

# Conference (Conference Session)

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

Less Preparation, More Impact!

## **Session Summary:**

Join me at GESS Dubai for a practical, research-driven session on how expert planning can save you time while enhancing student learning. We'll explore the power of pre-planning to streamline workload and the role of live, responsive teaching in adapting to students' needs in real time.

Let's move away from excessive lesson planning and shift towards efficient, high-impact strategies that boost both teacher wellbeing and student outcomes.

## **Speakers:**



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[Sarah Towlson](#) | Assistant Head: Teaching & Learning - Dubai British School Jumeirah Park

**Categories:**

- Leadership and Professional Development
- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 10:50am - 11:25am

Beyond Awareness: Building Truly Inclusive Classrooms for Autistic Students in the UAE and Beyond

**Session Summary:**

Despite increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), achieving true inclusion in educational settings remains a challenge. This talk explores strategies for educators to create genuinely inclusive classrooms for autistic students. It emphasizes the significance of understanding inclusion,

designing autism friendly environments, leadership roles, and future directions in autism education.

**Speakers:**



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[Dr. Emanuel Vincent](#) | PreK-12 School Principal - Pinkgrape Consulting (PGC)

**Categories:**

- Special Education Needs (SEN)

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

Why Safeguarding has to come first in schools

**Session Summary:**

Darren's presentation will be based on global research showing the vital role that safeguarding plays as the priority cornerstone of a school's culture. The presentation, entitled "Why Safeguarding Must Come First in Schools", looks at how as humans, both children and adults have to feel a sense of safety, security, connection and love within their schools in order to achieve their best possible educational outcomes. This approach puts safeguarding before academics, with the research showing this must occur for a school to have genuine quality outcomes. The presentation will also show the direct effect that staff well-being has on children's well-being and the impact that this can have on their overall educational experience. Darren will also show the work that Maarif Education is doing to forge new territory in the area of Safeguarding across its portfolio of schools within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

**Speakers:**



[Darren Goodall MBA](#) | Group Director of Safeguarding - Maarif Education

**Categories:**

- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 11:50am - 12:10pm

Global Perspectives on Wellbeing: What's Working in International Schools

**Session Summary:**

With wellbeing now central to the student experience and staff satisfaction in international education, learn how schools are responding, and what's proving effective? In this session, Sami Yosef, will be Drawing on exclusive intelligence from schools around the world, the session will explore how schools are embedding wellbeing into their culture, what strategies are being prioritised for both students and staff, and the challenges leaders are facing. The presentation will offer practical insights to help school leaders and educators shape meaningful and sustainable wellbeing provision in their own contexts. sharing key findings from ISC Research's latest white paper on wellbeing in international schools, published in September 2025.

**Speakers:**



• [Sami Yosef](#) | Head of Global Research - ISC Research

**Categories:**

- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 12:10pm - 12:30pm

Classroom Without Walls: Learning from the UAE's Wild Side

**Session Summary:**

From the rugged peaks of the Hajar Mountains to the quiet resilience of the desert ghaf tree, the UAE is alive with lessons waiting to be discovered. This talk explores how nature itself becomes the most powerful classroom - boosting wellbeing, sparking creativity, and cultivating environmental stewardship. We'll highlight remarkable species and ecosystems unique to the UAE and share practical ways teachers can harness outdoor learning, whether on campus or in the wild, with simple tips on safety and risk



management. It's about turning every encounter with nature into an opportunity to learn, reflect, and care.

**Speakers:**



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[Dean Riley](#) | General Manager - Absolute Adventure Education

**Categories:**

- Sustainability

Nov 11 2025 | 12:30pm - 12:50pm

The Inconvenient Truth: What Education is missing about Inclusion.

**Session Summary:**

Based on cutting-edge research and practical application, there's a missing piece in many educational strategies: a deep, actionable understanding of

how diverse minds learn and thrive. This workshop is designed to bridge that gap, empowering school owners and leaders to cultivate environments where authentic belonging and academic achievement flourish for all. In this highly interactive session, you'll:

- Discover the profound "why" behind moving beyond surface-level inclusion to truly embrace cognitive diversity, ensuring no student is left behind.
- Gain unprecedented insight by experiencing the educational journey through the eyes of students, teachers, and parents, highlighting areas for transformative change.
- Develop a clear, executable roadmap to integrate practices that will elevate your institution far beyond the requirements of 'Education 2030' and 'School for All.'

Stop settling for good enough. Ignite a new era of genuine inclusion at your school.

**Speakers:**





[Shona O'Callaghan](#) | CEO and Founder - Empowering Creative Minds

**Categories:**

- Special Education Needs (SEN)
- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 1pm - 1:20pm

From 'I Can't' to 'I Can': Empowering Young Minds with Marisa Peer

**Session Summary:**

Join world-renowned therapist Marisa Peer as she shares how the "I Can't to I Can" Schools 5-Day Challenge is transforming children's mental well-being. With one in seven young people struggling with anxiety, stress, and self-doubt, this program equips students with the tools to build confidence, resilience, and a powerful inner voice.

Following its incredible success in several Dubai schools, Marisa is now developing this initiative into a year-long program to create lasting change in children's lives. Discover how schools are already seeing remarkable results and how this groundbreaking approach is helping young minds take control of their emotions, overcome anxiety, and unlock their full potential.

**Speakers:**



• [Marisa Peer](#) | Founder of RTT - Always Enough LLC

**Categories:**

- Wellbeing and Mental Health

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

The Impact on Student learning of Design Thinking approach in Project based learning to solve human problems

## **Session Summary:**

In today's world, preparing students as problem-solvers is essential. This session explores the impact of Design Thinking in Project-Based Learning (PBL) and its role in fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world application.

As Head of Curriculum and Assessment at a K-12 American school in Sharjah, I have seen how integrating Design Thinking transforms student engagement. In my school, Grade 6, students design a sustainable canteen, applying area and volume concepts to minimize waste. In Grade 7, they use percentages and ratios to analyze real-world data and propose waste reduction solutions. Grade 11 students apply probability concepts to create fair, engaging games for a school fair.

This session offers practical strategies to integrate PBL in education, equipping students with future-ready skills to tackle real-world challenges through innovation and creativity.

## **Speakers:**



[Vandana Agrawal](#) | Senior Leader Sama - American Private School

**Categories:**

- Sustainability

Nov 11 2025 | 1:40pm - 2pm  
Mindful Actions

**Session Summary:**



This session invites you to pause, breathe, and explore the profound impact of mindful actions in our everyday lives. In a fast-paced world filled with distractions, we often operate on autopilot, neglecting the importance of mental well-being and inner balance. Together, we will reflect on how conscious choices whether in our thoughts, words, or daily habits can help us cultivate clarity, resilience, and peace of mind.

Through practical insights, interactive reflections, and simple yet powerful techniques, you will learn how to bring mindfulness into your routine and transform small actions into meaningful steps toward a more grounded and fulfilling life. By the end of the session, you will walk away with tools and practices that empower you to care for your mental well-being, embrace presence, and live with greater awareness, compassion, and purpose.

**Speakers:**

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[Hagop Dertavitian](#) | Project Manager - Emirates Literature Foundation



**Categories:**

- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 2pm - 2:20pm

A Local Approach to Sustainable Education

**Session Summary:**

As the founder of the Bahrain Sustainable Schools Partnership and the Bahrain Eco-Summit, I want to look at how these ventures have worked to bring schools together and collaborate on sustainable projects that impact our small island of Bahrain. Is this local, collaborative approach more sustainable and impactful than teaching and trying to solve the global issues that we often discuss in classes?

**Speakers:**

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**Categories:**

- Sustainability

Nov 11 2025 | 2:20pm - 2:50pm

The Power of Positivity

**Session Summary:**

This workshop explores how positivity and high expectations can transform outcomes for students with SEND. With an insightful look at research, strategies will be offered to enhance your school's learning and teaching ethos to ensure challenge and success for all students.

**Speakers:**



[Wendy Harris](#) | Director of Inclusion - Wellington and BritishIndependent  
Cluster of schools, WIS Assistant Headteacher GEMS Wellington  
International School

**Categories:**

- Special Education Needs (SEN)
- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 2:50pm - 3:10pm  
Storytelling for Impact in Education

**Session Summary:**

This talk explores how storytelling can be a powerful tool to inspire, engage, and create lasting impact in education. Through real-life examples and practical insights Saher shares how educators and leaders can use stories to connect with students on a deeper level, build empathy, and drive meaningful learning experiences that go beyond the classroom.

**Speakers:**



[Saher Salim](#) | Saher Salim - LEADERSHIP & TRANSFORMATION COACH , SOUL SPEAK

Nov 11 2025 | 3:10pm - 3:30pm

From Hives to Hearts: The Terra Pollinators initiative

### **Session Summary:**

This presentation highlights the transformative power of pollinators in inspiring environmental awareness, education, and collective action. the session explores how the Terra Pollinators Program is shaping a new generation of eco-conscious youth across the UAE.

Through hands-on learning experiences, beekeeping workshops, and creative environmental education, the programs connect children, educators, and communities to the vital role of bees in sustaining biodiversity and food security.

“From Hives to Hearts” celebrates the synergy between science, sustainability, and empathy, showing how one small creature can spark big change. By bringing bees into classrooms and hearts, this initiative nurtures environmental stewardship, supports local biodiversity, and strengthens the human connection with nature.

**Speakers:**



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[Dr. Meriem Hammal](#) | Pollinator Manager - Terra Expo City

**Categories:**

- Higher Education
- Pre-school and Early Years
- Primary Education
- Secondary Education
- Sustainability
- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 3:30pm - 3:50pm

Conscious Discipline: Redesigning School Culture Adult-First, Child-Second

### **Session Summary:**

School leaders often search for the next program or curriculum to transform behavior and improve outcomes. Yet true cultural transformation does not come from adding another initiative — it begins with the adults themselves. Conscious Discipline, created by Dr. Becky Bailey, is a research-based, adult-first framework that integrates social-emotional learning (SEL), executive functions of the brain, and emotional intelligence into daily practice.

As a pioneer Conscious Discipline school, Makers Learning School International Riyadh demonstrates how leadership grounded in self-regulation and connection reshapes culture from the inside out. This session will show how Conscious Discipline moves beyond classroom management to a transformative leadership journey — one that empowers adults to rewire responses, strengthen relationships, and model the very skills we want our students to master.

Designed for both school leaders and teachers, this session offers practical insights into how shifting adult mindsets unlocks student resilience, empathy, and responsibility. By prioritizing adult-first practices, schools can cultivate cultures where academic success grows from emotional safety and connection.

### **Speakers:**





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[Tania Al Jaroudy](#) | Director of Innovation - Makers Learning School International

**Categories:**

- Leadership and Professional Development

Nov 11 2025 | 4pm - 4:20pm

Precision Teaching and Direct Instruction: A Powerful Alternative Curriculum to Help with Learning Difficulties

**Session Summary:**

Precision Teaching (PT) and Direct Instruction (DI) are two powerful instructional methodologies designed to address learning difficulties. They can be combined effectively to enhance educational outcomes. Research shows that integrating PT with DI can maximize learning outcomes, particularly in reading and other foundational skills. Techniques such as



frequency-building interventions and analysis of components can enhance instructional effectiveness. Teachers can utilize PT techniques within DI frameworks to create a dynamic learning environment that adapts to student needs. Overall, Precision Teaching and Direct Instruction present a compelling alternative curriculum for educators aiming to support students with learning difficulties. Their structured approaches and focus on measurable outcomes make them valuable tools in modern education.

**Speakers:**



[Carrie Green](#) | Educational Director - Thriving Souls

**Categories:**

- Special Education Needs (SEN)
- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 4:20pm - 4:40pm

## Walking the Line: Between a Passionate Mother, Inclusion Advocate, and a Well-Meaning Educator

### **Session Summary:**

This talk will be mostly around the my personal journey of navigating the education system as teacher and a mother with a child with ASD and an advocate for inclusive education. I will explore the unique challenges and the dual roles and responsibilities of working with the system as teacher while also advocating for my child with ASD and other neurodiverse children like him.

Through honest reflection, from real life experience. I'll speak about the moments of frustration many parents feel when faced with the limitations. Even when well-meaning intentions are there there is some areas of disconnect to address. I will address how being an educator gives me a unique insight to understanding the system from within and how this perspective has shaped the way I support, speak up and push for better practices.

I will share my humble top tips which is drawn from both roles of a parent and an educator that have helped me to advocate and teach while most importantly keeping the children at the center of it all.

This talk will be ideal for anyone who is interested in the power of a different perspective how personal experience can inform and transform professional practice.

### **Speakers:**



• [Shahad Obaid](#) | Assistant Head - Student Experience and Progress (Primary) - Beech Hall School Riyadh

**Categories:**

- Special Education Needs (SEN)
- Wellbeing and Mental Health

Nov 11 2025 | 4:40pm - 5pm

Soul Speak - Storytelling for Conscious Leadership in Education

**Session Summary:**

Storytelling is more than communication today, it is a tool for cultivating conscious leadership in education. SOUL SPEAK empowers educators, thought leaders, and changemakers to own their voice, speak with empathy, and lead with conscious awareness. Through a combination of storytelling techniques, media immersion, and leadership principles, participants learn to

communicate authentically, foster engagement, and inspire purposeful action to create impact in the education industry. Guided by Saher Salim's SOUL framework ; Self-Discovery, Ownership, Unlocking Voice, and Leading with Soul, this interactive session will equip participants ed to lead with empathy, communicate consciously, and make meaningful connections within their and communities. Most importantly, they will be inspired to step into their own story, share it boldly, and take purposeful action, leaving a lasting impact on their teams and communities thus shaping a culture of conscious leadership and authentic expression in education.

### **Speakers:**



[Saher Salim](#) | Saher Salim - LEADERSHIP & TRANSFORMATION COACH , SOUL SPEAK

### **Categories:**

- Leadership and Professional Development
- Wellbeing and Mental Health