

**2025 NEAS CONFERENCE**

Aerial UTS Function Centre - Sydney



# Finding Your Place When You Don't Belong

*Vanessa Newbery, Jo Kwai & Leisl Bruhn*

# Pathways to Belonging

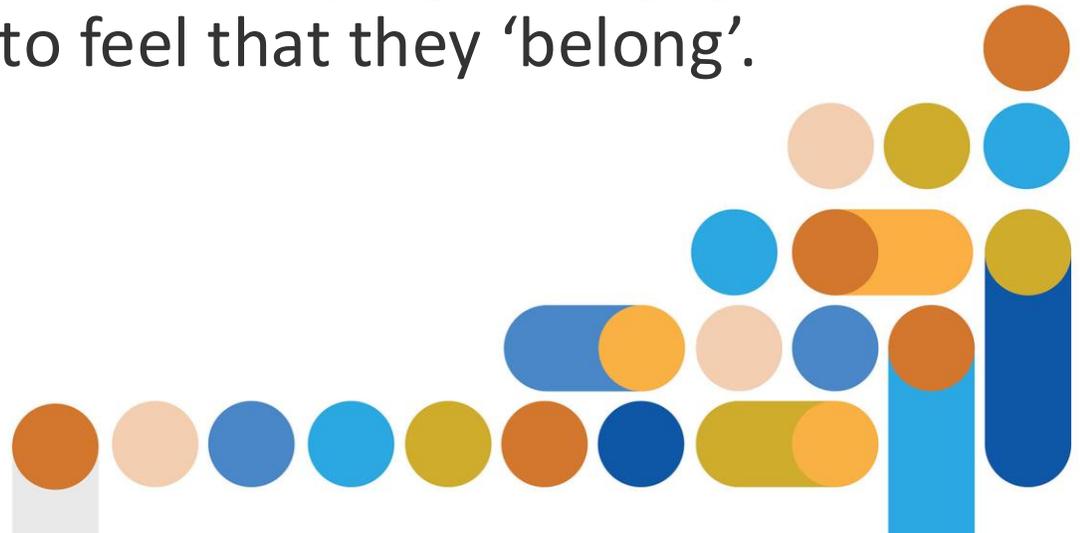
Our Role in Building Communities

22-23 MAY  
2025



# Introduction

- What happens when you don't belong? When you are new to the country, language, educational environment? Add to the mix living away from your support networks and friends, and this is a challenge facing many international students.
- Three High School Preparation providers, all based in school contexts, share strategies and best practice approaches for helping disengaged and/or unmotivated high school students to feel that they 'belong'.



# Session Takeaways

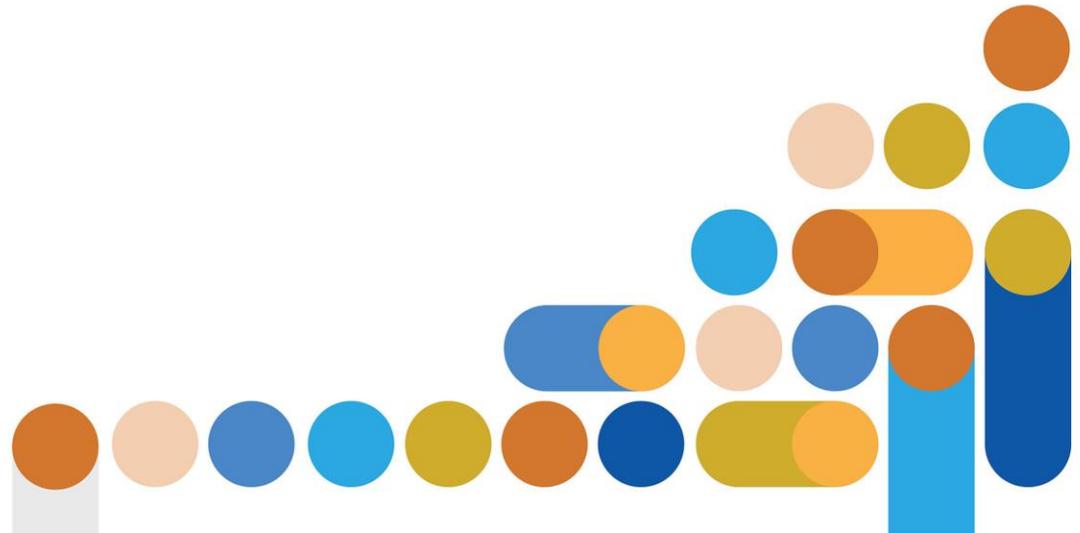
- Strategies for all stakeholders involved with students struggling to belong
- Networking – making new contacts
- Sharing experiences – sharing the load
- Growth mindset to towards continuous improvement
- Emphasis on the importance of community and continuous support in helping students thrive
- NEAS High School Preparation COP

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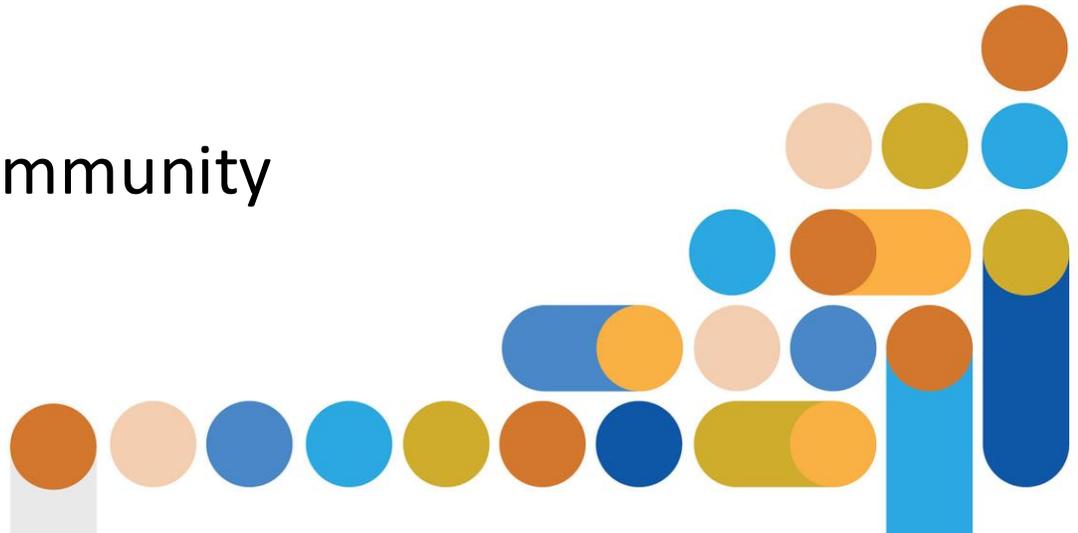


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# Parts

- Part 1: The Challenge of Belonging  
Together highlighting the common struggles faced by international students
- Part 2: Strategies for Engagement and Motivation  
Sharing practical strategies and real-world examples
- Part 3: Building a Supportive Community  
How to foster a Sense of Belonging and Community



# About me: Vanessa Newbery

- Head of International Programs, Wellbeing Team, Executive Leader
- Hills International College, Jimboomba, Queensland
- This is my 30<sup>th</sup> year of teaching! I started in ELICOS with international adults, then moved into AMEP, before settling into HSP. I have been at Hills for 13 years, teaching and managing in Hills Language College.
- My philosophy on education is that nothing can happen in a classroom without compassion, and it is through a compassionate approach that we achieve success, inclusion and become one community.

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# About me: Leisl Bruhn

- Dean of International Students, Ivanhoe Grammar School
- Onsite Intensive English Language Program/Student Care team/Admissions Team/Teaching teams/ Cross Campus
- Extensive teaching and leadership experience in the EAL field across primary, secondary and adult sectors in state and private systems.
- Language proficiency assessment in corporate field and extensive TNE and onshore teaching experience VCE and IB DP
- The care of international students is vital to their experience especially given their vulnerability. For students to fully enjoy their experience and achieve their best outcome they **must** feel safe, comfortable, well supported and that they truly belong!

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# About me: Jo Kwai

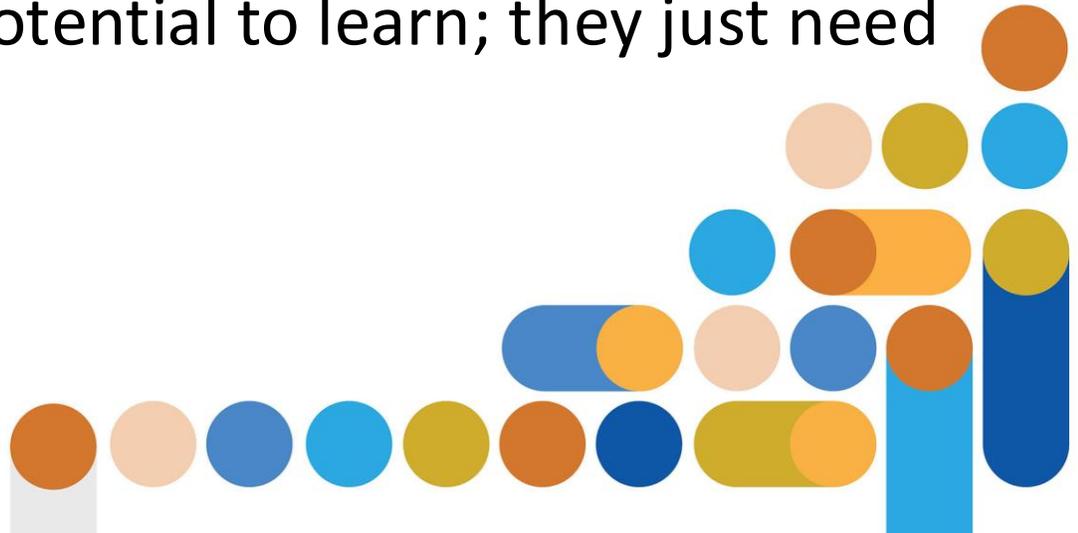
- Manager, JPIC (2.5 years)
- John Paul International College, Daisy Hill, 25 min south of Brisbane
- Multi-sectorial experience : teaching, coordinating, writing programs, compliance, and PD (primary, secondary, ELICOS, AMEP, Teacher training TAFE, RTO)
- My philosophy is to embrace lifelong learning, driven by respect, integrity and passion. Everyone has the potential to learn; they just need guidance and support.

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**How important is it for student(s) to belong?**



**Have you ever had a new international student who did not seem to belong?**



**As a school, did you have strategies that you used to help this student?**

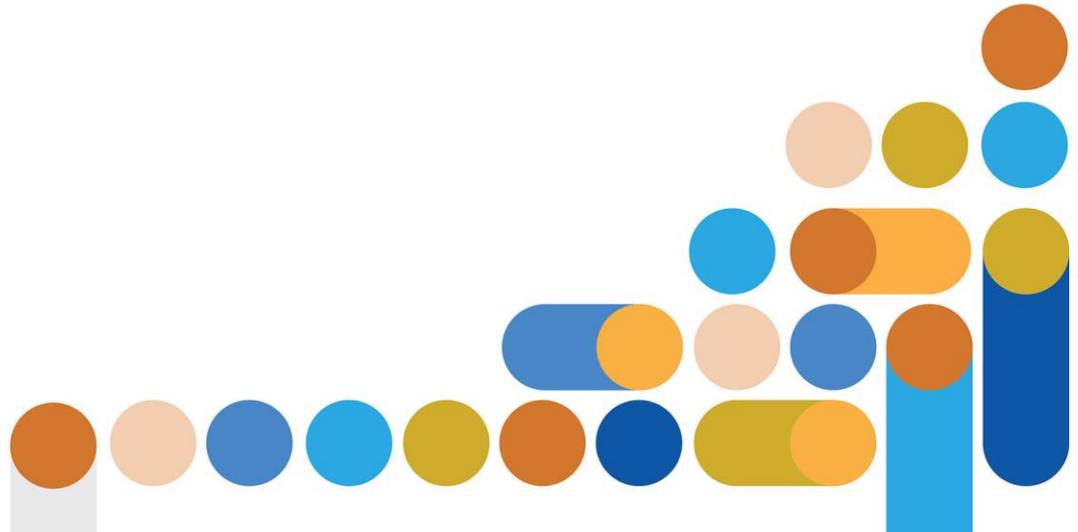


**Are you confident that these strategies work?**

# What Happens When you Don't Belong?

## Preparation for Group Work

- We notice it first (do we?)
- What do we notice first?
- How do you notice this? [intel / sources]
- Who do you 'tell' – [stakeholders]
- What supports are available for students (internal and external)



# Discussion Points

## Character Traits, Barriers and Solutions

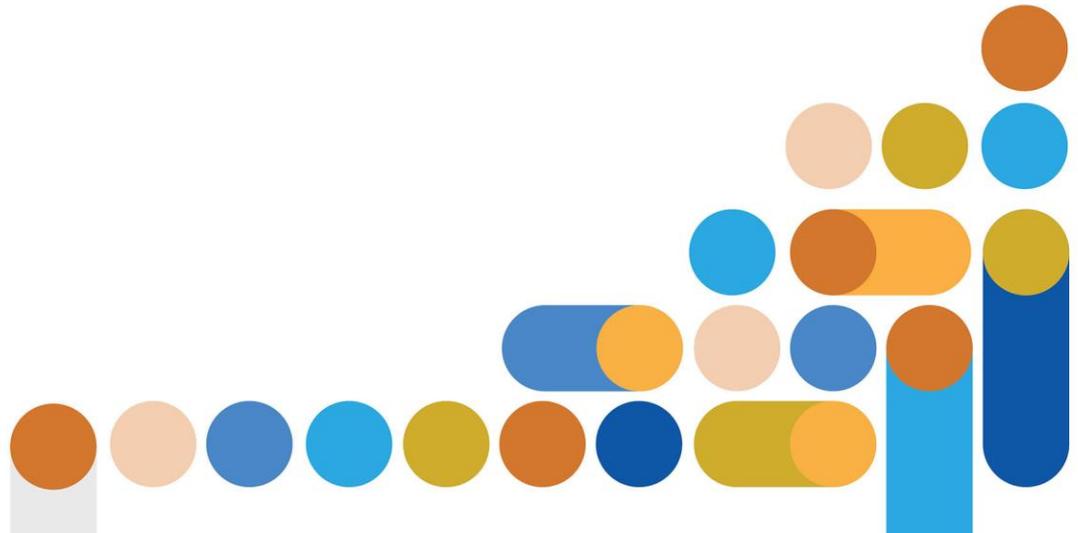
- Wild Child / Confident Connector
- Too cool for HSP/IELP
- Quiet as a mouse
- Get me out of here!

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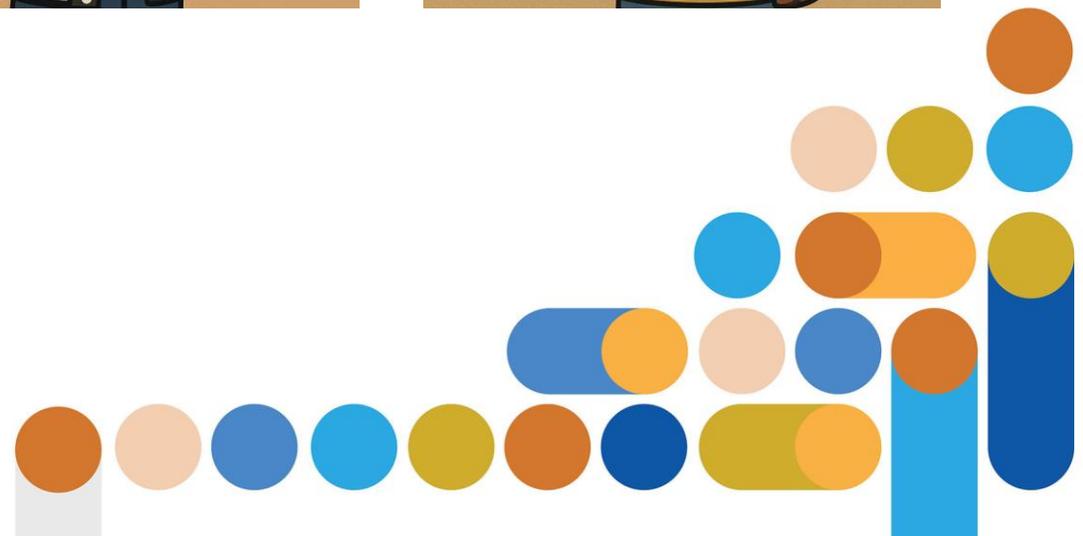
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# Feedback Discussions



# Q & A

- Only if we have time

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