Early Career Teachers Conference

9 October 2026

Nazareth Catholic College - Senior Campus

SASTA South Australian Science Teachers Association

YOUR SCIENCE COMMUNITY

Conference Program

Find your people. Grow your confidence. Leave with ideas you can use on Monday.

8.00am	Registration
8.45am	Opening and Welcome
9.10am - 10.10am	Session 1
10.10am	Morning Tea
10.40am - 11.40am	Session 2
11.45am - 12.45pm	Session 3
12.45pm	Lunch
1.30pm - 2.30pm	Session 4
2.35pm - 3.35pm	Share-a-thon
3.35pm	Close and Happy Hour

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Workshop Sessions

Foundations	Innovative Pedagogies	Tools & Strategies	STEM in Context
Session 1			
1.1 Transition from Provisional to Full Registration *Adrian Dilger, Catholic Education SA*	**1.2 Designing Notes that Optimise Learning and Active Student Engagement** *Mathew Disher, Concordia College*	**1.3 Teaching with AI: Opportunities and Challenges** *Joanne Villis, St Dominic's Priory College & Zac Villis*	**1.4 Food and fibre in the Primary Years** *Sue Pratt, AgCommunicators*
Session 2			
2.1 STEM outside the classroom *Sarah Todd, Coromandel Valley Primary School & Alex Lea, Green Adelaide*	**2.2 Wellbeing Strategies for Early Career Teachers** *Andrea Raptis Westminster School*	**2.3 Inquiry-based learning** *Dr Pranay Sharma, Cardijin College*	**2.4 How to effectively prepare students for Assessments** *Daniel Rabbett, Sacred Heart College*
Session 3			
3.1 Making Science special: Practical Wisdom *Erica Bolto, Kangaroo Island Community Education*	**3.2 Fact or cap? Using influencers to teach scientific literacy** *Dina Matheson, Specialised Assistance School for Youth*	**3.3 Relinquishing control to inspire creative Deconstruct & Design investigations in Stage 1 & 2 Science** *Maylin Evanochko, Adelaide Botanic High School*	**3.4 Microplastic Mess: Using Real-World Problems to Drive Year 7 Science Inquiry** *Swati Salvi, Seymour College*
Session 4			
4.1 Running Practical Lessons Effectively (Middle School Focus) *Jason Greenslade, Westminster School*	**4.2 Re-imaging STEM: Connecting Learning to Country, Context and Culture** *Denise Rule & YASTSA Program Teacher, Department for Education*	**4.3 Navigating the Middle School Classroom - Behaviour Management Strategies** *Jessie Evans, Kangaroo Island Community Education*	**4.3 Video games are more than just entertainment** *Hilary Schubert-Jones, Future You*
Session 5			
Share-a-thon *An informal setting for multiple presenters to share innovative teaching ideas. Each presenter will share a strategy or tool during a 10-minute presentation and delegates will rotate around the room.*			

Workshop Abstracts

Session 1

1.1 TRANSITION FROM PROVISIONAL TO FULL REGISTRATION

Adrian Dilger, Catholic Education SA

Teaching is a dynamic and challenging profession. Teachers have a professional obligation to develop and maintain professional relationships with a diverse range of learners, communicate with parents, act ethically, promote positive values and maintain and raise professional standards. Moving to (full) registration is a continuum of professional growth for a teacher as they transition from the Graduate level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to the Proficient career stage. During this session you will learn about the process to transition to (full) registration, gathering evidence and the role of the evaluator.

1.2 DESIGNING NOTES THAT OPTIMISE LEARNING AND ACTIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Mathew Disher, Concordia College

Many science teachers invest significant time creating notes and presentations, yet few have had the opportunity to consider how these resources influence learning. Grounded in Cognitive Load Theory and the science of learning, this practical workshop explores principles for designing and delivering content in ways that maximise student thinking and engagement. Participants will examine how notes, explanations and lesson design can position students as active participants in learning rather than passive recipients of information. Teachers will evaluate examples, audit their own teaching materials, and redesign notes and resources using evidence-informed principles that can be immediately applied in the classroom.

1.3 TEACHING WITH AI: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Joanne Villis, St Dominic's Priory College & Zac Villis

Artificial intelligence has rapidly changing education, creating both exciting opportunities and new challenges for teachers. This interactive workshop will explore the evolving role of AI in the science classroom, with a focus on practical strategies that can support teaching, learning, and assessment.

Together, we'll consider how AI can be used to enhance classroom practice, reduce teacher workload, and promote student learning, while also discussing ethical use, academic integrity, and ways to respond to inappropriate use of AI. Through discussion, demonstrations and collaborative activities, participants will explore current approaches, share ideas, and leave with practical strategies they can adapt to their own classrooms.

Whether you're new to AI or already experimenting with it, this session will provide a supportive space to build confidence and consider how AI can be used thoughtfully and effectively in science education.

1.4 FOOD AND FIBRE IN THE PRIMARY YEARS

Sue Pratt, AgCommunicators

Agriculture provides a rich, authentic context for teaching science in the primary years, helping students connect classroom learning with the food they eat, the clothes they wear and the natural environments around them.

This interactive workshop will explore how food and fibre contexts can be used to develop students' Science Inquiry Skills and Science as a Human Endeavour understanding across the Australian Curriculum. Through a series of engaging, hands-on activities, participants will investigate real-world agricultural challenges while exploring concepts such as plant growth, soils, animal production, sustainability, natural resource management and emerging technologies.

Designed for early career primary teachers, the workshop will demonstrate practical, curriculum-aligned investigations that encourage students to ask questions, plan and conduct investigations, analyse evidence and communicate their findings. Participants will also examine how science and innovation continue to shape Australian agriculture and how farmers use scientific knowledge to improve productivity, sustainability and animal welfare.

Teachers will leave with a collection of ready-to-use classroom activities, teaching resources and ideas for incorporating agriculture into their science programs, regardless of whether their school has access to a farm or agricultural facilities.

Whether you are looking to enrich an existing science unit or introduce meaningful real-world contexts into your classroom, this workshop will provide practical strategies to inspire curiosity, build scientific thinking and help students better understand the vital role of food and fibre production in Australia's future.

Workshop Abstracts

Session 2

2.1 STEM OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Sarah Todd & Alex Lea, Coromandel Valley Primary School & Green Adelaide

This interactive workshop, presented by primary school teacher Sarah and Alex, Learning Partnerships Coordinator at Green Adelaide, will explore practical strategies for integrating citizen science and outdoor learning into science programs.

Drawing on classroom practice and environmental education experience, the presenters will demonstrate how authentic, place-based learning can enhance student engagement, scientific inquiry, and environmental stewardship while supporting the Australian Curriculum.

A key focus will be managing students in outdoor and non-classroom environmentsâ€"an area where many early career teachers (ECTs) may have less experience or confidence. Participants will gain practical strategies for planning, risk management, maintaining student engagement, managing behaviour, and responding to the challenges and opportunities of learning beyond the classroom.

The workshop will also share tips, common pitfalls, and lessons learned from delivering successful outdoor learning experiences.

Through practical examples and discussion, participants will discover how citizen science projects can provide meaningful contexts for developing scientific skills, connecting students with their local environment, and fostering curiosity and participation in real-world science.

Attendees will leave with practical ideas, resources, and increased confidence to implement engaging outdoor science learning in their own schools.

2.2 WELLBEING STRATEGIES FOR EARLY CAREER TEACHERS

Andrea Raptis, Westminster School

Teacher Wellbeing can be a key challenge for Early Career Teachers as they navigate workload, time pressures, administrative load and student/parent relationships whilst still developing confidence as a teacher. This open and collaborative workshop aims to support teachers to identify the key factors affecting their wellbeing and learn tips and tricks to prevent burnout. Through guided reflection, collaborative discussion, and realistic action planning, teachers will leave feeling empowered to build sustainable habits that support their wellbeing.

2.3 INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

Dr Pranay Sharma, Cardijn College

Driving Scientific Literacy through Science Demonstrations and STEM Learning

How can we encourage students to think, question, and act like scientists, rather than just complete experiments? This interactive workshop presents evidence-based strategies to transform routine practical activities into meaningful STEM experiences that build scientific literacy, curiosity, and confidence.

Guided by the Engagement Continuum by Dr Berry, participants will examine how learners progress through the stages of Investing, Participating, and Driving. The session starts by demonstrating how accessible, low-cost activities can spark curiosity and prompt students to ask questions and make predictions. As students participate, structured investigations and collaborative problem-solving deepen conceptual understanding and build confidence in scientific inquiry. In the Driving phase, students apply scientific knowledge to real-world challenges, demonstrating agency, innovation, and transferable STEM skills.

Dr Pranay Sharma will present classroom-tested, curriculum-aligned activities such as jelly cup models for infection control and cellular processes and an engineering challenge focused on designing sustainable homes. These hands-on, inquiry-based experiences connect key biological concepts with engineering, sustainability, and critical thinking.

Participants will learn efficient methods for organising equipment, ensuring safety, addressing common classroom challenges, and delivering impactful lessons that maximise student learning and reduce teacher workload.

Designed for both early-career and experienced educators, this practical session provides adaptable, low-cost strategies to enhance student engagement, scientific reasoning, and STEM skills. Participants will gain ready-to-use approaches that help students move from passive participation to confident investigation, innovation, and problem-solving, in line with the Australian Curriculum.

Workshop Abstracts

2.4 HOW TO EFFECTIVELY PREPARE STUDENTS FOR ASSESSMENTS

Daniel Rabbett, Sacred Heart College

Through this workshop, we will unpack a range of effective strategies to best prepare students for Summative tests and Exams across Science subjects at Stage 1 and Stage 2. The workshop will specifically explore these strategies though the lense of Physics, however all strategies are able to be applied to various Science subjects

Session 3

3.1 MAKING SCIENCE SPECIAL: PRACTICAL WISDOM

Erica Bolto, Kangaroo Island Community Education

What makes science a subject that young students genuinely look forward to, and how can early career teachers build strong foundations in their classrooms? Drawing from over a decade of hands-on classroom teaching, this session will share practical, classroom-tested strategies for teaching science effectively in the junior primary and primary setting.

Participants will explore a range of tried-and-true approaches, from how to work with the curriculum & students interests, to delivering engaging learning experiences. I will showcase adaptable lesson structures, planning tips, and resource ideas that foster scientific curiosity in diverse learners. Learn how to embed Science as a Human Endeavour and integrate STEM meaningfully â€"while maintaining high expectations and supportive relationships.

Practical advice will cover classroom management, how to grow your classroom resources on a limited budget, collaboration with colleagues and families, and leveraging digital tools and technologies for engagement.

Additionally, discover strategies to make science matter beyond the classroom, including excursions and connecting lessons to real-world phenomena, and making Science Week inspiring for young learners. Early career teachers will leave with concrete ideas, honest insights, and renewed confidence in their capacity to inspire students and establish science as a highlight of the school week.

Join me to create classrooms where every child believes science is for them, and where teachers are empowered to nurture the next generation of scientistsâ€"starting with strong foundations.

3.2 FACT OR CAP? USING INFLUENCERS TO TEACH SCIENTIFIC LITERACY.

Dina Matheson, Specialised Assistance School for Youth

Our young people are constantly bombarded with information from the world wide web, and it's becoming increasingly more difficult to determine fact from fiction. With so many influencers and celebrities pitching the next best thing in health, nutrition, exercise regimes etc, and so much of it conflicting with itself, how do we know what to trust and believe?

Using a range of advertising and promotional material, I share how I've been able to engage young people in developing their critical thinking skills and designing experiments to test the claims.

3.3 RELINQUISHING CONTROL TO INSPIRE CREATIVE DECONSTRUCT & DESIGN INVESTIGATIONS IN STAGE 1 & 2 SCIENCE SUBJECTS

Maylin Evanochko, Adelaide Botanic High School

Your mission should you choose to accept, is to find a testable hypothesis for which the outcome is truly uncertain. Too often, SACE Deconstruct and Design tasks can fall into the trap of leading students towards producing dull investigations where the outcomes & relationships are entirely predictable. It's not uncommon for students & teachers to play it safe, worried that unless the hypothesis is googleable they might not get the "right" results. Building strong science inquiry skills in our young people demands that we encourage them to venture boldly into the unknown and that as teachers we have the confidence to travel beside them even when we might not know all the answers. In this workshop, we will work through pedagogical strategies to encourage all students to think creatively during the deconstruct process, to develop multiple research questions and recognise that from these there could be infinitely many testable hypotheses for which the outcome is uncertain. From there, we'll explore the many ways that individual and small group investigations can be supported in a busy classroom to allow all students to experience the joy of thinking like a scientist & finding out something new.

Workshop Abstracts

3.4 MICROPLASTIC MESS: USING REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS TO DRIVE YEAR 7 SCIENCE INQUIRY

Swati Salvi, Seymour College

How can we move beyond teaching mixtures and separation as isolated concepts? In this practical session, participants will explore a Year 7 inquiry-based investigation where students design and test water filtration systems to address the growing problem of microplastic pollution. The investigation integrates Science Understanding, Science Inquiry Skills and Science as a Human Endeavour while promoting creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. Participants will experience a short hands-on design challenge, examine assessment approaches, and leave with adaptable resources that can be implemented immediately in their own classrooms.

Session 4

4.1 RUNNING PRACTICAL LESSONS EFFECTIVELY (MIDDLE SCHOOL FOCUS)

Jason Greenslade, Westminster School

Running a middle school classroom is challenging enough but what about when we ask them to do lab work?

This workshop is designed to give you some practical skills in running the laboratory and ensuring student safety and learning.

Preparation and execution of these lessons will be examined and plenty of resources given to help you on your way!

4.2 RE-IMAGINING STEM: CONNECTING LEARNING TO COUNTRY, CONTEXT AND CULTURE

Denise Rule and YASTSA Program Teacher, Department for Education

How do we move beyond 'adding context' and instead design STEM learning that is genuinely grounded in place, culture, and student experience?

This hands-on workshop explores practical approaches to integrate Aboriginal knowledges, local stories, and STEM learning together in meaningful classroom practice. Participants will engage with classroom ready strategies, including simple inquiry structures, lesson ideas, and teacher prompts that connect science, technology, and mathematics concepts to Country and real-world contexts.

Through interactive examples and discussion, the session highlights small but powerful shifts in planning that can enhance engagement, deepen scientific understanding, and support more inclusive learning environments. With a strong emphasis on application over theory, participants will leave with adaptable tools and clear starting points they can confidently implement to design more connected, and culturally responsive STEM learning experiences.

4.3 NAVIGATING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Jessie Evans, Kangaroo Island Community Education

This training provides beginning teachers with a foundational understanding of the adolescent learner, alongside practical strategies to enhance engagement, establish positive classroom cultures, and reduce challenging behaviours.

Key discussion points will include:

- The identity and cognitive makeup of the adolescent learner.
- Building relationships while maintaining high expectations.
- Unpacking engagement â€“ what it looks like, why it matters, and how to establish engagement norms, routines, and expectations.
- Understanding behaviour as communication.
- Strategies to keep your cool during turbulence.
- Strategies to redirect a lesson when needed.
- Using stored responses to reduce processing load and respond consistently.
- Supporting disengaged learners.

Participants will leave with practical, evidence-based strategies that can be implemented immediately within their classrooms to support engagement and behaviour outcomes.

Workshop Abstracts

4.4 VIDEO GAMES ARE MORE THAN JUST ENTERTAINMENT

Hilary Schubert-Jones, Future You

Video games are more than just entertainment – they're powerful tools for learning and student engagement. When learning feels relevant, students become more engaged and confident - and that confidence shapes their early attitudes towards STEM careers. During this presentation, you will explore how your primary-aged students can use real-world STEM role models in gamified learning modules to spark curiosity, build confidence and connect classroom learning to the real world. Join Future You and Arludo for this presentation to discover how gamified classroom modules can challenge stereotypes about who belongs in STEM while grounding learning in real-world, socially relevant contexts, equipping teachers to create vibrant, student-centred STEM learning experiences that captivate and motivate every learner.

Share-a-thon

An informal setting for multiple presenters to share innovative teaching ideas. Each presenter will share a strategy or tool during a 10-minute presentation and delegates will rotate around the room.

TEACHING YOUNGER STUDENTS TO ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

Cate Hepburn, IQRA College

Asking questions is an essential skill of scientific inquiry, yet it is a skill that needs to be explicitly taught and modelled. This Share-a-Thon session will explore practical strategies for helping students move beyond simple questions like "Do you like it?" to deeper scientific questions such as "How can scientists see the cells if there is skin?" Participants will leave with classroom-ready scaffolds and routines that can be used immediately to foster curiosity, strengthen inquiry skills and build confident young scientists.

MORE DETAILS TO COME!