

Conference (Conference Session)

Nov 11 2025 | 10:25am - 10:30am

Leadership Conference Chaired by Jonathan Hughes-D'Aeth, Educational Consultant

Speakers:



[Jonathan Hughes-D'Aeth](#) | Educational Consultant

Nov 11 2025 | 10:30am - 10:50am

Opening speech: The future of education... begins here

Session Summary:

Dr. Amal Al-Qahtani's opening remarks consisted of five main points:

Pillar 1: Vision and Strategic Direction

- The Ministry of Education – UAE envisions empowering schools and educators through technology and artificial intelligence to create exceptional learning experiences.
- The school is redefined as a hub for innovation, creativity, and continuous learning, not just a place for teaching.

Pillar 2: Innovation and Artificial Intelligence in Education

- AI is a partner, not a replacement for teachers, enhancing data-driven personalization and learner support.
- Key initiatives highlighted:
 1. Empowering educators with AI competencies.
 2. Developing digital curricula aligned with innovation.
 3. Designing smart assessment systems responsive to learners' differences.
 4. Creating innovative learning environments that promote well-being and creativity.

Pillar 3: School Leadership as the Engine of Change

- Inspirational leadership is essential to turn vision into tangible school realities.
- Empowered leaders drive innovation, motivate teachers, and sustain meaningful educational transformation.

Pillar 4: The Student at the Core

- The learner remains the central focus of the educational process.
- The goal is to nurture critical thinkers and problem-solvers who can create opportunities and shape the future.

Pillar 5: Recommendations and Conclusion

- Encourages collaboration and knowledge exchange through international forums such as GESS.
- Concludes that the future of education begins with every idea that believes in change and every hand that helps build tomorrow.

Speakers:



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[Dr. Amal Al Qahtani](#) | Director of School Development and Support
Department - Ministry of Education UAE

Nov 11 2025 | 10:50am - 11:10am

Keynote speech by Dr. Wafi Dawood, CEO of the Strategic Development
Sector at the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA)

Speakers:



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[Dr. Wafi Dawood](#) | CEO - Strategic Development Sector at the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA)

Nov 11 2025 | 11:10am - 11:40am
UAE Skills Economy

Session Summary:

This session will take the form of a fireside chat exploring the skills economy and the current state of skills in the UAE. Drawing on research and data from the Massar Al Ghurair Program of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation, the discussion will examine emerging skills identified through labor market insights, what these trends mean for higher education institutions and employers, and the key priorities for upskilling youth to prepare them for a rapidly evolving job market. The conversation will also delve into the concept of the skills economy and the growing shift toward skills-based hiring.

Speakers:



[Mona Ghander](#) | VP-Partnerships and Programs - Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation



[Fiona McKenzie](#) | Head of Education - Carfax Education

Categories:

- Higher Education
- Leadership and Professional Development
- Secondary Education

Nov 11 2025 | 11:40am - 12pm

Fog to Focus: The Secret of Strategy That Works

Session Summary:

Strategy Isn't a Document. It's a Decision-Making Habit.

Why do most strategic plans gather dust within weeks?

Because they're seen as documents to complete, not living tools to guide

decision-making. This session is a practical, provocative exploration of how to lead your school out of fog and into focus with strategy that sticks. You'll leave with a framework that helps your team act with clarity, not confusion.

Speakers:



[Ewan McIntosh](#) | Managing Director - NoTosh

Categories:

- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 12pm - 12:20pm

The AI-driven R-evolution Is Happening Now

Session Summary:

AI is no longer a futuristic concept, it's here, transforming how we learn, work, and connect. In this session, we'll explore how Agentic AI and People Digital Twins are reshaping education and careers, making personalized learning, mentorship, and productivity available to everyone, anytime. From AI teachers and mentors to smart assistants and digital colleagues, discover real-world examples of how these technologies are already revolutionizing classrooms, organizations, and beyond.

Speakers:



• [Frank Furnari](#) | Vice President, Saudi Arabia – Napster Corp

Categories:

- AI and EdTech
- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 12:20pm - 12:40pm

Session Summary:

A more in-depth exploration of Emirati culture will be highly beneficial for educators and professionals, as it fosters a deeper understanding of local traditions, values, and social norms. Such cultural awareness not only enhances mutual respect and communication but also plays a vital role in creating effective educational environments that support learning, engagement, and collaboration.

Speakers:



[Noura Almarzooqi](#) | Cultural Speaker - Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Cultural Understanding

Nov 11 2025 | 12:40pm - 1pm

Why learning oracy skills is as important for school leaders as it is for students

Session Summary:

In this session, Dr Helen Wright will draw on her experience working with senior and middle leaders in schools across the world, to explore why school leaders at every level benefit from focusing on their own oracy skills. She will explain how research into our unconscious biases makes the case for adults to develop their oracy skills, and will share insights, based on psychometric processes, that demonstrate how school leaders can learn to communicate more effectively with one another.

Speakers:



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[Dr Helen Wright](#) | Director - Global Thought Leadership

Categories:

- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 1pm - 1:20pm

Panel Session: Dr Helen Wright Interview with Frank Furnari

Speakers:



[Dr Helen Wright](#) | Director - Global Thought Leadership



• [Frank Furnari](#) | Vice President, Saudi Arabia – Napster Corp

Categories:

- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 1:20pm - 1:40pm

Leading from the 'Ledge' ... Extreme Leadership in a new world order...

Session Summary:

The 'ask' of leadership today sometimes exceeds the boundaries of everything that most leaders know, have known, or have ever imagined. Perhaps responding to the wildest imaginings of a city designer or driven to think differently and immediately by the most extreme of circumstances, or propelled the adrenaline rush of exhilarating opportunities, here emerge the skills and responses that cannot be learned, where authentic leadership steps up and the greatest leadership training of all – 'learnership' takes

centre stage.

This presentation provides a 'walk through' of the impact of such experiences for leadership, testing the mettle of the most resilient leaders to drive catalytic change, retain humility and humanity in equal measure and approach leadership differently. This is 'Extreme Leadership' in action!

Speakers:



[Pam Mundy](#) | Director - Pam Mundy Associates

Categories:

- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 1:40pm - 2:25pm

Panel Session: Early Childhood Strategy - A Quantum Leap for Quality, A Game Changer for Living and Learning

Session Summary:

High quality Early Childhood learning and care is constantly referenced by forward-thinking leaders and Governments as the basis of all learning and the indicator of future life chances for children, society and the planet. This panel brings together a stellar representative group of innovative, dynamic and committed Early Childhood strategists, influential educators and regulatory leaders who will challenge the status quo and (in no uncertain terms!) ensure that delegates leave with the strong message that the Early Years decide that 'The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world'!

Speakers:



[Pam Mundy](#) | Director - Pam Mundy Associates



[Fiona Carter](#) | International Director - Wellington College International



[Anita Gleave](#) | Founder and CEO



• [Noora Alsaadi](#) | Director of Quality Assurance - Knowledge & Human Development Authority (KHDA)

Categories:

- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 2:25pm - 2:45pm

Empowering Early Childhood Innovation: Abu Dhabi's Role in Advancing EdTech Startups

Session Summary:

Abu Dhabi is positioning itself as a global hub for innovation in early childhood development, with government-led initiatives that bridge policy, technology, and impact. This session explores how the Emirate supports EdTech and early childhood startups to scale solutions that empower children, families, and communities. Highlighting the Anjal Z program,

Abdulla Almehsin will share how Abu Dhabi is fostering an ecosystem where entrepreneurs, policymakers, and educators collaborate to design future-ready environments for learning and play. The talk will showcase success stories, lessons learned, and the broader vision of how government leadership can catalyze meaningful change in education and child development across the MENA region and beyond.

Speakers:



[Abdulla Almehsin](#) | Trends and Innovations Specialist - Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

Categories:

- AI and EdTech
- Pre-school and Early Years

Nov 11 2025 | 2:55pm - 3:15pm

Disappearing Thoughts

Session Summary:

An exploration of the implications of MIT's report into the impact of using Artificial Intelligence on students' cognition.

Speakers:



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[Dr Neil Hopkin](#) | Director of Education - Fortes Education

Categories:

- AI and EdTech

Nov 11 2025 | 3:15pm - 3:35pm
The Human Edge in the Age of AI

Session Summary:

AI is everywhere and education is feeling the impact. From lesson planning to marking, the tools are impressive, but the real question is: what can't AI do? That is where the human edge comes in.

In this keynote, Olly Lewis will cut through the noise to show how schools can harness AI without losing sight of what really matters: empathy, creativity, connection, and the teacher's role as a guide. Drawing on real school experience and global trends, Olly will explore how AI can reduce workload, open doors for inclusion, and free teachers to focus on what only humans can do.

This is a session about balance, impact, and vision. In the age of AI, it is not the technology that defines learning, it is us.

Speakers:



[Olly Lewis](#) | Head of Secondary - Amity International School Abu Dhabi

Categories:

- AI and EdTech
- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 3:35pm - 3:55pm

The Data in the Shadows

Session Summary:

Matthew reinterprets 'assessment' as 'getting to know each student', and 'data' as all the fragments of their individual stories. In this talk, he will give a brief introduction to what he calls "Antidata", a pioneering new approach to data and assessment which intentionally seeks out the fragments which can so easily fall through the cracks and slip into the shadows. After all, without those often missing fragments, how can we ever hope fully to see,

hear and know our students, and to help them to belong?

Speakers:



• [Matthew Savage](#) | Director - The Mona Lisa Effect

Categories:

- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 3:55pm - 5pm

Panel Session: Leading Wellbeing and Belonging in Schools (in association with BSME)

Session Summary:

As a preview to, and to help inform, the BSME Wellbeing and Belonging Conference on 18 April 2026, Matthew Savage - international educational

consultant and Director of The Mona Lisa Effect® - will chair a panel of wellbeing senior leads from across the BSME network, to explore how best we can weave webs, and evolve ecosystems, of wellbeing and belonging in our schools.

Speakers:



[Matthew Savage](#) | Director - The Mona Lisa Effect



[Aarti Odhrani](#) | School Counsellor - NLCS Dubai



[Kathryn King](#) | Vice Principal - GEMS Metropole School Motor City



[Rhys Allen](#) | Year 10 Student - Royal Grammar School Guildford Dubai



• [Sheridan Teasel](#) | Head of Secondary - Dubai British School Emirates Hills



• [Leisa Grace Wilson](#) | Editorial Director - Teach Middle East

Categories:

- Wellbeing and Mental Health