



University of
Nottingham

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

ITE Summer Conference 2024 – Tuesday 2 July

Theme: Belonging in school

Keynote 4.30pm-5.15pm

Dr. Rachel Lehner-Mear: Family engagement in children and young people's education: How do parents understand, experience, and enact involvement in their child's learning?

Abstract: Engaging parents in their children's education has, for a long time, been endorsed as an important school activity. On the face of it, building home-school partnerships, and processes where families and teachers work together to ensure young people develop to their full potential, appears uncontroversial. Yet educators know this simple objective can be complex, challenging, and sometimes peppered with tensions. Moreover, working with parents is rarely explicitly taught during initial teacher education, and whilst partnership and parent engagement are promoted in government and school policies, effective ways of meeting these goals can be missing, contextually problematic, or left to local development. The paradox of expecting schools to create positive parental engagement practices without helpful insight into how parents experience calls for their participation, raises questions such as: What do we know about how parents support learning behind closed doors? In what ways do parents experience the expectation to be 'involved' in their child's schooling? How do parents construct their own role in their child's education? Does engagement mean the same in all contexts?

In this presentation, I discuss key findings from my work on parental engagement. Drawing on a substantial longitudinal project, I will share individual parents' stories of engagement with their child's learning. Illustrating these portraits with a variety of data, including interview extracts, video of parent-child home learning interactions, and parents' stimulated reflections on their own practices, I reveal some of the gendered, classed, raced, and individualised ways parents engage with, experience, and enact their understanding of educational support. By unveiling hidden, perhaps unanticipated, dimensions of the universalised assumption of family engagement in education, the presentation offers some answers to the questions: what do parents *do* when schools expect them to support their child's learning, and *why* do they do it like that?

Speaker bio: Rachel is a Research Fellow at the UoN School of Education. She has twenty years' experience as a primary school teacher, further education lecturer, and co-creator of parent engagement programmes. Rachel's research focuses on parental involvement / engagement, home-school relationships, mothering, and embodied educational practices. She is interested in how gender, class and ethnicity intersect with parenting and education, and works with theories of emotion and relationality to understand behaviours, experiences, identities and embodiments. Rachel's forthcoming book *Primary Homework, Mothering and Maternal Agency: Portraits of relationality, agency and care in educational support* will be published by Routledge.

Workshops/seminars 5.15pm-6.30pm

Dr. Rachel Lehner-Mear – Thinking about homework for our own contexts: Learning from a case study of radical homework change

Abstract: Do you set homework? What principles underpin that homework? Is homework aligned with other aspects of your school culture? Would you like to change or update homework practice? These are some of the questions this workshop will raise.

As an almost universal practice in UK schools, homework is entrenched in the school system, often expected and accepted by both teachers and parents. However, given that homework is also situated in contentious debates about who is responsible for pupils' academic progress, what role parents should have in education, whether homework actually impacts outcomes, and indeed, to what degree homework may unintentionally reinforce inequalities, it is surprising that consideration is rarely given to the principles underpinning particular approaches. Following a brief overview of the homework research, this workshop uses a case study of one educational area which introduced a major shift in homework policy, to explore whether, and how, it is possible to change homework. Delegates will be invited to discuss fundamental questions underpinning the way homework is framed, either in their own school setting or in the English education system more broadly. The workshop aims to prompt ongoing homework conversations for individual school contexts.

Dr. Anne Emerson – Building belonging through combatting anxiety

High numbers of students, some of whom are identified as autistic, experience high rates of anxiety about and in school. This often presents a barrier to their sense of school belonging. In this seminar I present some ideas about how schools can provide appropriate support to all students to help them feel safe and that school is somewhere they are welcomed and included.

Dr. Elizabeth Walton – What schools and teachers can learn from parents of disabled children

The 2023 annual Ofsted report talked about the damaged relationship between parents and schools. While this may generally be true, it is a particular concern in mainstream schools where disabled children are included. Parents question what teachers know about teaching their disabled children and in turn, teachers question what parents can possibly know about the complexities of classroom practice. Both blame the other when things don't go well. This workshop reports on research with parents of disabled children in the UK and Australia and identifies some of the key contributions to the knowledge of inclusive teaching that the parents offer. These contributions go beyond parents' expertise in their own child/ren's lives and conditions to wider perspectives about the value of an inclusive education for all children and the systemic changes needed. Teachers attending this workshop will benefit from the insights that parents offer and will be encouraged to consider how the oppositional discourses of parents and expert discourses of teachers might be less polarised, if not combined in a quest for a more just and equitable education system.

Dr. Fran Salvi – Can local schools save the planet?

In April 2022, the UK Department for Education published its [first policy paper](#) connecting school education to the need to both adjust to and mitigate the effects of climate change by improving sustainable practices. On top of infrastructural objectives connected to becoming carbon neutral, the Department for Education has also committed to increasing opportunities

for all children and young people to '*spend time in nature* and learn more about it', as well as for them to '*become actively involved in the improvement of their local environment.*'

Yet, what do we mean by 'nature'? In the UK 84.4% of the population lives in cities (O'Neill, 2022). Do cities count as nature? If not, is immersing students in 'nature' the right way to make them care about the impacts of climate change? We could perhaps replace 'nature' with 'environments': this may help us see our cities and communities more affectionately as places we care about and want to see remain above water for generations to come.

In this workshop, Dr Salvi (University of Nottingham) will:

- Discuss the DfE policy
- share some insight from her projects around Environmental Education (EE) in UK primary schools
- focus on how EE focused on empathy can help children develop a stronger sense of place and belonging, and how this can be conducive to environmental stewardship in later years
- consider how to create opportunities for EE within existing curricular demands, vis-à-vis opening up extra-curricular opportunities

Dr. Brittany Wright – Charting a course to the future: how can we *teach* working-class children to belong if they're supposed to *learn to leave*?

This workshop will explore the relationship between social class, place, social mobility, and schooling. Whilst there are no easy answers to educational inequalities, Dr Brittany Wright invites teachers and leaders to consider how three strategies can help 'close the gap' between working-class young people and their peers.

Katie Robinson and Selina Brewin – Fernwood School: Building for the Future: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Practice

Every child deserves to feel seen, respected and celebrated in their school; effective equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work is integral to this taking place. In this seminar, we will share some of the EDI work happening at Fernwood School in Nottingham and strategies for overcoming barriers. We have successfully embedded EDI through a whole school approach and enhancing student leadership opportunities. You can see some of our EDI work over on Instagram [@FernwoodForAll](#).

Mica Coleman-Jones – Working in partnership with children, young people, families, and teachers to create an education which works for everyone.

Mica is a qualified teacher and has worked in senior leadership, including Head of Autism Research and Development and Leader of Specialist Provision. Mica has a keen interest in how we can enhance teaching and learning environments and approaches to better support children and young people in education.

Mica is a co-founder and one of the trustees of the [Lilya Lighthouse Education Trust](#), a neurodiverse-inclusive trust which is committed to working in partnership with children, young people, families, and partner schools to create an education which works for everyone.

In the workshop, Mica will share her Trust's approaches to fostering truly inclusive educational spaces. At the heart of this is a vision to provide an education which enables young people to develop self-awareness, well-being and happiness leading to positive health, accessible education, employment, and meaningful lives.

Eva Vincente – Rushcliffe School: The power of the classroom teacher to foster a sense of belonging through their subject specialism

This workshop will showcase how classroom teachers can create a purposeful and relevant curriculum that fosters a sense of belonging to learning. We will discuss the importance of defining the curriculum purpose of our own subjects and aligning it with curriculum design and implementation while ensuring it complies with current policy guidance.

Participants will learn practical strategies for embedding these principles into daily classroom practice. The session will include successfully implemented examples with a particular focus on modern languages but also other subjects such as science and humanities. These examples will illustrate how educators can be instrumental in integrating a well-defined curriculum purpose with effective teaching strategies to enhance student belonging and engagement.

Rebecca Williamson – Transform Trust: Representation in the curriculum – creating a sense of Belonging through the people we learn about

Working with Nottingham Citizens, a group of Nottingham teachers and leaders have worked together to create a bank of diverse resources to be used across the National Curriculum. We care about the children in our schools having a sense of belonging and believe that we can promote this through teaching them about inspirational figures with a range of protected characteristics and who they can relate to. As Marian Wright Edelman said, 'You can't be what you can't see', so come and see how you can use picture books and our resource bank to support a more diverse curriculum where all children and families are represented.

Drinks and light refreshments – 6.30pm-7pm