



# Better Together: Using a Coaching Model to Support EBP Use with Students on the Autism Spectrum

Dr. Jessica Paynter, Griffith University, supported by the Autism Hub, Department of Education





## Our team

- **Dr Jessica Paynter**, Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer School of Applied Psychology, Griffith Institute for Educational Research,
- **A/Prof Marleen Westerveld**, Certified Practising Speech Pathologist and A/Prof, School of Health Sciences and Social Work, Griffith Institute for Educational Research,
- **Dr Kate Simpson**, Senior Lecturer, School of Education Professional Studies/Postgraduate Autism Studies,
- **Kate O'Leary**, Certified Practising Speech Pathologist and PhD Candidate, School of Health Sciences and Social Work,
- **A/Prof Dawn Adams**, School of Education and Professional Studies Deputy Director, Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE),
- **Dr Megan Clark**, Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre (ASELCC) and Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre La Trobe University,
- **A/Prof David Trembath**, Deputy Research Director The Hopkins Centre; Menzies Health Institute Queensland



# Students on the Autism Spectrum

---

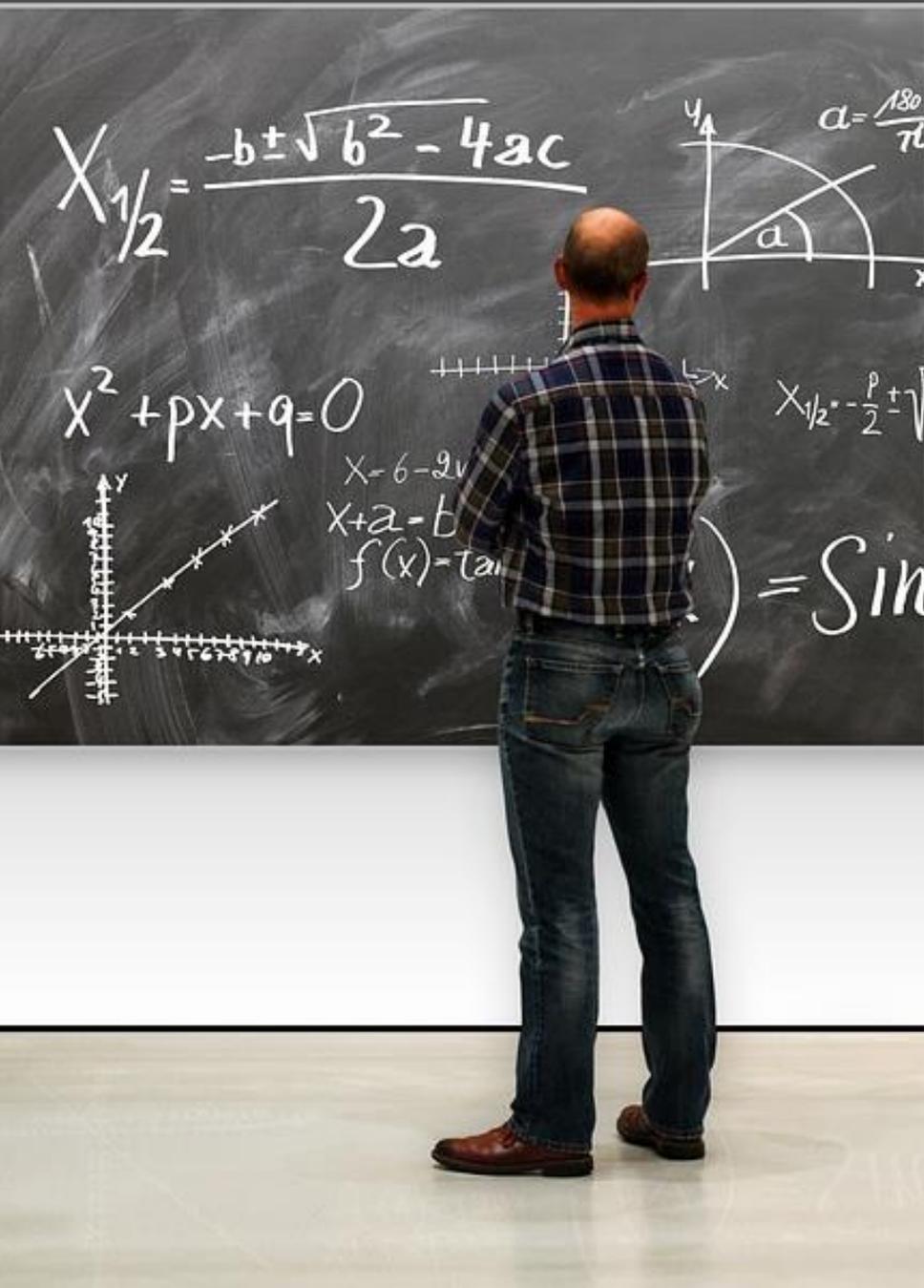
- 2-3% of school-age children are diagnosed with autism<sup>1,2</sup>
- 63% Australian children are educated in mainstream school settings<sup>1</sup>.
- Almost all (92.3%) experience challenges<sup>1</sup>
  - Special class or special school (40.8%)<sup>1</sup>
  - Social (59.8%)<sup>1</sup>
  - Communication (51.5%)<sup>1</sup>
  - Learning (55.3%)<sup>1</sup>
- Academic under-achievement common<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019); <sup>2</sup>Maenner et al. (2021); <sup>3</sup>Keen et al., 2015

# Evidence-based Practice

- Evidence-based practices- practices demonstrated in research to improve outcomes <sup>1</sup>.
- BUT, translating these from research to the real world can be challenging<sup>2</sup>
- Tailored supports, may help to bridge this gap<sup>3</sup>.
- Need for Australian research *with* teachers

<sup>1</sup>Paynter et al. (2018); <sup>2</sup>Brock et al. (2020); <sup>3</sup>Ruble et al. (2013)



# Aims

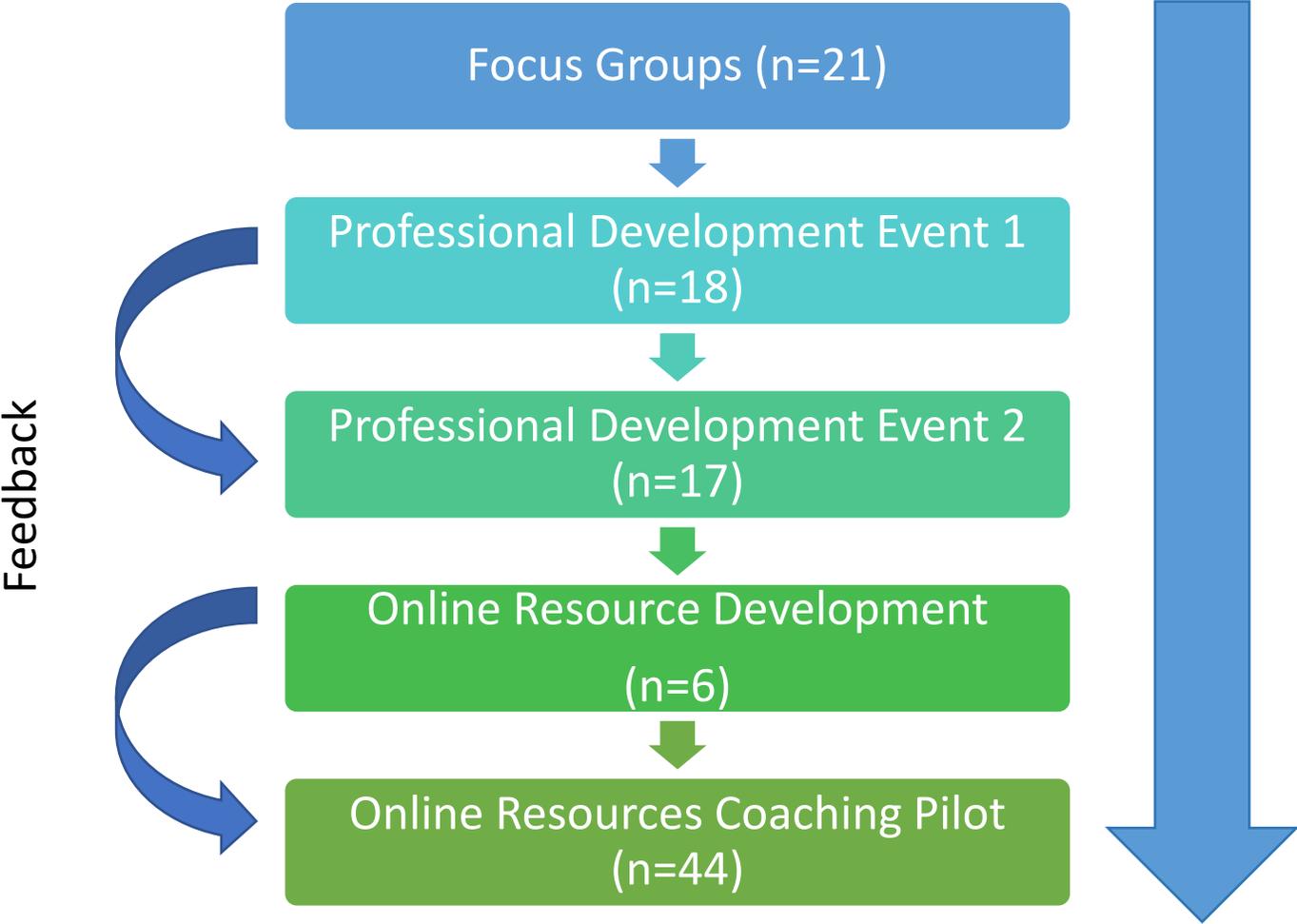
Work with teachers and the Autism Hub to create a model and approach to sharing knowledge that would be useful in the real world

Build capacity of Australian teachers to select and implement EBPs

Develop a model to share knowledge

Implement and evaluate a coaching model

# Overview of Research Stages



# Phase 1: Participants and Method

- 13 teachers
  - Classroom teachers
  - Inclusion support teacher
- 6 – 20 experience
  - Average = 6.3 years
- Schools = 3 state public schools in the greater Brisbane/Gold Coast area
- Focus groups- PL needs, topics, and feelings about coaching model

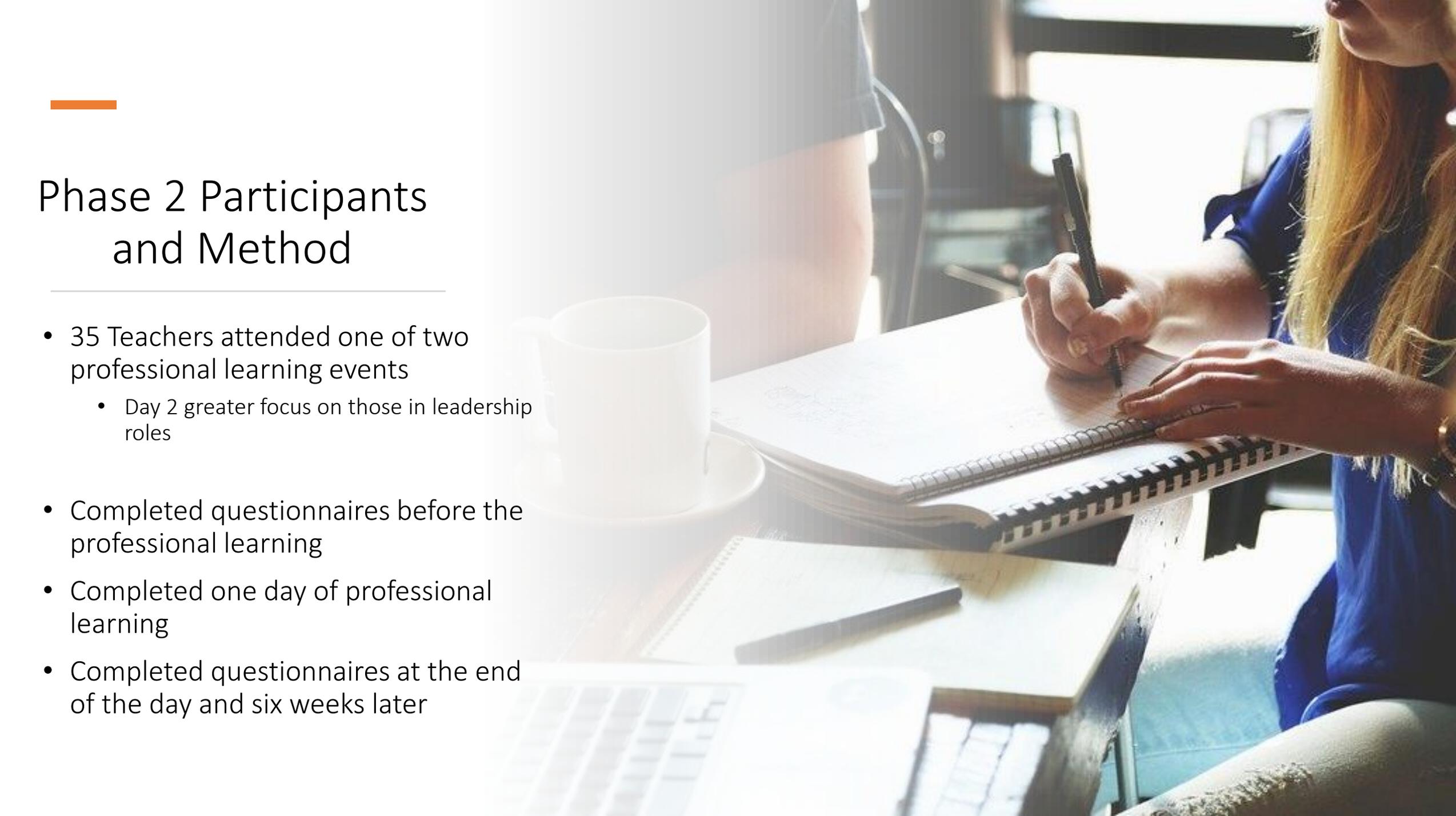


# Phase 1: Results

---

- More professional learning
- Individualisation and validation:
  - “Validate what I had already learned through experience”
- Topics:
  - Autism knowledge, skills and resources; behaviour and executive functioning; learning and differentiation; social-emotional and life skills; and expectations
- Coaching:
  - Coaching would be “great...because you don’t know what you don’t know”
  - Coaching could be “very powerful”





## Phase 2 Participants and Method

---

- 35 Teachers attended one of two professional learning events
  - Day 2 greater focus on those in leadership roles
- Completed questionnaires before the professional learning
- Completed one day of professional learning
- Completed questionnaires at the end of the day and six weeks later



## Phase 2: Professional Learning Events

---

Two events were held, with refinement of content between events based on participant feedback. Topics included:

- 1) Navigating practices,
- 2) Setting up for success,
- 3) Learning, literacy and differentiation,
- 4) Social-emotional challenges,
- 5) Coaching.

Combination of live presentation, short videos, and activities.

# Video example: Ask for Evidence



A photograph of a modern university building at night, illuminated by interior lights. The building has a glass facade and a red logo on the side. People are walking on a path in the foreground.

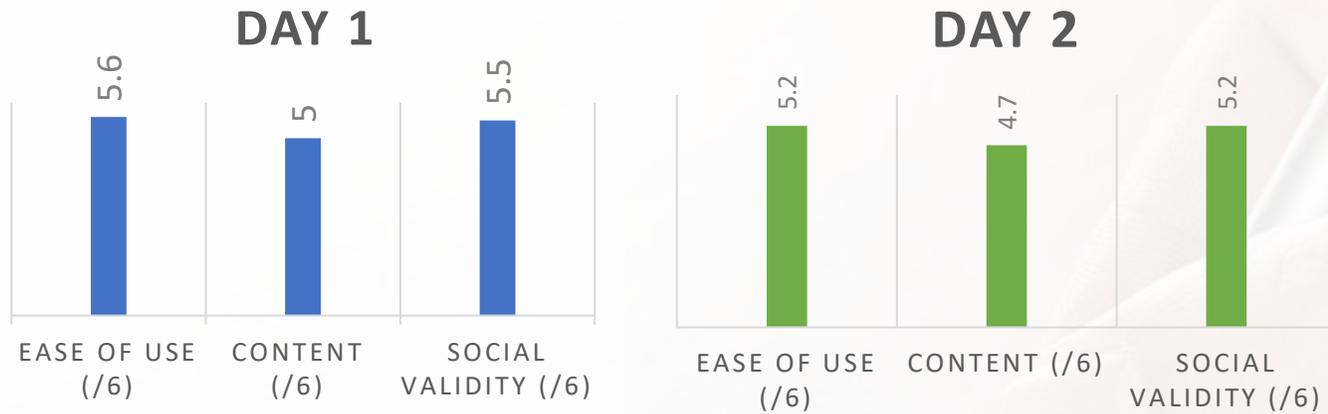
# Example Activity: Neuromotor integration therapy (fictional intervention)

- Your school has been approached to implement the Neuromotor Integration Therapy Approach.
- Training will be conducted by Dr Shannon Murphy who has written books on autism and often presents at conferences and parent workshops. He reports he has developed the approach based on his extensive clinical experience over twenty years.
- Dr Murphy claims that NITA can fix learning problems for children with autism, ADHD, and learning difficulties. The NITA website has stories from teachers who report positive outcomes at their schools.
- The intervention includes implementing a series of physical exercises throughout the school day to support “whole brain learning” and “neural integration” which Dr Murphy reports causes learning difficulties for these students. These can be completed with the whole class with “boosters” for individual students of up to 30 minutes each day 1:1.
- NITA is intended to be implemented for the whole class for at least six months. Training for each teacher will cost \$500 for a one-day workshop, the curriculum package costs \$5000, and ongoing training at \$300/hour is recommended monthly.

# Activity questions

<b>What is proposed?</b>	
What is involved in the practice? (What will you have to do?)	
How much will it cost?	
Does the practice fit with your knowledge of autism?	
How much time will it take?	
Is it a short-term or a long-term practice?	
Is the practice acceptable to you?	
<b>What is the Promise?</b>	
What are the benefits (results) you can expect to see?	
What are the risks?	
How long does it take to see results?	
How will you monitor results? How will you know if it is working?	
What training do you need? What qualifications?	
<b>What is the Proof?</b>	
Is there evidence the practice works for students with autism?	
Is the practice on the list of EBPs on the 2020 list? What about on Research Autism?	
Has the practice been given a "fair test"- are there any published studies looking at the effectiveness of this practice?	

# Phase 2: Feedback



- High social validity (useful and relevant)
- Day 1: Significant increases in confidence working with students on the spectrum and in providing peer coaching to other staff.
- Day 2: Significant improvements in self-efficacy and coaching investment.

# Phase 2: What could be done to improve the PD materials?

*I would love digital copies of the resources*



Digital copies of resources were emailed to participants and later included in our online resource.

*I would suggest that the matrix is unpacked a little more.*

An EBP Matrix Unpacked Document was developed which includes a "Who can administer" column, a description of the intervention and links to online modules.

Evidence-based practices, definitions, qualifications for use, and sources for further training.

NOTE: \*Support may be required from trained professionals to ensure that this EBP is implemented correctly

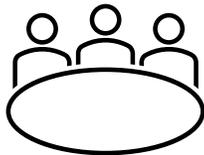
Evidence-based practice	Definition	Who can administer?	Description/Examples ( <i>adapted</i> from Steinbrenner et al., 2020)	Links/Resources
Antecedent-Based Interventions (ABI)	Arrangement of events or circumstances that happen before an activity/demand that increase the occurrence of a behaviour or lead to the reduction of the challenging /interfering behaviours.	Anyone*	Common ABI procedures include: 1) modifying educational activities, materials, or schedules, 2) incorporating learner choice into learner activities/materials, 3) preparing learners ahead of time for upcoming activities, 4) varying the format, level of difficulty, or order of instruction during educational activities, 5) enriching the environment to provide	AFIRM: <a href="https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/antecedent-based-intervention">https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/antecedent-based-intervention</a>  AIM: <a href="#">Autism Internet Modules   Login</a>

In developing the online resource, we ensured that all modules clearly explained how the information could be used in a coaching capacity.



*Some parts of the presentation may be useful for general class teachers.*

*I would enjoy and appreciate more time to allow for discussions.*

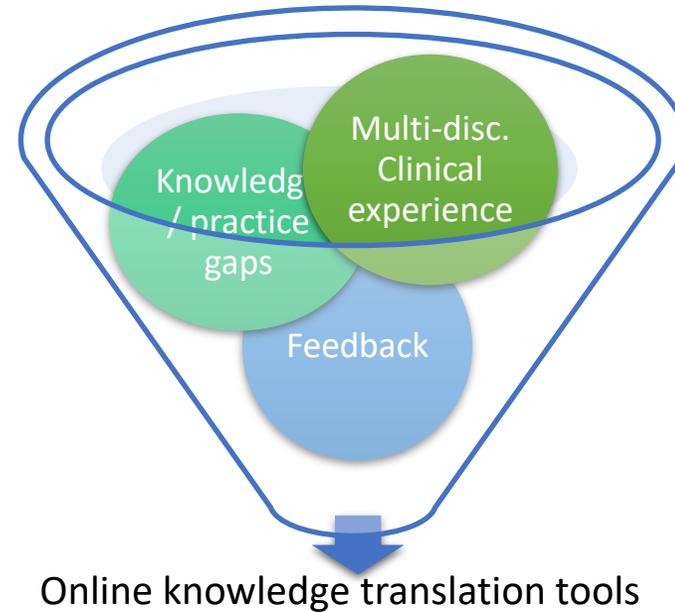


The phase 4 coaching model encourages regular discussions with teachers so that they understand and feel supported in using EBPs in their classroom.



# Phase 3: Online Resource Development

---



Online knowledge translation tools

- Videos
- Mini lectures
- Handouts/resources
- Activities

# Phase 4: Implementation in Schools

- Recruited four schools from Phase 3 to then share learnings with teachers at their schools
- Access to online materials for each school
- Could elect to use parts of our training and materials that were a fit for their school
- Training was provided in how to access the online content.

The screenshot displays the Microsoft OneNote interface. At the top, the title bar shows 'OneNote' and 'EBP in Autism Notebook'. Below this is a ribbon with tabs for 'File', 'Home', 'Insert', 'Draw', 'View', and 'Help'. The 'Home' tab is active, showing various text formatting options like bold, italic, underline, and color. A search bar and a 'Share' button are also visible. On the left side, there is a navigation pane with a search icon and a list of pages under the 'EBP in Autism Notebook' folder. The pages listed are: 'Introduction', 'EBP in Autism - Navigating Practi...', 'Autism - The Basics and Beyond', 'Setting Up for Success', 'Social-emotional', 'Learning and literacy', and 'Coaching'. The 'Introduction' page is selected and its content is previewed in the main area. The preview shows three images: a teacher interacting with students in a library, a young boy smiling outdoors, and a man writing on a laptop. Below the images, the title 'Introduction' is displayed, followed by the date and time 'Thursday, 10 June 2021 9:33 AM'. The main text begins with a 'Welcome!' heading and a paragraph: 'Welcome to *Better Together - Using a Coaching Model to Enhance Outcomes for Students with Autism*. These materials were developed as part of our research study *Gateway to Best Evidence for Students with Autism*, and have been refined based on prior participant feedback. This content is designed to be used as a starting point for...

# Phase 4: Participants

	Coaches	Teachers
Sample size:	4 (all F)	40 (38F)
Roles:	HOSES, acting HOSES, head of inclusion, head of student engagement.	Classroom teacher (n=36), Teacher Aide (n=4)
Years experience:	M = 20.8 (12-30)	M = 11.8 (2-30years)
Highest level of education:	Bachelor Degree (n=4)	Certificate (n=3), diploma (n=1), bachelor (n=23), post-graduate degree (n=10), graduate diploma (n=1)

## Week 1: Introduction

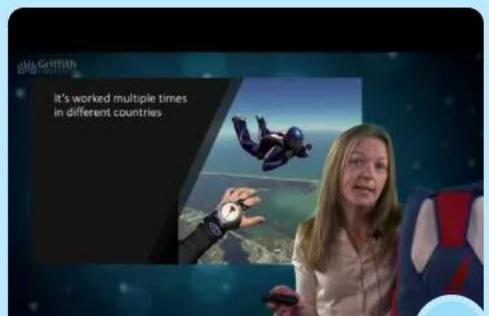
Have you completed the Survey?



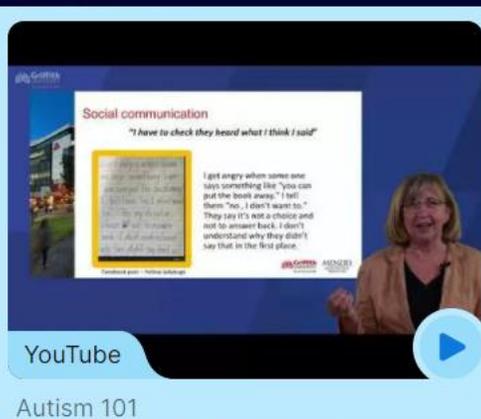
Better Together Ph4 Teacher Survey 1- the link above is the survey link for you to complete if you haven't already done

## Week 2: Evidence Based Practices

Parachute - ask for evidence video



## Week 3: The basics and beyond



## Week 4: Setting up for Success



## Week 5: Social-Emotional



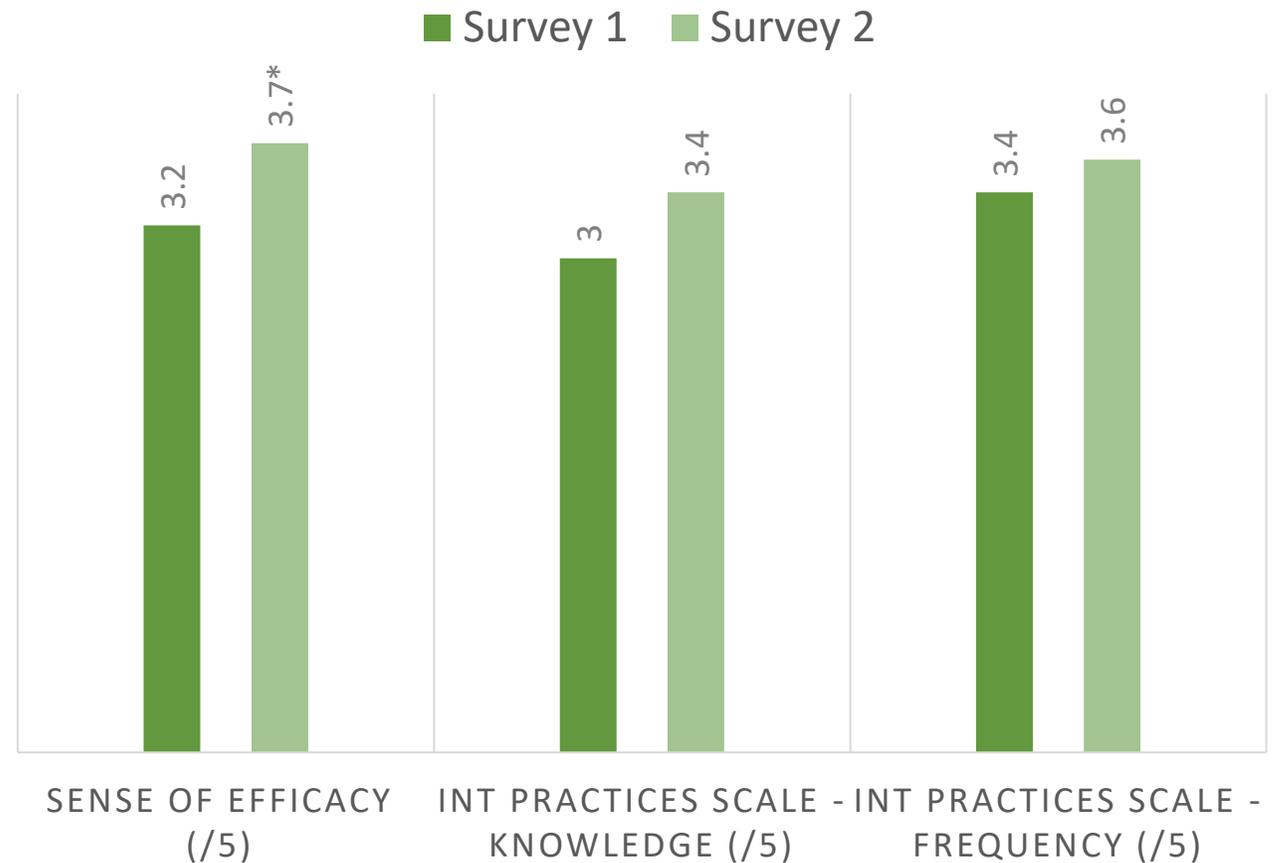
# How coaches used the resources

- Padlet and scavenger hunt activity
- Supported staff to complete an environmental audit with a "teaching buddy".
- School discussions of considering evidence-base of new practices and resources
- Reflection on viewing videos from the resource- new learning or what was reinforced

# Phase 4: Teacher Outcomes

Following coaching teachers showed increases in:

- Knowledge
- Intention to use EBPs
- Sense of efficacy in working with students on the spectrum (\* $p = .003$ )





# Feedback from teachers

---

- *In a school setting, this knowledge is vital and should be used as a PD at the beginning of a school year for all... this has really clarified and helped a lot of misunderstandings [about autism]. I wish I had this information when I studied at Uni. It was very comprehensive and helpful.*
- *The videos supported which evidence-based practices I would try in my classroom.*
- *We all enjoyed learning together and completing this project*
- *Term 3 and 4 was not ideal to start this program, perhaps Term 1 and Term 3 would have been better*
- *Content is not specific to students with Autism – all EBPs are applicable to all students and beneficial for all*

# Phase 4: Coach Feedback

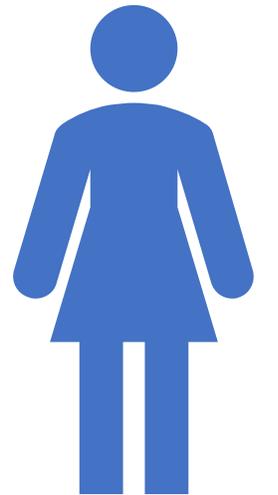
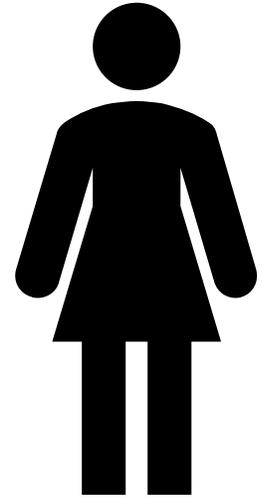
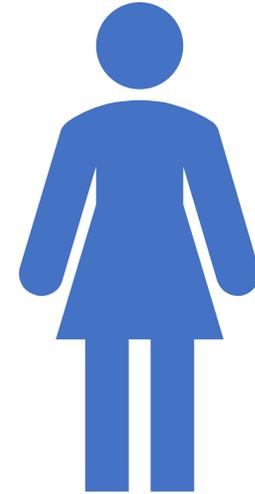
---

- Online materials supported them within their role (*Average* = 4.6/5)
- Time spent working with the teachers was effective and productive (*Average* = 5/6)
- Felt teachers found the information provided helpful (*Average* = 4.75/6)



# Phase 4: Coach Interview Feedback

- Materials:
  - *"10 [out of 10] ...it was easy to access, it was all relevant, it's all evidence based"*
- Future Plans:
  - *"I'd like to continue with the same model" and the coach reported teachers "were keen to continue"*
- Barriers:
  - *"I would say time...it's just it's all consuming ...the commitment to making sure that you're covering all the content"*

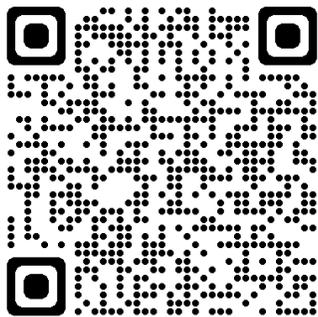




# Better Together

Using a Coaching Model to Enhance

## Next steps: Better Together: Online



- Created a website to share online with the broader education community
- Our website includes videos, activities, resources and links to other useful documents and online modules.
- Requiring short registration so we can keep track of who is using it
- Optional to provide feedback on the site so we can continue improving it

To access the registration survey, scan the QR code or go to:  
[https://is.gd/bettertogether\\_demosurvey](https://is.gd/bettertogether_demosurvey)

Or e-mail me: [j.paynter@griffith.edu.au](mailto:j.paynter@griffith.edu.au)



# Evidence-based Practice

This video outlines:

- What is evidence-based practice?
- Evidence-based practice in autism
- Giving practices a fair go and a fair test

You may find this video useful for determining whether practices have a suitable level of evidence.



## Activity



### Evaluating the "evidence"

Imagine that your school has been approached to implement the *Neuromotor Integration Therapy Approach*. Read through the attached intervention details and identify any further information you might require before making a decision. Use the questions provided to evaluate this intervention and determine whether it would be suitable for your school.

[Download here](#)



## Useful Links

All the resources and websites mentioned in this online training have been included below. For your convenience, we've also included some useful links to more general information on autism, either for yourself or to share with a parent following their child's autism diagnosis.

### Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL): Coaching Toolkit for Teachers

This toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to coaching, including phases of the coaching relationship, roles and responsibilities, and how to prepare and grow as a coach.

For more great resources from the AITSL, please see: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/>

[Open here](#)

### Autism CRC - Full Report

This report summarises the best available high-quality evidence about interventions for children on the autism spectrum aged up to 17 years.



# What did we learn

---

- Importance of targeting recruitment to audience
- Challenges of timing and some novel solutions
  - Padlet
  - Scavenger hunt
  - Value of short videos (5-15 minutes) for snack-sized professional learning
- Value of supporting access to materials and providing ongoing supports to set and evaluate goals
- Value of working collaboratively to create resources and materials that are useable and useful!



Any Questions?



## Acknowledgements

- This project was funded by the Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith Institute for Educational Research, and the Autism Centre of Excellence, and had ethical approval (Ref: 2018/963)
- We wish to thank the Queensland Department of Education Staff who gave their time to participate in this research and the Autism Hub (Queensland Department of Education) for their support.



# Contact us

Dr Jessica Paynter

07 5678 7058

[j.paynter@griffith.edu.au](mailto:j.paynter@griffith.edu.au)

 [@Jess\\_Paynter](https://twitter.com/Jess_Paynter)