



## Thinking Schools South Africa Quarterly Newsletter

Welcome to our Third Newsletter of 2025,

We are still basking in the success of the TSSA International Conference on Cultivating Thinking Cultures. As TSSA's first-ever conference, it was a landmark event—and we're excited to announce that planning is already underway for our next one in 2027! A heartfelt thank you to our incredible keynote speakers—Shirley Eadie, Trevor MacKenzie, and Jessica Vance—whose thought-provoking sessions inspired many to reflect deeply on their teaching practices. We are especially grateful to Herschel Girls School and Kingsmead College for graciously hosting the Cape Town and Johannesburg events. Their support made these four days of professional learning and collaboration possible.

In other exciting news, Hatfield Christian School recently completed their whole-school Thinking Maps® training. On 31 May, we spent three hours reviewing the Maps in action, reflecting on their classroom application, and completing the final set. The examples shared demonstrated the tangible impact of Thinking Maps on student learning and cognitive engagement. Sonja also facilitated an online session with the Primary Science Project on Developing a Culture of Motivated Learners. Two follow-up sessions are scheduled for July and August. It is always uplifting to collaborate with dedicated educators working in challenging environments.

Looking ahead:

- 29 July: Jessica Vance begins her three-part masterclass, *The Third Teacher Revisited: Learning Walls, Learner Voice, and Lasting Agency*. This series builds on the idea of learning spaces as “third teachers” and invites participants to explore how physical environments can foster voice, agency, and engagement.
- September: Don't miss Tarryn McLaren's energising workshop, *Courageous Teaching: A Day to Reflect, Reignite and Rise*, hosted at St Andrew's School for Girls, Bedfordview. (Exact date to be confirmed.)
- May 2026: We are thrilled to welcome Trevor MacKenzie back to South Africa! He will lead full-day workshops designed to help schools embed an inquiry mindset across their learning communities. Spaces are limited, so please reach out soon if your school is interested.

Warm regards,  
Sonja  
CEO, TSSA



# PHOTOS FROM TSSA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HERSCHEL GIRLS SCHOOL & KINGSMEAD COLLEGE







# UPCOMING EVENTS

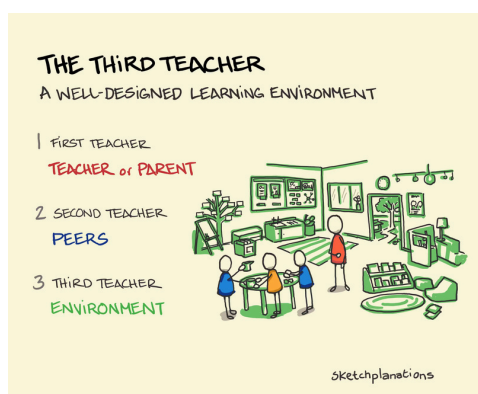


## ONLINE MASTERCLASS

with

Jessica Vance

### The Third Teacher Revisited: Learning Walls, Learner Voice, and Lasting Agency



Dive deeper into the powerful idea of space as the third teacher in this three-part masterclass designed to move your practice beyond aesthetics toward authentic engagement. Together, we'll explore how learning walls can evolve from decoration into dynamic, living documentation that captures thinking, growth, and learner voice.

Throughout the series, you'll gain:

- Practical strategies to activate your classroom space
- Tools to centre learner voice and scaffold agency
- Inspiration to create environments that reflect and support all learners

This is a hands-on, reflective journey that invites you to put ideas into practice right away, contributing your own learning to a shared dialogue. Perfect for educators ready to refine their documentation practice and create spaces where learning is visible, valued, and alive.

**Dates:** 29<sup>th</sup> July, 5<sup>th</sup> August, 14<sup>th</sup> October

**Time:** 16:00 - 17:30

**Cost:** R3240 for three sessions,

R2750 for TSSA Network Schools

For more information, [click here!](#)

To register, [click here!](#)



Jessica Vance in action at the TSSA conference



# UPCOMING EVENTS



## ONE DAY WORKSHOP with Tarryn McLaren

### The Courageous Teacher: A Day to Reflect, Reignite, and Rise

Teaching is more than a profession – it is a calling. In the midst of daily demands, it's easy to forget why we chose this noble path. This one-day retreat invites you to pause, reflect, and reconnect with your purpose.

Join fellow educators for a powerful day of self-discovery, where we will explore the deep inner questions that lie at the core of meaningful teaching.

Knowing your students and mastering your subject matter are essential. But knowing yourself : what motivates you vs. depletes you, your strengths, your inner compass are equally vital. This one day workshop, in the heart of Johannesburg, is designed to guide you inward, helping you rediscover the passion and clarity that inspired your journey into education.

With courage, we:

- Persevere through adversity
- Think and act with independence
- Engage openly and confidently with diverse people and ideas
- Rise to the challenge of the complex and the unfamiliar

These qualities not only shape our teaching, they sustain it. This retreat offers the space to cultivate that courage, through self-reflection and shared experience.

What you'll gain:

- Renewed insight into your teaching identity
- Tools for sustaining personal and professional well-being
- A supportive space to reflect, connect, and be inspired

Don't miss this opportunity to return to the why behind your work – and leave feeling grounded, revitalised, and empowered.

**Date:** mid-September

**Time:** 9:00 - 15:00

**Cost:** R1875.00

R1595.00 for TSSA Network Schools

[For more information, click here!](#)

[To register, click here!](#)



Tarryn McLaren



# UPCOMING EVENTS



## Whole School Workshop with

**Trevor MacKenzie**

### From Mindset to Practice:

### Deepening Inquiry Across Classrooms and Grade Levels

Trevor is a global expert in Inquiry-Based Learning, and these workshops are designed to equip both teachers and school leaders with practical strategies to cultivate a culture of curiosity, student agency, and deep thinking across the school. Trevor MacKenzie will challenge your mind to rethink the role of the teacher and the learner in the inquiry classroom. You will participate in activities that can be immediately applied to your practice. You will see and discuss video clips and photographs of lessons and strategies that will provide the skills and understandings necessary to adopt an inquiry approach in your classroom and school. You will learn specific, practical instructional strategies that engage the passions, wonders and curiosities of learners.

Following the overwhelming success of the recent TSSA International Conference, it's clear that Trevor MacKenzie's work continues to have a profound impact on teacher practice and student engagement. We're excited to offer your school the opportunity to host a full-day professional development workshop with Trevor during his return visit to South Africa in May 2026.



Trevor MacKenzie at the TSSA International Conference, Johannesburg.

**Dates:** last two weeks in May 2-26

[For more information, click here!](#)

**Time:** 09:00 - 15:00

[If you're interested, fill in this Expression of Interest Form.](#)

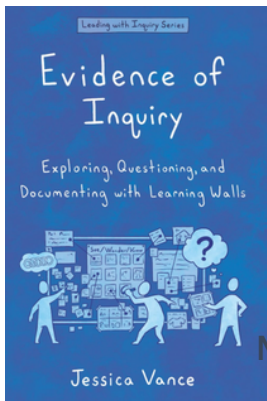
# ARTICLES, TALKS OF INTEREST, ETC

## Trevor MacKenzie's Question Routines



Take a look at Trevor MacKenzie's webpage on Question Routines.

**[Click here for the webpage on Question Routines](#)**



## Learning Walls for Deeper Learning Jessica Vance

Explore how learning walls can become a powerful tool for student agency, visible thinking, and meaningful learning by reading Jessica Vance's second book "Evidence of Inquiry".

**[Click here](#)** if you are interested in buying any of Jessica Vance's or Trevor MacKenzie's books, and TSSA will get back to you with the price and how to place an order (South Africa only).

## 5 Engaging AI Classroom Activities to Try With Your Students

Toby S Fischer: Edutopia, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025



From targeted writing prompts that get pencils moving to an interactive radio show where students join as the co-host, these AI classroom activities help students take learning to the next level.

**[Click here to read the article](#)**

## Making the Case for Project Based Learning Curriculum: Why We Built It and Why You Might Need It

John Larmer: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025



Most teachers would like to design good projects for their students, right? But how easy is that, for many teachers? And what about the challenge of implementing it successfully?

**[Click here to read the article](#)**