your teaching materials in seconds—this is the reality with the right tools.

Remember, AI isn't here to replace the good work you're already doing. Instead, it's about enhancing your efficiency. Think about how you can use AI to streamline your workload, allowing you to focus on what matters most—connecting with your students and inspiring their love of learning.

2

Know the 'Rules'

Before diving headfirst into AI, it's essential to understand the policies your school may have in place. While there may be few to no global AI policies in Southern Africa at this stage, it's crucial to communicate clearly and openly with your school leadership. This isn't just about following the rules—it's about ensuring you're using AI responsibly, especially when it comes to protecting student data.

3

Build Authenticity and Trust

When using AI in your classroom, transparency is key. Nadine Smith from Pinnacle College in Johannesburg suggests making it a collaborative learning experience: "Tell students you're new to AI (or Robotics/Coding) and want to learn with them. Ask them how they're using it, and get them to do quick mini-presentations on their use cases."

Being open about your AI use not only builds trust but also enriches the learning experience. Many teachers disclose when they've used AI for tasks like report writing or grammar correction. When you're transparent about your AI use, students will be more likely to do the same. This openness creates an environment of mutual learning and respect, making AI a positive addition to your classroom.

4

Collaborate with Colleagues

You're not alone on this AI journey. Collaborating with colleagues can make the process more enjoyable and less overwhelming. It's essential to collaborate across different subjects and grades to share insights and refine your approaches. In Southern Africa, we understand the power of community. By working together and sharing what we've learned, we can ensure that AI enhances our teaching practices in meaningful ways.



Tell students you're new to AI and want to learn with them. Ask them how they're using it, and get them to do quick mini-presentations on their use cases."

5

Embrace Continuous Learning

As I mentioned at the beginning of our webinar a couple of months ago—no one knows everything about AI, and it's okay to question and explore.

No one is expected to become an AI expert overnight. It's all about building your confidence and competence over time. As Benjamin Sharratt wisely says, "Begin by embracing AI with a spirit of curiosity and openness."

We wish you all the best as you tackle the final month of the Keller Education AI Course—A Jetpack for Learning and Innovation. Keep experimenting, stay curious, and remember that this journey is about continuous learning.



Devices versus Social Media - The Great Debate & a Possible Solution

Gavin Keller

Washington Irvin, the American novelist, wrote the short story in 1819 about Rip Van Winkle, who fell asleep and woke up 20 years later. Although the world was physically the same, people had change dramatically.

If we had fallen asleep on the night of 28 June, 2007, the day before the iPhone was released and woke up just 10 years later, we would have been astounded to discover everyone around us looking at little rectangle blocks of dark glass in their hands.

This phenomenon is everywhere. At home, with friends, at school, on the bus, plane, train, at the urinal and even in bed with their lover.

What happened in 10 years that fundamentally rewired the human brain?

Back in 2007, texting was big. Teens and pre-teens exercised their thumbs with the tedious task of tapping on the 7 button four times in order to make an s.

The rewiring was caused by the introduction of the Smartphone. Within a ten year period, pre-teens and teens had been fundamentally rewired to spend most of their day interacting at high speed with others, consuming vast quantities of data from strangers as well as friends, playing mobile games, watching videos and posting messages on social media.

How are our brains rewired? In 1911, Edward Thorndike put hungry cats into a small maze cage where they could escape only by pulling on a ring that was connected to a chain that opened a hatch to food.

“

The one impulse, out of many accidental ones, which leads to pleasure, becomes strengthened & stamped in.”

What Thorndike discovered is that the cats thrashed around trying to escape until they discovered the ring and the escape hatch.

What was particularly interesting in this experiment was the fact that when the same cats were put back into the maze, they didn't go directly to the ring. It took time for a learning curve to develop. Thorndike described the behaviour of the cats like this.

"The one impulse, out of many accidental ones, which leads to pleasure, becomes strengthened and stamped in."

The "stamped in" pathway he described as "the wearing smooth pathway!" The fast route, not a conscious thought.

The human body changes fast. In 2015, John Kelly spent a year in space on the International Space Station. He was part of an experiment to determine the effect of long term space flight on the human body.

For many years prior to this, astronauts had returned from space flight with ailments, some of which could not be reversed. Back in 2005, John Phillips left earth with 20/20 vision and after spending six months in orbit

returned with 20/100. Scientists and doctors examined astronauts and discovered that when humans spend long periods of time in microgravity, over 2 litres of body-water shifts from their legs to the brain. The water creates intense pressure because there is insufficient space in the human brain so the eye balls are flattened. It was this that caused the irreversible eyesight failure causing the optic nerve to be inflamed.

In 2017, **Jean Twenge** PhD, wrote the book **iGen** after researchers became acutely aware of the dramatic change in the brains of pre-teens and teens. She is Professor of Psychology at San Diego State University. Her team has studied long term research on the behaviour of teens since 1976 in large national surveys using over 11 million children. Although there were slight fluctuations over the years, a sudden and unexpected change in the survey results appeared in 2010. By 2016, the change that had elbowed on the graphs in 2010 was now on a dangerously steep climb. In her 2017 book, Dr Twenge shows that the introduction of the Smartphone fundamentally rewired the pre-teen and teen brain.

After joining forces with Dr Twenge, Dr Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist and professor at New York University wrote the book, **The Anxious Generation** which was



published in March 2024. In his brilliant book, Haidt shows how teen's mental health literally fell off the cliff in 2013.

Teen mental health had been relatively level in 2000, but between 2011 and 2013 there was unprecedented fluctuation in the survey results. Researchers found a massive increase in depression rates from 50% to 150%. This trend had never been seen since 1976 when the large group surveys were carried out.

Many commentators have argued that it was because most of the surveys were carried out as "self-reporting" and this generation of pre-

teens and teens are more able to express themselves. But the self-reporting matched the behavioural statistics seen by the number of children admitted to hospital for self-harm.

This wasn't just a North American phenomenon. The same statistics were seen in Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand. It was slightly different in the Germanic countries and Europe, but that had a lot to do with parenting styles.

Something happened and pre-teen girls were hit the hardest. The focus fell directly on social media.

"In his brilliant book, Haidt shows how **teen's mental health literally fell off the cliff in 2013...**"



This is where we sometimes make the mistake. Media, devices, internet and even You Tube should not be linked to social media like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter/X, Tik Tok and Tumblr.

Girls tend to be attracted to the visual social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook and boys head off to You Tube and Video Games. Interestingly there doesn't seem to be a link between video games and depression.

Mark Zuckerberg believes that, "There is no causal connection at a broad scale between these things." He rejects the link between social media and teen mental health.

The research cannot support his belief.

At the heart of the problem is the business model applied to Instagram, Facebook and Twitter/X. The model incentivises people to make content, post it, get likes and shares and the people using it become the PRODUCT that is sold to advertisers.

The findings are:

- 1 The crisis is specific to mood disorders
- 2 The increases are large both in self-reporting and behaviour (ie. teens in hospital for self harm).
- 3 The crisis is gendered - ie. pre-teen and teen girls are highly impacted.
- 4 The crisis is in many countries.

“

“Interestingly there doesn't seem to be a link between video games & depression.”

How do we **fix** this? Is social media harmful to kids?

We do not know the answer to this because the question is too broad. Most research methods make use of the DOSE method. For example, a little dose of sugar is fine, but a large dose of sugar is bad.

Has social media rewired the human brain? What we do know is that social media has led to a complete rewiring of the human brain. Children no longer play. Childhood was about play. Free play meant interacting with mixed age groups, learning things, dealing with bullies and experimenting without adult intervention. Childhood underwent a dramatic shift in the 1990's when everything became too dangerous and the child safety industry made billions on knee guards to avoid scratches. Tall slides at play parks that ended in a sand hole were replaced with low ones onto a rubber mat. We literally lost our Free Range Kids.

A person wearing a green and white vertically striped long-sleeved shirt is holding a gold-colored smartphone in their right hand. The background is a solid orange color. The person's face is partially visible on the left side of the frame.

Lenore Skenazy in his 2021 book, Free-Range Kids shows how we have to get kids physically playing again. The GenZ cohort of 1996> were the first group to get onto social media before puberty. By 2009-2010 they were active on social media and two years later were suffering from depression.

When social physical connections decline - everything changes. When the natural order changes, as it does in space, the human body changes. Today, almost all connections with other humans are done through the phone, the schizophrenic friend in the pocket. Damage is the greatest in girls between 11 and 13.

The age for access to social media has to be lifted to 16 years of age and enforced. Just like we are unable to sell alcohol or cigarettes to minors, so too must social media be regulated. Until countries are prepared to turn this into law, parents and schools have to pick up the responsibility.

So what must change?

It's not the device. It not the games - Roblox with adult approved friends shows no harm, but Instagram, Facebook, X/Twitter and Tik Tok must be forbidden until 16 years of age.

Protect our girls

Our girls are thinking all the time about "posting". The power of social media is that everyone's life looks better than yours because everyone's life is fake - but we believe it.

Once you start posting, that dominates your mind and you are no longer present, always thinking about it and mostly sedentary.

One mover and shaker in education, Natalie Meerholz - Principal of Holy Rosary, a colleague and friend, made a significant breakthrough. She instituted a voluntary 40 day Phone-free cycle and tracked the student responses.

<https://uchief.co.za/holy-rosary-kids-go-phone-free-for-40-day/>

This article is worth reading.

Yes, it is time for the Rip Van Winkels in Schools to wake up and discover that the brains of our children have been rewired by repeating the activity, like the cats in the maze, the smooth pathway is leading to mental health challenges of depression, cutting and even suicide.

Yes, it is time for schools and parents to separate devices and screen time which has little effect on mental health (but a larger effect on physical health because of the

lack of physical play and being sedentary) and social media.

Maybe it is time to ban the phones during school hours. In 2012, just as the crisis was brewing, the school that I was leading banned the phone. Students locked them in the classroom safe for the day and collected them at the end of the day. The focus was play, and free play was enforced by doing away with Homework resulting in a massive increase in the level of participation in afternoon sporting activities.

**Let's bring childhood back to earth.
Jonathan Haidt's recommendations are:**

1. No smartphone before High School
2. No social media before 16.
3. Phone-free schools
4. Far more unsupervised play and childhood independence.



Natalie Meerholz - Principal of Holy Rosary



Teacher Burnout - Not on your watch!

Ryan Jooste

As you approach the final stages of the term, what once felt manageable can now seem overwhelming. The days grow longer and the pressure of unfinished tasks and upcoming deadlines can make the end of the term feel distant. Yet, it's during these times that the resilience of a teacher becomes most evident.

This is when you find that extra bit of energy to keep going, even when fatigue starts to set in. The demands may be high but so too is your ability to rise to the occasion, drawing on the strength and dedication that brought you into this profession in the first place.

Taking care of yourself is crucial in preventing burnout. Amidst the commotion of school life, it's easy to overlook your own needs, but maintaining your well-being is essential - not just for your sake but for your students as well. They rely on your energy,

patience, enthusiasm, and these can only be sustained if you take the time to recharge.

I found that starting the day with a simple ritual like setting aside 10 minutes each morning for a quiet cup of coffee helped me clear my mind and prepare me for the day ahead.

This small, consistent practice gave me a moment of calm before the hustle of the school day began - allowing me to approach my duties with a clear head and a positive mindset. Whether it's a few moments of meditation, a quick walk or even just sitting quietly, finding time for yourself can make a significant difference in how you handle the demands of teaching.

Keeping your students engaged is another way to stay energised as the term draws to a close.



Amidst the commotion of school life, it's easy to overlook your own needs, but maintaining your well-being is essential - not just for your sake but for your students as well."

The classroom can easily become a place of routine, where both teachers and students go through the motions without much enthusiasm.

By injecting creativity into your lessons you can transform the atmosphere, making learning more enjoyable and relevant for everyone involved. For example, I once turned a routine PE lesson into a team competition. What was initially a standard sit-up challenge became a lively event when I split the students into groups and introduced a bit of friendly competition. The atmosphere shifted as students encouraged one another and enjoyed the novelty of this dopamine-fostering activity.

This experience highlighted how a bit of creativity can keep both students and teachers motivated. When students are actively engaged, their energy is contagious and it can help to reignite your own passion for teaching, even on the most challenging days.

Setting clear goals can also help manage the demands of the final stretch! When the workload seems overwhelming, breaking it down into smaller goals can keep you focused and on track.

In my classroom, I would often set weekly goals - such as completing a project, meeting an administrative deadline or trying out that 'new concept' in a lesson.

These goals provided a sense of direction, helping both me and my students to navigate the term's demands without feeling lost or overwhelmed.

By working together to achieve these goals and celebrating our progress along the way, we maintained a sense of purpose and accomplishment, making the end of the term feel within reach. Celebrating these small victories also served as a reminder of the progress we had made, reinforcing a positive classroom environment and keeping spirits high as we moved towards the end of the term.

As the term draws to a close, it's important to remember that finishing strong isn't just about reaching the end, it's about doing so with a sense of pride in what you and your students have achieved.

The journey through the term is filled with challenges, but it's also rich with moments of learning, growth and connection. Teacher burnout is a significant challenge, something that is so prevalent in our profession - now more than ever! But by taking care of yourself, keeping your students engaged and setting manageable goals, you can approach the final stages of the term with confidence and energy. The end of the term is not just a finish line but a culmination of all the hard work and dedication you've invested.

"...by taking care of yourself, keeping your students engaged and setting manageable goals, you can approach the final stages of the term with confidence and energy."



The Balancing Act - Finding Rhythm Between Classroom and Home Life

Brad Keller

Teaching is a profession where passion and purpose often blur the lines between work and home.

Between long hours, after-school activities, and the emotional weight of guiding young lives, teachers give so much that finding the energy to fully engage with family can seem impossible. But with a **few intentional habits**, supported by research and neuroscience, teachers can build a balance that benefits both their students and their families.

1

Transitioning from Classroom to Home Mode

Transitioning from an intense teaching day to a peaceful evening at home is a challenge for many educators. The brain's default mode network (the brain's processing hub) often keeps replaying the events of the day. This network, while great for problem-solving, can keep teachers in "school mode," making it

tough to shift emotionally and mentally into family time.

Quick Tip: Build a Simple Transition Ritual

Consider adopting a short ritual that signals the brain to move from work to home life. Simply listening to a calming song or taking a five-minute walk around the block could make a massive impact. The neuroscience shows us that short, familiar routines can help "rewire" the mind and ground us for what comes next.

"A five-minute shift routine can be enough to let go of the day's work and reconnect with family."

Dr. Linda Lantieri, Educational Psychologist



As teachers, we're shaping lives all day long. But we're also shaping lives at home. Creating a balance that respects both roles takes intention, but it's possible.

3

Redefining Boundaries in a “Always On” Profession

Teaching is demanding and trying to “switch off” entirely when the day ends can feel unrealistic.

Studies from Harvard show that accepting this work-life integration rather than fighting it can actually enhance well-being.

2

Quality Over Quantity: Prioritising Presence in Family Time

Research consistently shows that quality time matters more than the total hours we spend with loved ones. **Dr. Jennifer Senior's** work reveals that children benefit from moments of intentional, undistracted connection. For busy teachers, this is encouraging: you don't need hours of free time, just moments of real connection.

Ideas to Boost Family Presence

- A. **Create Device-Free Zones** – Make dinnertime or bedtime a tech-free window. These undistracted times strengthen family bonds and show children the value of presence.
- B. **Mini Moments** – Short interactions, like reading a story together or talking about the day's highlights, can offer children emotional stability and a sense of connection.

“Children thrive on being seen and heard. Five focused minutes can mean more than an hour of distracted time.”

– Dr. Shefali Tsabary, Global Parenting Coach

The trick? Setting micro-boundaries that allow dedicated family time but also recognise the reality of work.



Micro-Boundaries for a Healthier 'Balance'

- **Set Family Time Windows** – Establish specific windows for family where work can only be checked if truly necessary. For instance, a half-hour after dinner could be a non-negotiable family moment.
- **Limit Marking and Planning Times** – Instead of letting grading spill into family life, reserve a short time slot (e.g., 30 minutes after the kids go to bed) and close the work materials once finished.

4

Guiding Children Through the Digital Age

As a teacher, you likely see the effects of technology on students every day. Research by **Dr. Jonathan Haidt** reveals that social media and screen time contribute to rising anxiety among teens and children.

With this in mind, setting tech-free zones at home and helping children navigate their digital lives can offer much-needed balance and mental clarity.

Embrace Tech-Free Moments

- A. **Dinner Without Screens** – Model tech-free moments by setting aside family dinners where everyone disconnects. This offers a break from screens and promotes deeper conversation.
- B. **Weekly Screen Detox** – Encourage a “device-free hour” on weekends. This small boundary has been shown to reduce stress and increase face-to-face interactions, something every family can benefit from.



Bringing the Classroom Skills Home: Leading with Empathy

Teachers are experts at managing diverse personalities and emotions in the classroom. These same empathy and coaching skills can build resilience and confidence in children at home. Research by Dr. Robert Brooks highlights that children raised with empathy and support develop greater resilience, giving them confidence to handle life's ups and downs.

The Coaching Mindset at Home

- **Ask Open-Ended Questions** – Instead of simple yes-or-no questions, ask things like, “What was your favourite part of today?” This builds connection and teaches kids to express themselves.
- **Celebrate Effort** – Emphasise effort over outcomes. By celebrating your child's journey and learning moments, you help them develop a growth mindset, a quality they'll carry into adulthood.

As Psychologist Dr. Robert Brooks says, **teachers guide students to grow**. Apply that same coaching mindset at home and you'll see remarkable resilience in your children.

In the end, teaching is both a calling and a lifestyle, but so is parenting.

The goal is balance, not perfection. A few small boundaries can keep work from eroding family time.”

Adam Grant, Psychologist and Author

Finding harmony between these two commitments can help you be fully present both in the classroom and at home. Small, intentional strategies can make all the difference, allowing you to build a legacy that extends beyond the school walls and into your family.

The best investment we make is in the lives we shape; whether in the classroom or around the dinner table.





From Struggle to Success: Harnessing the Strengths of Learners with ADHD

Bianca Burridge

ADHD is one of the most misunderstood aspects of education. It's often seen as a challenge; an obstacle that leads to impulsivity, distraction and disorganisation.

But what if we **shifted** our lens?

Imagine if we recognised the inherent strengths in ADHD instead of viewing it solely through the lens of struggle. ADHD isn't a lack of attention; it's an overflow. Students with ADHD aren't empty of focus; they're overflowing with creativity, energy, and resilience! With the right approaches, educators can channel these traits into remarkable success.

In this article, we'll dive into what ADHD really is, how it shows up in classrooms, and share practical strategies for building learning spaces where students with ADHD can truly thrive.

Understanding ADHD: It's More Than Just Distraction

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects how people manage attention and impulses. There are three primary types: Inattentive, Hyperactive-Impulsive and Combined.

While many think of ADHD as endless energy, the reality is far more nuanced. According to the DSM-5, ADHD students may struggle with attention, managing impulses, or task completion, but they also possess an amazing ability to hyper-focus on topics they find interesting.

Teachers often encounter a “variable attention system” in students with ADHD. The Variable Attention Stimulus Traits (VAST) model explains that ADHD students may shift between intense focus and distraction depending on what’s happening around them.

Flipping the Script: ADHD as a Source of Strength

It’s easy to feel frustrated when teaching students with ADHD, but these learners bring a lot to the classroom. Instead of seeing impulsivity, distraction, and eccentric behaviour as problems, we can view these traits as strengths.

Here’s a guide to reframing “negative” ADHD traits into positive qualities:

1. **Impulsive → Energetic**
Students who jump into conversations or blurt out answers are often just expressing their enthusiasm! They process information quickly and love engaging with the material. Try harnessing this energy through quick-response activities or leadership roles that allow them to contribute constructively.
2. **Disorganised → Curious**
ADHD students may appear scattered, with desks covered in half-finished assignments. But this “disorganisation” often reflects a mind buzzing with ideas. Tap into this curiosity by encouraging open-ended projects, where they can explore multiple ideas and dive into creative challenges.





Routine may not resonate with ADHD learners, but in their need for novelty lies incredible vision.”

3. **Bluntness → Honesty**

Students with ADHD are known for being direct—even blunt. But their directness is honesty at its core, a trait that can be powerful when guided well. Help them express their thoughts in a way that blends their honesty with kindness and constructive feedback.

4. **Routine-Resistant → Dreamer**

Routine may not resonate with ADHD learners, but in their need for novelty lies incredible vision. These students think big and see possibilities others might miss. Allow space for imaginative exploration through storytelling, drawing, or innovative projects that lets them embrace their unique perspective.

5. **Eccentric → Original**

Unconventional behaviours—like mismatched clothes or quirky comments—highlight their originality. In an age where teens feel pressure to conform, their authenticity is refreshing. Create a culture where uniqueness is celebrated and students feel safe expressing their individuality.

Tapping into Brilliance: Supporting ADHD Students in the Classroom

Reframing ADHD is a strong start, but practical strategies are essential for helping students channel their strengths effectively.

Here are tried-and-true techniques that can make any classroom more ADHD-friendly and in doing so, **help all children to thrive.**

A

Personalised Support

ADHD varies widely, so understanding each student’s specific traits is key.

Individualised attention helps identify whether a student needs support in focusing or managing hyperactivity, enabling teachers to tailor their approach effectively.

B

Flexible Learning Spaces

Movement matters! Incorporate standing desks, wobble stools, or foot pedals, allowing students to release energy without disturbing others. Short movement breaks can also provide a reset for all students, creating a dynamic learning environment.

C

Executive Function Support

Planning and organisation can be challenging for ADHD students. Techniques like the 10:3 system—10 minutes of work followed by a 3-minute break—can support sustained focus.

Help them break down larger projects into manageable steps, promoting a sense of accomplishment along the way.

D

Recognition and Praise

ADHD students respond well to specific, frequent praise.

Highlighting their efforts—rather than just outcomes—can be especially motivating, activating what's known as Recognition Responsive Euphoria. This feeling of being valued boosts their engagement and morale.

E

Structured Routines

While ADHD students may resist routine, they benefit from

structured environments. Clear, predictable routines reduce distractions and provide stability. Ensure smooth transitions between activities to keep them grounded and engaged.

F

Sensory Aids

Students overwhelmed by sensory input can benefit from aids like ear muffs or calming devices such as weighted blankets, helping them regulate their environment and focus better.

Rewriting the ADHD Narrative: A Collaborative Effort

Our role as educators isn't to "fix" ADHD but to embrace the unique strengths these students bring to our classrooms. Shifting from a deficit-based perspective to a strength-based approach helps all students thrive.

By creating supportive, flexible environments and celebrating each student's individuality, we can help ADHD learners reach their full potential.

ADHD students aren't broken; they're brimming with creativity, energy, and resilience. Let's work together to unlock this potential and empower every child to succeed!





Inspiring Teachers: The Power of EQ in Education

Gavin Keller

For nearly 45 years, I've championed a belief that has guided my entire career: the skills of the heart, often dismissed as "soft skills," are far more valuable than the easily tested concepts that dominate our curriculums.

Throughout my journey, I've faced criticism, been labelled a maverick, and even been seen as a troublemaker by authorities who couldn't see past the status quo. Yet, their critiques only fuelled my conviction, as I witnessed the academic and social triumphs of students nurtured in environments rich in Emotional Intelligence (EQ).

I've seen education systems evolve, from the "Christian" National Curriculum under apartheid to the ambitious but poorly executed Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) after South Africa's first democratic elections.

"...their critiques only fuelled my conviction, as I witnessed the academic and social triumphs of students nurtured in environments rich in Emotional Intelligence (EQ)"

Despite its potential, OBE crumbled under the weight of untrained teachers and insufficient support, leading to a chaotic learning environment. This was followed by the CAPS curriculum—a return to test-based teaching, but with an overwhelming amount of content that further alienated both educators and students.

Today, we face the dire consequences of this system: a generation of young people, the brightest in history, are being failed by an education system that prepares them for the past, not the future. In South Africa, youth unemployment rates have reached alarming heights, with over 60% of 15-24-year-olds out of work. And this isn't just a South African problem—countries like Kenya, with their Competent-Based Curriculum, are struggling with similar issues.

So where did we go wrong? Education policymakers have lost sight of the fact that we're teaching a generation far more capable than the systems designed for their parents and grandparents. We've made school compulsory, but without the necessary resources, we've turned it into a holding pen rather than a place of learning.

We need to recognise that IQ without EQ is meaningless. Education must engage the heart, not just the head. It's not about adding another subject on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) but about embedding EQ into every lesson, every day. As **Prof. Laban Ayiro, Vice Chancellor of Daystar University in Kenya**, wisely notes, education is about more than downloading information—it's about uploading values like ethical leadership, integrity and empathy.

Teachers, it's time to ask ourselves: Why have we stopped reading about education? Why aren't we keeping up with modern trends in the business world, ensuring that our students are prepared not just for tests, but for life? Unemployment is different from unemployability, and our goal should be to equip students with the soft skills they need to thrive—self-control, self-awareness, empathy and the ability to connect with others.

The future is here, and we need to be the change-makers our students deserve. Let's rise to the challenge, inspire each other and create learning environments where every child can flourish—not just in their IQ, but in their EQ. The time for change is now.





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