

HAS YOUR SCHOOL GOT THE BUZZ?

TRACEY EZARD



THE BUZZ



Learning.

Growth.

Curiosity.

What's The

Stretch.

Transform.

Connect.



The Buzz is that unmistakable energy you find in a culture that's built on collaboration, trust and learning.

The Buzz creates an exciting place to work, one with a thriving learning zone. The sense of purpose is palpable, as is the willingness to find new ways of transforming the work.

Buzz?



At its very core of **The Buzz** is the impact it has on students. They thrive surrounded by teachers who are focused on making a difference for them and their learning.

The Buzz creates cultures where educators learn and grow together, gaining momentum and collective impact.

Why The Buzz?

MOVING FROM A CULTURE OF NICE

After a few years of education continuing through global uncertainty and shutdown, many leaders are grappling with balancing cultures of safety and challenge, often facing resistance and fragility within professional settings. There is substantial goodwill in schools, but harnessing and directing it towards meaningful shift is the gamechanger many education settings are seeking.

SHAKING THE STATUS QUO

Education is in a state of major dynamic shift as we respond to the increasing complex needs of students and the evolution of technology. Many schools are stuck in complacency, adhering to a compliance mindset rather than embracing a culture of initiative and innovation. It requires bold steps to inspire a shift towards dynamic, forward-thinking practices, through leaders and educators collaborating to disrupt this cycle of repeating rather than evolving.



By Tracey Ezard

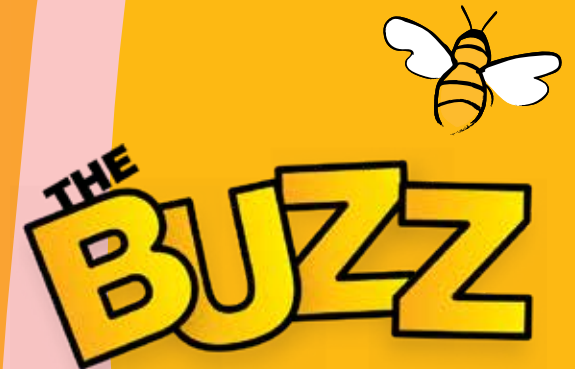
Why The Buzz?

DUSTING OFF FRAGILITY

In times of challenge, fragility in professional culture can stifle growth. To overcome this, schools that foster an environment where courage and continuous learning are at the forefront. Leaders must boldly challenge the status quo, pushing through resistance to embrace change and learning. It's about transforming fear of failure into opportunities for growth—encouraging staff to step out of their comfort zones and into the learning zone. The future of education depends on resilient cultures where courage is celebrated, and learning is an ever-present priority.

BALANCING SAFETY AND STRETCH

Finding the equilibrium between safety and growth is crucial for a thriving professional culture. Psychological safety should be the bedrock where vulnerability and courage coexist. Achieving this requires intentional actions to build trust and connection at every level—among leadership, colleagues, and teams. This is not just an aspiration but a necessary foundation for a resilient, high-performing environment. Schools that excel in this balance cultivate a vibrant culture where well-being, collaboration, and professional learning intersect, enabling staff to thrive and students to benefit.



A shift in the staffroom...

... a shift in the classroom...

From Leaners to Learners

It can be easy to LEAN on the status quo. It's comfortable, familiar and safe. Being in a LEARNER mindset pushes against this culture of nice and moves it to a culture of growth. As leaders, our own learning mindset creates a culture of improvement, curiosity and adaptability. We can shift quickly along the continuum from LEARNING to LEARNING depending on the context and our mindset. It is never an either/or situation, it's a continuum, a continual journey.

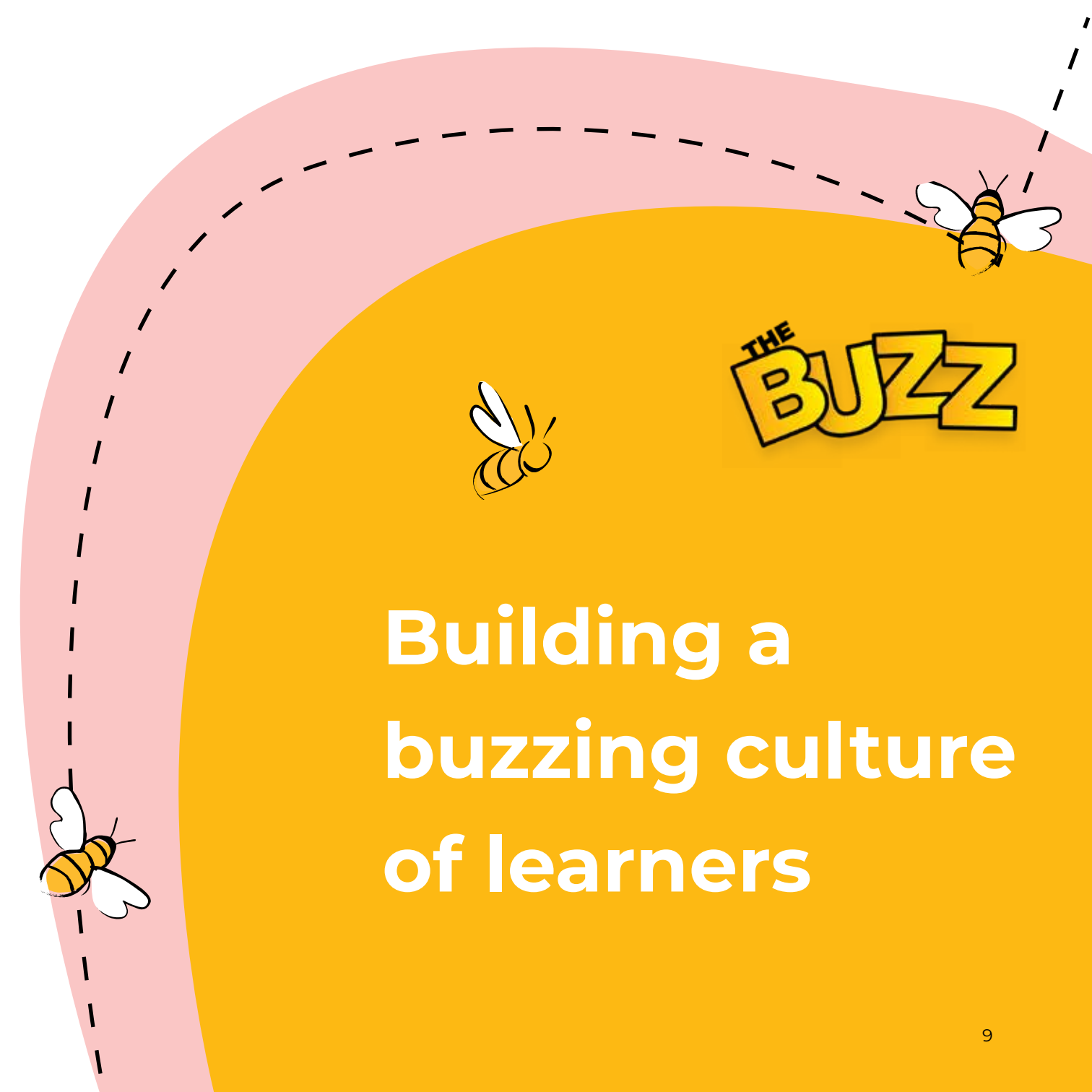
LEANERS:

- Prop themselves up against the comfort zone and use it as an excuse not to challenge the status quo
- Dismiss or squash new thinking through cynical remarks, ridicule or boredom
- Rely on others to make choices and decisions for them
- DENY, BLAME and JUSTIFY – a lot
- See robust professional debate as a personal attack on their position
- Turn up to meetings without having done the work required and rely on the hard work and good will of others
- Rely on others to seek out new and up to date information and have it fed to them
- Lean on the way they have always done it to get through

- COMFORT ZONE
- SHARING IDEAS
- DECISION MAKING
- FEED-BACK
- PROFESSIONAL DEBATE
- ACTION
- THINKING
- MINDSET

LEARNERS:

- Use the comfort zone as a strong foundation, then springboard to further growth
- Listen to new perspectives with curiosity and interest
- Make courageous and strategic decisions based on the head and the heart
- Take responsibility, have accountability and see feedback as opportunity for growth
- See robust professional debate objectively, and as a critical role of team members
- Lead action vital for growth and momentum
- Are always on the look out for new research, thinking and perspectives
- Are agile and flexible, eager to learn and experiment





**Individual growth
mindset is good.
Collective growth
mindset is better.**

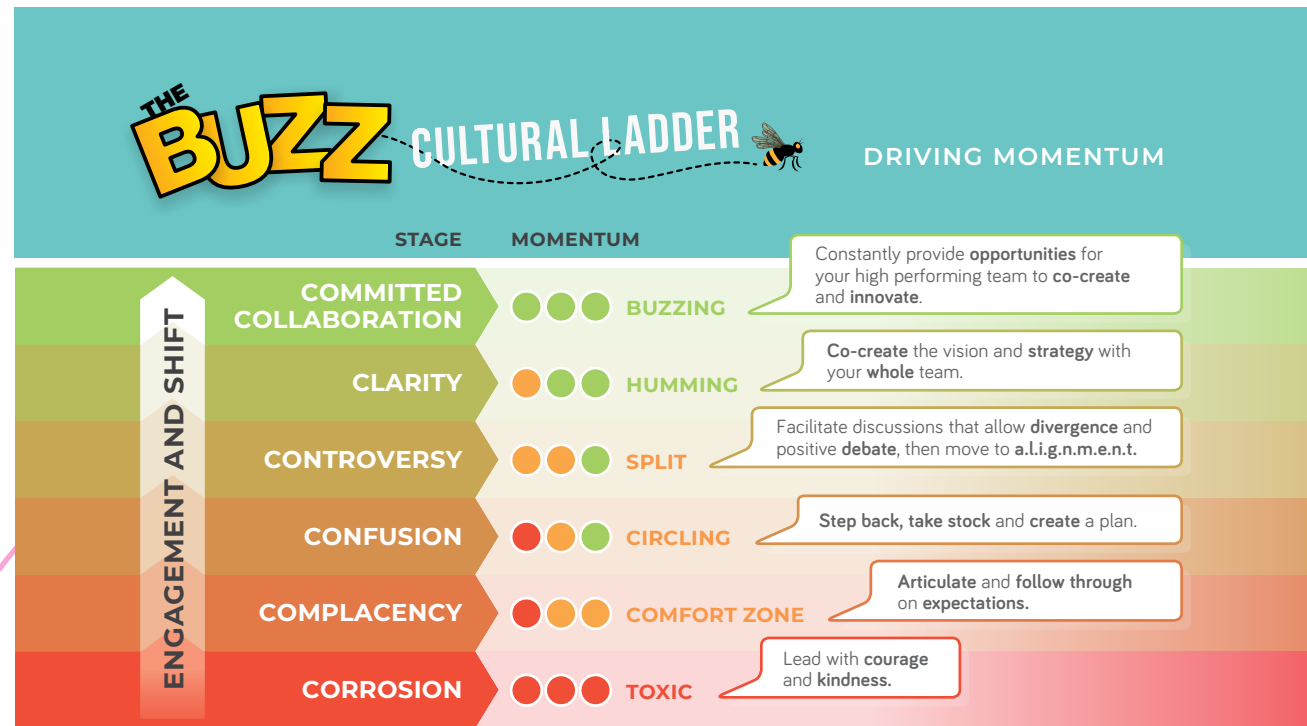
Where is your professional culture sitting right now?

The Buzz Diagnostic has been undertaken by over 15000 educators and support staff over the last six years, giving great insights into cultural strength and areas of development, as well as giving benchmarks for each school.

When undertaken by the professionals in your school, The Buzz Diagnostic gives you insight into how they perceive the professional culture. Individual staff members assess their personal contribution to The Buzz and receive a personal report. Their perception of the school and the work of the collective is aggregated with others into the whole school report.



Where does your school sit on the Buzz Cultural Ladder?



The Buzz Diagnostic provides your school with a clear indication of where your staff see the school's culture. It also provides a benchmark against over 550 schools and 15000 educators. (see page 24 for more information)

1. Committed Collaboration: The Buzz: At the highest level, teams are fully aligned and work together effortlessly. There's a strong culture of shared learning and innovation, with high internal accountability. The school is a dynamic and thriving environment where both staff and students excel. There is intellectual rigour and high levels of emotional intelligence.

2. Clarity: Schools at this stage have a clear direction and a shared sense of purpose. Teams collaborate effectively, and there's a growing optimism and momentum for the future, driving continuous improvement. Educators feel both safety and stretch, led by a cohesive and well functioning leadership team.

3. Controversy: This level is marked by a passion for change, but differing opinions and power struggles can cause friction. While goodwill exists, there's still a need for better alignment to harness this energy for positive growth.

4. Confusion: Schools at this level recognise the need for improvement, but the path forward is unclear. The work is often reactive, and attempts to improve are scattered, leading to frustration and a lack of focus. Safety is preferred to stretch.

5. Complacency: In this stage, schools can settle into stagnation. There's comfort in the status quo, and little motivation to innovate or embrace new ideas, leading to resistance when change is proposed.

6. Corrosion: At the lowest level, the school culture is toxic, driven by fear, distrust, and poor or struggling leadership. Feedback is often taken personally, and there's a lack of professionalism, making it difficult to move forward as a team.

Building a Professional Culture of Learning- the approach

Building professional culture creates an environment where trust, psychological safety, courage and vulnerability are present. It encourages us to grow our practice to impact student learning and wellbeing. It's only when we are all connected, that we're propelled forward into our learning zone, where problem solving, learning and creativity are found. The balance of safety and stretch is a dynamic tension that strong teams navigate together.

This cultural work focusses on strengthening the three pillars of The Buzz. This creates a collective of learners, evolving practice and approach to meet the needs of students, while providing a culture where professional wellbeing is embedded.

*Authentic collaboration
is learning out loud.*



The Three Pillars of The Buzz



1. Building the **collective growth mindset** that expands our thinking individually and collectively.

2. Creating a **compelling environment** in which we are drawn to learning together, due to the relationships and energy, processes and protocols we each bring to the table.

3. Undertaking **authentic dialogue** where we focus on discussing the things that help us expand our impact on student learning.

When these three come together, we create psychological safety for learning, focus on the right things and build forward momentum. Hello Buzz!



School Professional Culture Days



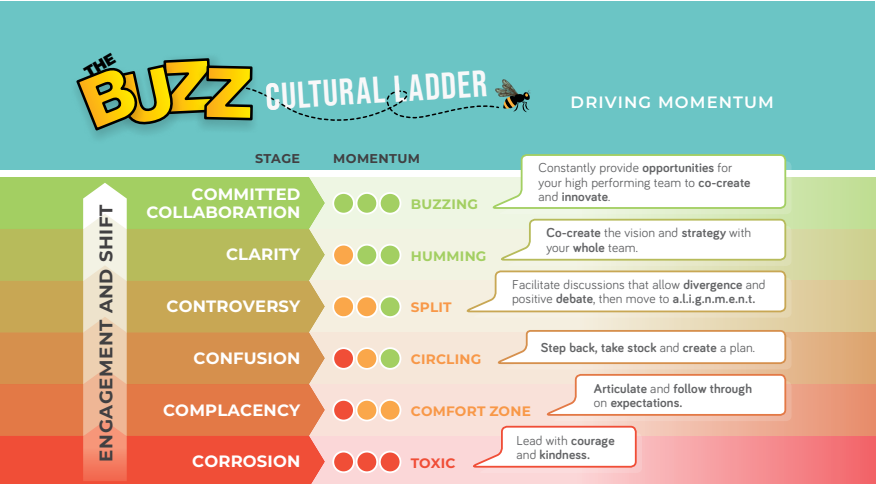
These days are specially designed for the whole staff to come together and explore the individual and collective challenges and opportunities of a learning culture.

We dive into the individual impact we all have on culture, and how to create an exciting and motivating learning zone as colleagues. We explore relationships, trust and what psychological safety really means! Hint – it’s not about warm and fuzzy, it’s about the balance of safety AND stretch.

Using Tracey Ezard’s The Buzz Culture Ladder and data from The Buzz Diagnostic as a basis, the three pillars of Collective Growth Mindset, Compelling Environment and Authentic Dialogue are explored in the context of your school. We co-create ways forward from the current state for teams to work on back in their school environment.

Further follow up Buzz Days delve into deep professional trust, the neuroscience of trust and conversations. Other focus areas that can support strategy review times are also journey maps, visioning and values work.

The quality of our culture can be found in the quality of our conversations.





**Never underestimate
the impact of your
leadership on culture.**

Leading Culture

These days are designed to support the middle and senior leaders in building their capacity to lead thriving growth cultures.

We know how important the leaders of learning and leaders of teams are to a high performance school. But often there is not enough time given to helping them build the skills to lead this dynamic and deeper work. This work is about building strong professional relationships that hold both safety and stretch.

Leading the Buzz days give tools and strategies for leaders to guide this work and lead a collective shift in the connection between educators, and the quality of the conversations, including feedback.

TIMING:

One day workshops.

Ongoing leadership development program presented across a school year.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

Creating a Growth Culture – balancing results and relationships; compassion and accountability.

Leading with the Head and the Heart – being a Ferocious Warmth leader.

Self Awareness – the will and skill of understanding ourselves and our impact on others.

The Neuroscience of Trust in Conversations.

Purposeful Collaboration.

Facilitating Learning Meetings.



The Critical Friend

FLAGSHIP SCHOOLS PROGRAM

1 TO 3 YEAR PARTNERSHIP

THE CRITICAL FRIEND PROGRAM IS A LONGER TERM PARTNERSHIP. DESIGNED TO SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL IN ITS ONGOING LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE JOURNEY.

The Critical Friend Program is a transformative and sustained initiative designed to foster continuous improvement, collaboration, and a strong professional culture within schools. By partnering with educational leaders, the program provides sustained support through leadership development, whole-staff workshops, and targeted resources. This approach enables schools to navigate complex challenges with confidence and empathy. Key outcomes include enhanced leadership capacity, a more collaborative and trusting staff culture, and a long-term commitment to growth and development. Through tools like the Buzz Diagnostic and access to the Buzz Academy, and other resources, the program ensures that improvements are not only achieved but also sustained over time.

Through this program Tracey Ezard works with senior leadership teams, whole organisations and systems to create environments of safety and stretch through leadership and collaborative learning cultures. Using evidence base approaches from the latest findings in leadership, emotional intelligence and neuroleadership, and frameworks developed from over 18 years of practice in this field, the Critical Friend Program gives schools the catalyst for change, and the tools and resources to embed that change within the professional culture.

In a variable combination of face to face or online in-person connections, as well as online videos, school diagnostic, activities, books and other resources, the Critical Friend Program responds to the needs of an individual school's context.



The Critical Friend FLAGSHIP SCHOOLS PROGRAM

LEADERSHIP AND GROWTH CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

1 TO 3 YEAR PARTNERSHIP

The Critical Friend Program is more than just leadership and culture development- **it's a whole school partnership.** The Critical Friend Program is a unique, transformative approach designed to empower leaders and educators to navigate these complexities with confidence, insight, and a collaborative spirit. This program offers a long-term, supportive relationship where Tracey Ezard works closely with your leadership team and whole staff to foster a culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and trust.

1. REFLECTIVE AND TEAM CONNECTION ACTIVITIES.

Unlike traditional workshops or one-off sessions, the Critical Friend Program offers sustained engagement over time. This allows for deep, meaningful change that goes beyond surface-level improvements. Tailored to the specific needs of your school, this program ensures that strategies and initiatives are contextually relevant and immediately applicable.

2. BUILDING A CULTURE OF TRUST AND COLLABORATION.

At the heart of the Critical Friend Program is the development of a professional culture where trust, psychological safety, and open communication are paramount. Leaders are supported in creating an environment where staff feel valued, heard, and motivated to contribute to the school's success.

3. EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP TEAMS.

Hands-on and interactive sessions that explore the Ferocious Warmth principles in depth, tailored to the specific needs of your leadership team. Topics include balancing results and relationships, fostering psychological safety, and creating a culture of collaboration and trust.

4. PRACTICAL, ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS.

Through regular feedback, reflection sessions, and strategic planning, the Critical Friend Program equips leaders with practical tools and frameworks that drive real results. The program includes the use of diagnostic tools like The Buzz, which provide benchmark data and actionable insights into your school's cultural strengths and areas for development.

5. SUSTAINED IMPACT BEYOND THE PROGRAM.

The program's impact is designed to last, with leaders and teams equipped to continue the journey of growth and improvement long after the program concludes. Access to additional resources, such as The Buzz Academy and the Ferocious Warmth online modules, ensures ongoing development and support.



What do we know about schools at the top of the culture ladder?



FINDINGS FROM THE BUZZ DIAGNOSTIC*

TRUST AND CONNECTION

Schools at the pinnacle of cultural development, within the “Committed Collaboration” phase, exhibit exceptional levels of trust and connection. With average scores of 4.8 out of 5 on statements such as “Our school community is deeply connected” and “We have strong levels of trust”, it’s clear that staff feel secure in collaborating and are eager to engage in open, authentic dialogue.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND COLLABORATION

Psychological safety, described by Timothy R. Clark as an environment that “rewards vulnerability,” is the backbone of any thriving learning culture. In schools that excel in committed collaboration, staff consistently report high mean scores (4.8-4.9) for statements like, “We foster a culture where everyone feels safe to collaborate,” and “We actively encourage robust pedagogical discussions.” This shows that team members are comfortable engaging in critical debates about teaching practices, a key indicator of a vibrant professional learning community.

WORKING AS A LEARNING COLLECTIVE

In high-performing schools, collaboration is driven by a shared commitment to growth and a unified purpose. The strongest collective scores emerge from “we” statements such as, “We are open to giving and receiving feedback on our teaching methods,” and “We work together as a learning community to enhance our teaching capabilities,” achieving mean scores up to 4.9. This reflects a deeply embedded culture of continuous improvement and mutual support.

FEEDBACK AND PEDAGOGICAL DEBATE

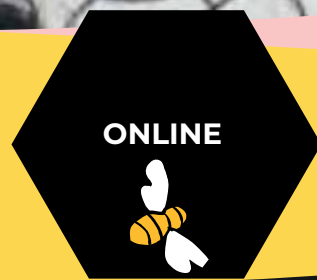
Schools thriving in this stage don’t just accept feedback—they actively seek it as a catalyst for professional growth. They engage in meaningful pedagogical discussions, using evidence-based dialogue to refine their teaching practices. This level of professional trust empowers schools to tackle challenging topics head-on, ultimately enhancing teaching strategies and student outcomes.

IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP

Leaders play an indispensable role in cultivating a culture of committed collaboration. Those who embody ‘ferocious warmth’ balance high expectations with robust support, creating environments where trust and safety are integral to the school culture. Such leadership is essential for fostering a professional environment that champions both individual and collective growth. Their teams say that they model professional behaviours with integrity.



Supporting Leaders and Sustaining Your Culture with Online Resources



The Buzz Academy is an online member resource portal for schools. Supported by Tracey Ezard and our Buzz Academy Facilitator to guide you, the online Buzz Academy is a set of short, sharp videos and resources designed to support school leaders and professional learning leaders to embed and sustain a culture of collaboration and collective efficacy. They provide a catalyst for you to continue the work with your teams.

This program is not a one size fits all, step by step 'bored-to-snores' program. It provides an agile and flexible approach to building capability. It's designed to assist leaders of learning within schools to dive deeper into the human side of collaborative culture. It assists professionals to facilitate discussions with their teams that are contextually relevant and responsive to need.

These videos are provocations, designed for you to contextualise and implement to suit your team, using the accompanying resources and activities. You can use them in your meetings or one-on-one to develop concepts that you know, if you embed them, will help build a thriving learning culture.

Take them, use them and contextualise them for what your school needs to get shift and transformation in the classroom.



accompanying resources



online portal



Catalyst
Resource
Provocation
Concepts

Annual Membership of The Buzz Academy



Designed to support your leaders build and sustain your professional culture.

Included in this program is access for any of your team to use to facilitate the growth of your team and school culture: senior leaders, learning leaders, faculty heads, team leaders.

Includes:

- Whole school access to Buzz Bites, 24 short, sharp videos that serve as a catalyst for further discussion and investigation at staff or team meetings, one-on-ones or leadership meetings
- Support from our Buzz Academy facilitator, who will help you create a strategic pathway through the resources, based on your cultural context .
- Accompanying downloadable resources and activities for you to use. Links to readings and other resources.
- Access to The Buzz Diagnostic, which will give you clear insights from your staff on how strong the Buzz is at your school.
- Access to our Bonus Bites, a growing library of resources, videos, activities and more. These resources are created both by Tracey and our community.
- Access to The Buzz Community, where we come together to reflect, ask questions and share best practices. This also includes a live 60 minute virtual session twice a year, where Tracey and Amy will answer questions and provide insights into the program to all Buzz Academy school members.



*Hosted by
Tracey Ezard*

Buzzing Clients



“The power in Tracey’s work is centred on what the school needs, supporting us through this challenging time firstly as a whole staff, then working with the leadership team and to working with PLC leaders and their immediate teams. We have developed a common language across the school guided by Tracey’s tools and strategies and creating our own new master stock.”

**NATALIE ROSE, PRINCIPAL,
RIPPONLEA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

“We started using the Buzz Academy 3 years ago after working in partnership with Tracey the year prior. Each year I ask the same question of my PLT leaders, do you want to renew the subscription?”

Each year, regardless of the changing leadership membership, I receive the same response, absolutely! The Buzz Bites and supporting resources are used to start PLT meetings, to support leadership development and to assist teams to re-engage with our cultural work that is in constant motion. We always start our year with some of Tracey’s work. The Buzz Diagnostic shows our progress each year and gives our leadership the direction needed to ensure we continue to build upon and sustain a positive, supportive and above the line culture at our school.”

**SALLY WEBB, PRINCIPAL, CRANBOURNE
CARLISLE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

“Tracey’s work with our school helped us move from producing good results into the realm of excellence. Prior to Tracey, we were a collegiate workplace that lacked the rigor that would allow us to challenge ourselves and each other to get to the next level. Tracey helped us to find our ‘Buzz’ working with our whole staff to identify what set us apart from others and helped us to focus our energy on the greater good of our community.”

**SCHY PREWETT, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL,
CURRICULUM FEEDBACK AND PRACTICE,
BENTLEIGH SECONDARY COLLEGE**

Speaking to both the head and heart.

If you are looking for a trusted keynote speaker that will wow your audience, Tracey is your answer. Her much loved keynotes include participant interaction, laughter as well as storytelling and frameworks that provide takeaways people can take back to their school and actually use. Tracey charms and challenges audience with her unique mix of humour, hope and honesty. Building an atmosphere of collaborative enquiry, Tracey encourages people to come together to find solutions and step into a space of deep learning – as she inspires both the head and the heart.

SPEAKING TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Ferocious Warmth Leadership – Balancing the Head and the Heart.**
- Balancing Compassion and Accountability.**
- Creating Psychological Safety in Teams for Growth and Transformation.**
- Learning Teams – The Cultural Advantage.**
- The Buzz – Creating a Collaborative Professional Culture.**

Tracey Ezard



Tracey's three books explore the concepts of leadership and culture. Collaborative, transformational, open to learning and connected. **The Buzz. Glue. Ferocious Warmth.**

About Tracey Ezard

As a speaker, author, educator and mentor, Tracey brings to any group she works with a range of models and positions that will spark the new thinking and discussion needed to continue evolving in a complex and diverse global paradigm.

Tracey works across Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the UK with schools, systems and networks to support leaders and their teams to be extraordinary. Her education journey started in the Victorian state system.

Tracey is the author of three books for education, was awarded the Hedley Beare Educator of the Year 2022 by the Victorian-branch of Australian Council of Education Leaders (ACEL) and is a National Fellow of the Australian Council of Education Leaders (ACEL). She was included in the Most Influential Educator List 2024. Tracey is Board Chair of the social enterprise, The Corner Store Network, which aims to eradicate food poverty issues both in Timor Leste and in Australia.



Speaker

Author

Educator

Mentor



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