



TLF Connects

Empowering Educators, Elevating Student Success
Executive Coaching & Professional Learning

Ghost Students? **Not Anymore.**



Attendance challenges often signal something deeper than missed days. In this featured blog, Ciaran Musumeci, Deputy principal, explores how the Triangle of Agency has helped her school move beyond compliance and create the conditions where students feel they belong, have a voice, and want to be present.

BALMORAL STATE HIGH SCHOOL

A JOURNEY TOWARD LEARNER AGENCY, BELONGING, AND INNOVATION

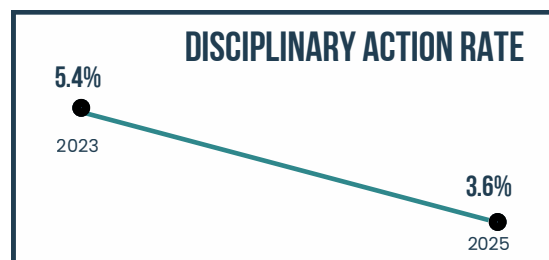
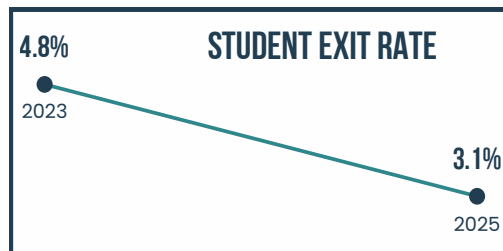


Since 2023, Balmoral State High School and The Learner First have partnered to drive a whole-school transformation toward learner agency, belonging, and authentic engagement.



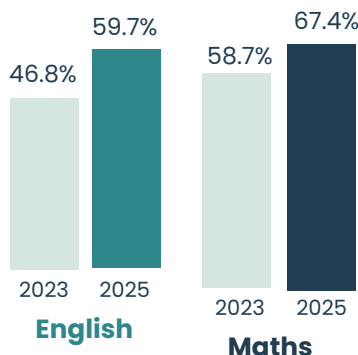
Timothy Barraud
Principal

“Agency of all learners is at the core of this work—not just student agency, but the agency of everyone.”



B+ ACHIEVEMENT GAINS

On track for Success Year 7–9



LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT

100%

executive, senior, and middle leader participation

14

Action Learning Exploration (ALE) inquiry projects planned and implemented aligned to the strategic plan.

AGENCY

BELONGING

INNOVATION

How Balmoral State High School and The Learner First partnered to transform learning culture from the inside out.

STUDENT VOICE

80%

of students identified themselves as **capable learners**

82%

of students agreed with the statement “I like learning at my school” (2026 school opinion survey)

Students

- attendance
- engagement
- standardized test scores



Staff

- Collaboration
- Confidence
- Coherence



Community

- Shared Language
- Visibility
- Communication



See what made the difference.
Read the full Impact Story.





From Assessment Tasks to Learning Tasks

Reclaiming Authentic Assessment



“If students succeed without improving from feedback...are we measuring learning or just performance?”

Authentic assessment asks us to answer that honestly. If we are serious about preparing learners, not just for exams, but for life, then we must redefine rigour.



Rigour is not:

- silence in an exam room
- sameness of output
- compliance with instructions



Rigour is:

- growth over time
- ownership of learning
- sustained thinking
- the ability to improve

In the blog, Director Chris Dench shares about shifting assessment tasks to learning tasks which is a fundamental move towards authentic mixed method assessment (AMMA) which is human, meaningful, and owned by students.

Are we preparing learners to succeed in school, or to thrive in life?



Joanne McEachen, founder of The Learner First, announces the release of her newest book, ***But Are They Good at Life? Why Education Must Measure What Matters***.

Designed as both a thought-provoking read and a reflective professional learning resource, *But Are They Good at Life?* challenges readers to rethink the assumptions that shape education and consider how belonging, contribution, responsibility, and achievement might be brought back into alignment.

Late October 2026

Amazon | Kindle | Paperback

www.TheLearnerFirst.com

FOLLOW US

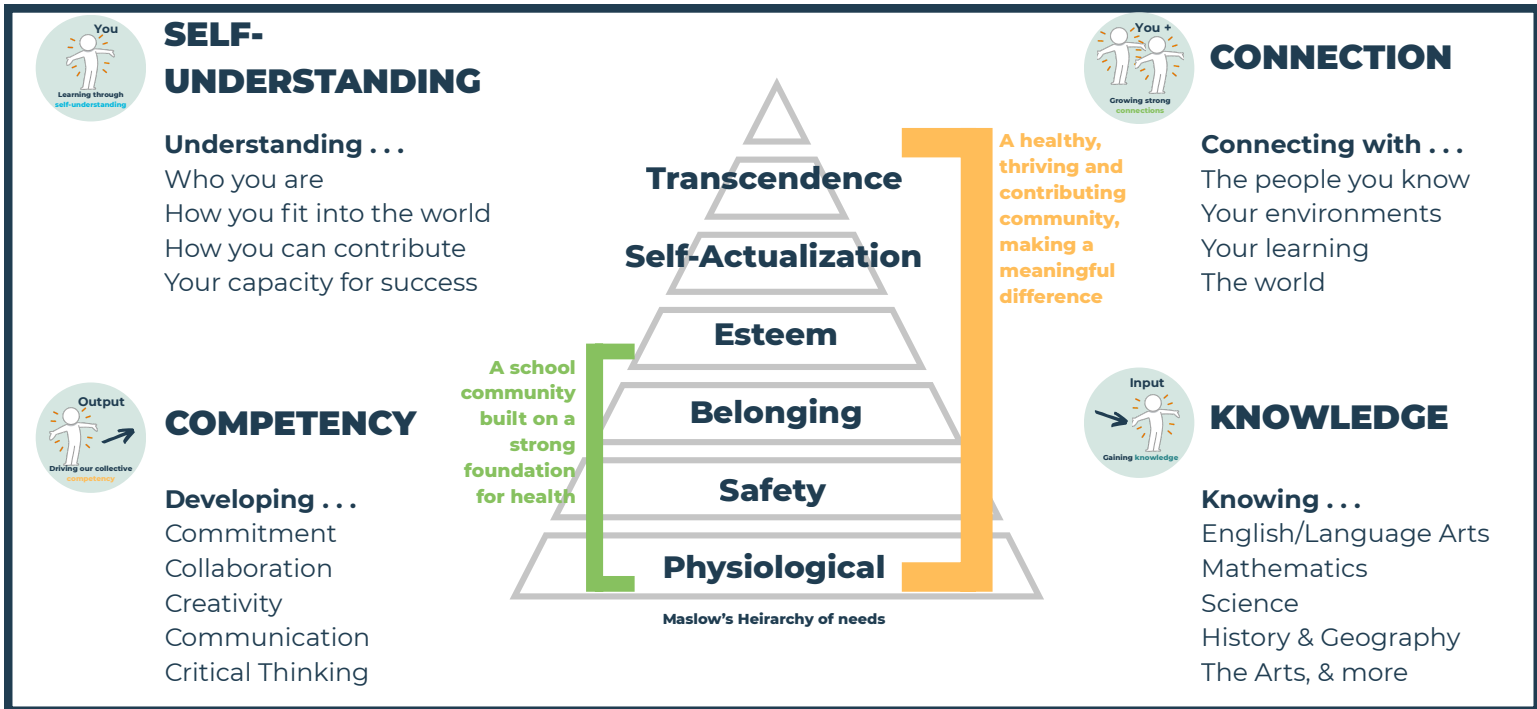


www.TheLearnerFirst.com



From Belonging to Agency

The Missing Piece of School Improvement



"When I look at Maslow's hierarchy today, I see more than a psychological theory. I see a powerful metaphor for school transformation. The lower levels remind us that safety, wellbeing, and belonging are essential foundations. Without them, meaningful learning is difficult to achieve. But the highest levels point toward something equally important: self-actualisation, contribution, and meaningful participation in the world."

Maree Nielsen, TLF Executive Director



Maree Nielsen
Executive Director, TLF

Congratulations!

2026 ACEL QUEENSLAND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

ENGAGE | MEASURE | EMPOWER | TRANSFORM



FREE RESOURCE!

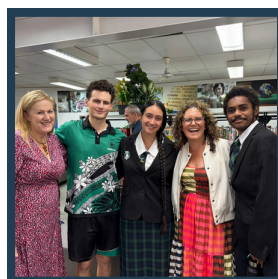


Building connections starts with truly getting to know your students and their families. Understanding each student individually helps create a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone feels they belong.

15 pages of practical ideas for building relationships for teachers, students, and families! Share at back to school nights, in parent/family newsletters, in teacher trainings/meetings, and more!

Lead with Purpose. Empower with Vision. Transform with Contribution.

Where purpose-driven leaders build coherence, amplify student voice, and foster thriving learning communities.



THE Learner First™

ENGAGE | MEASURE | EMPOWER | TRANSFORM

Reach Out Today
to Learn More!



www.TheLearnerFirst.com



info@thelearnerfirst.com