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Using Tabletop Role Playing Games (TTRPGs) in Education

Andrew Kingsford-Smith

Rob Woolfrey

(Photo from Canva)

Stranger Things

Dungeons & Dragons Honor Among Thieves

Critical Role at Wembley Arena (Photo credit @lifeofwyn)

Context:
From Basements to Mainstream!

- 50+ million people play Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) around the world
- TTRPG industry valued at over $23 billion (AUD)
- Enjoyed by adults, teenagers, and kids

My Different Professional Hats

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TEACHER @
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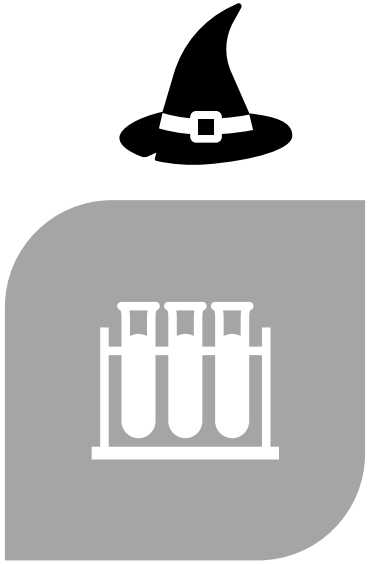
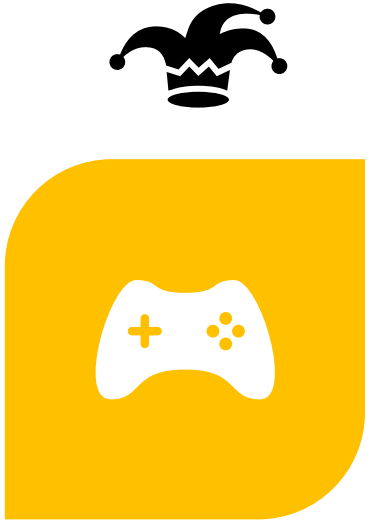


RESEARCHER @
UNSW



TTRPG
GAME MASTER

Map of Today's Presentation

1) What are TTRPGs?

2) Using TTRPGs to Support Wellbeing

3) What do Sessions Look Like in Schools

4) Case Studies

What are TTRPGs?

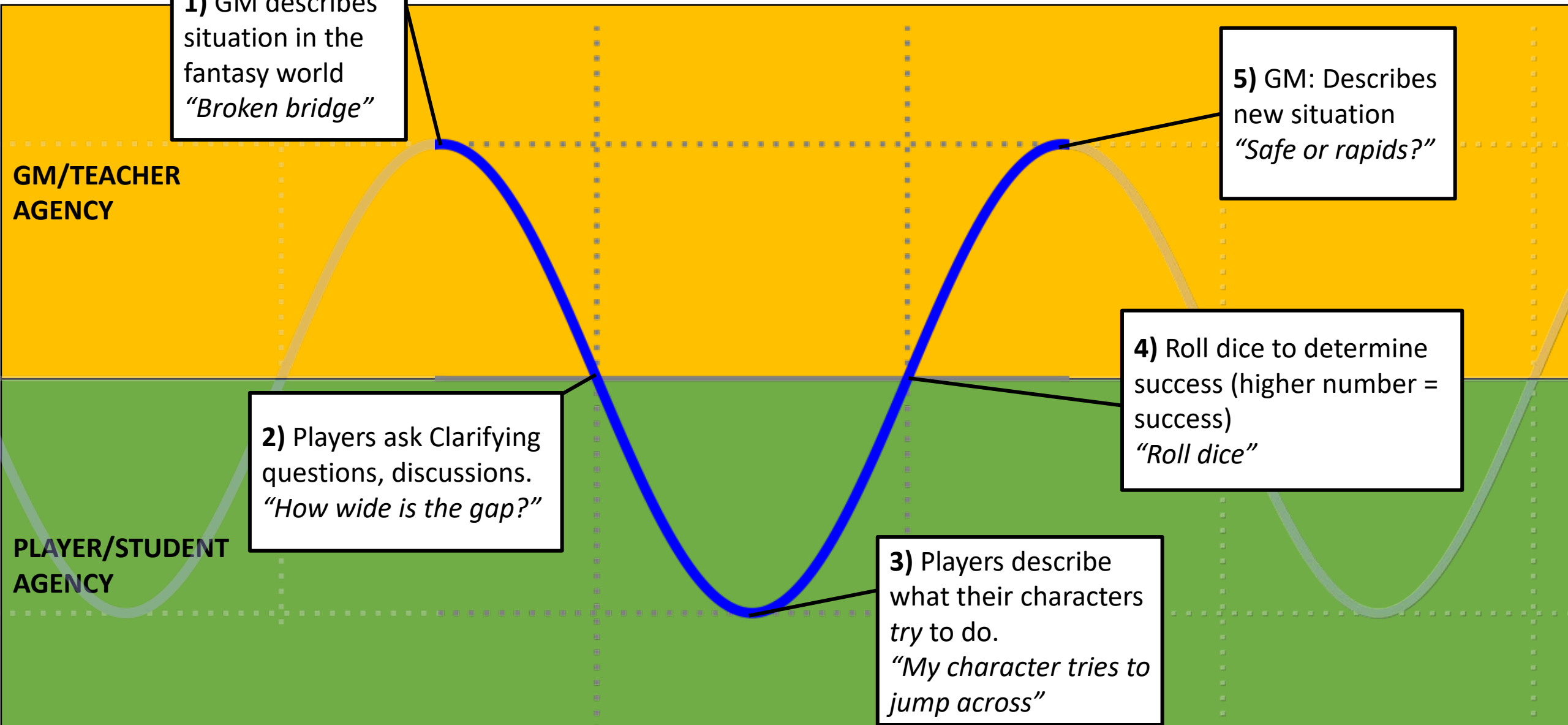
Image created using Microsoft Co-Pilot

TTRPGs

(Photo from Canva)

- Tabletop Role Playing Game
- Collaborative storytelling game
- Players role-play as fantasy characters (*any genre*)
- Every character has strengths & weaknesses
- Players collaborate to overcome obstacles
- Games master (GM or DM), rules, & dice

How does it work?
The wave of play



Using TTRPGs to Support Wellbeing

The Basic Psychological Needs

Autonomy

- Volition/ agency
- Interests/ passions
- Values

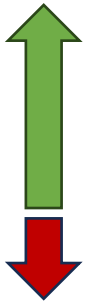
Competence

- Feel successful
- Appropriately challenged
- Regulation

Relatedness

- Connected to others
- Feel important
- Collaboration

Needs support =



student engagement
emotional wellbeing
academic performance
emotional illbeing

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Publications. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1521/978.14625/28806

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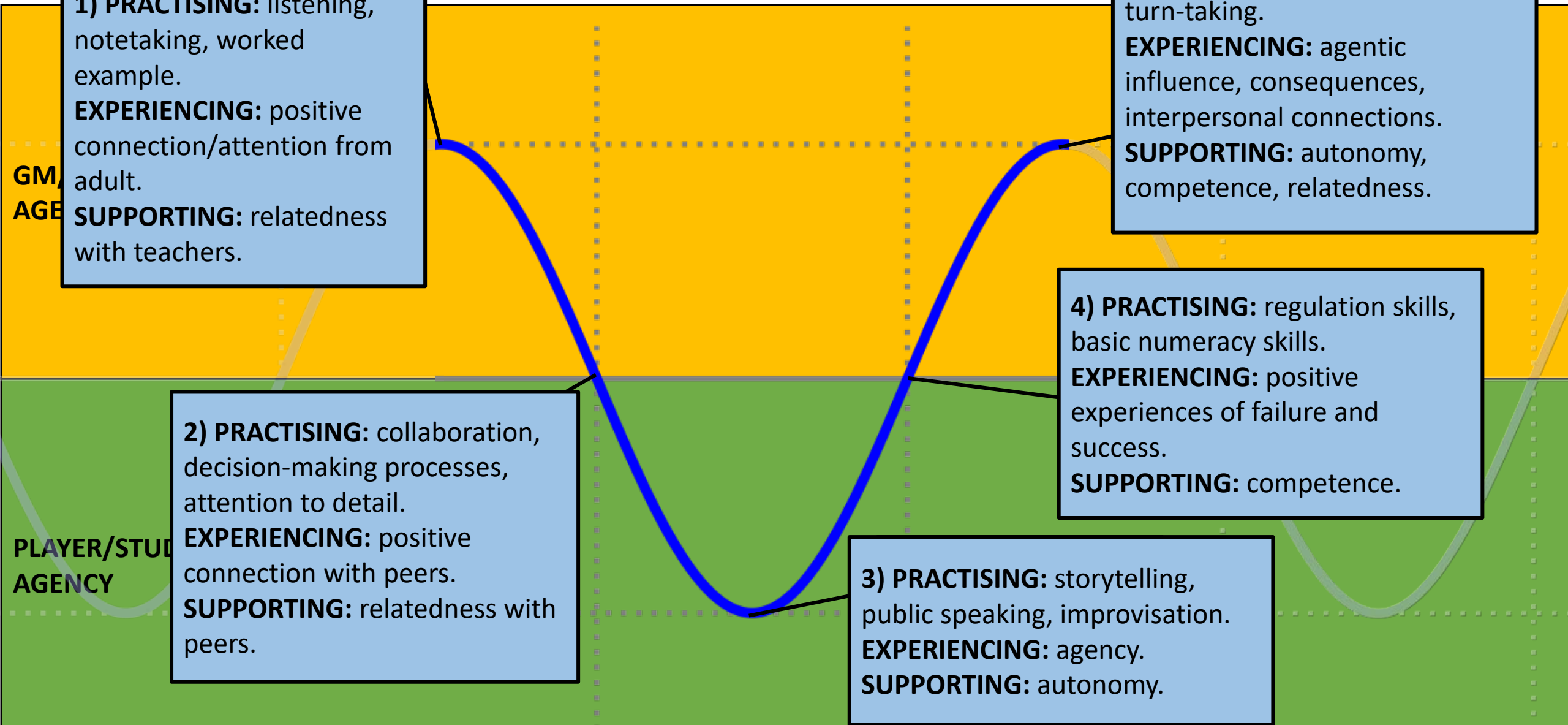
Potential Benefits



1) PRACTISING: listening, notetaking, worked example.
EXPERIENCING: positive connection/attention from adult.
SUPPORTING: relatedness with teachers.

2) PRACTISING: collaboration, decision-making processes, attention to detail.
EXPERIENCING: positive connection with peers.
SUPPORTING: relatedness with peers.

3) PRACTISING: storytelling, public speaking, improvisation.
EXPERIENCING: agency.
SUPPORTING: autonomy.

4) PRACTISING: regulation skills, basic numeracy skills.
EXPERIENCING: positive experiences of failure and success.
SUPPORTING: competence.

5) PRACTISING: Adaptability, turn-taking.
EXPERIENCING: agentic influence, consequences, interpersonal connections.
SUPPORTING: autonomy, competence, relatedness.

Why use TTRPGs in Schools?

- Intrinsically motivating
- Student engagement
- Literacy & numeracy skills
- General capabilities: Regulation, collaboration, perspective taking, etc.
- Positive social experiences
- Support student wellbeing

“Needs satisfaction is critical not just to keep players engaged with the game, but to also ensure that the learning itself is deep and abiding”.

(Rigby & Ryan, 2011, p. 144)

Rigby, S., & Ryan, R. M. (2011). *Glued to games: How video games draw us in and hold us spellbound.* Praeger.

SEPLACON 2024

TTRPG's for

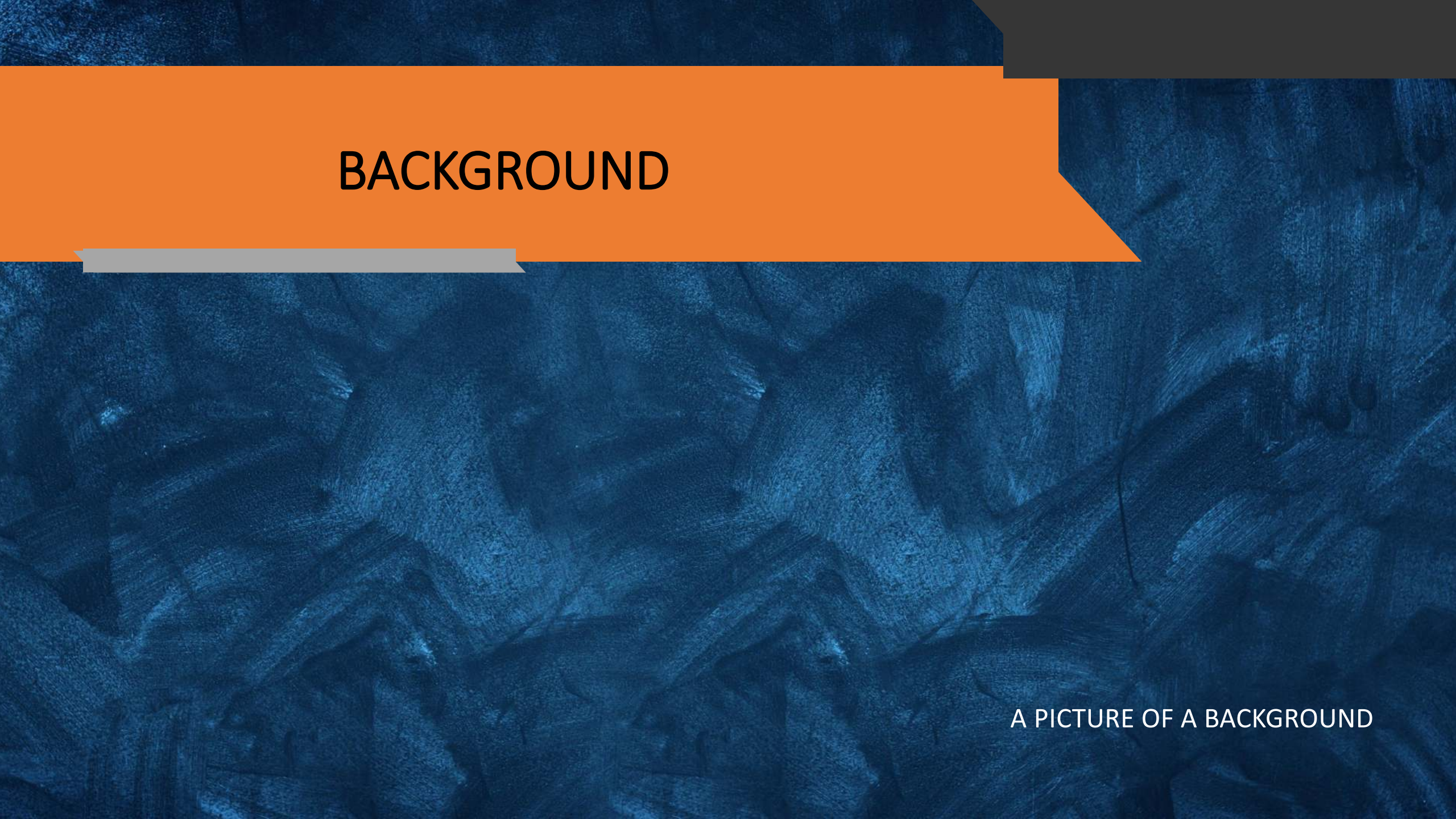
EDUCATION & WELLBEING

ROB WOOLFREY

WHERE WE ARE GOING

- My Background
- How does this look?
- Case Studies

BACKGROUND



A PICTURE OF A BACKGROUND

How it looks in a session

Session
CHECK IN Qs (5-10 min) ✓ Create check-in questions to Build capacity for positive-self expression E.g., *Who is someone you look up to? (BONUS: Who does your character look up to?)*
GAME SESSION (50-100 min) ✓ Run through several encounters (waves of play) ✓ Support students' needs
CHECK OUT Qs (5-10 min) 1. Spotlight 2. Predictions/ hopes

Kilmer, E. D., Davis, A. D., Kilmer, J. N., & Johns, A. R. (2023). *Therapeutically applied role-playing games: The Game to Grow method*. Routledge.

CASE STUDY 1

PDHPE Learning Outcomes and Social Skills

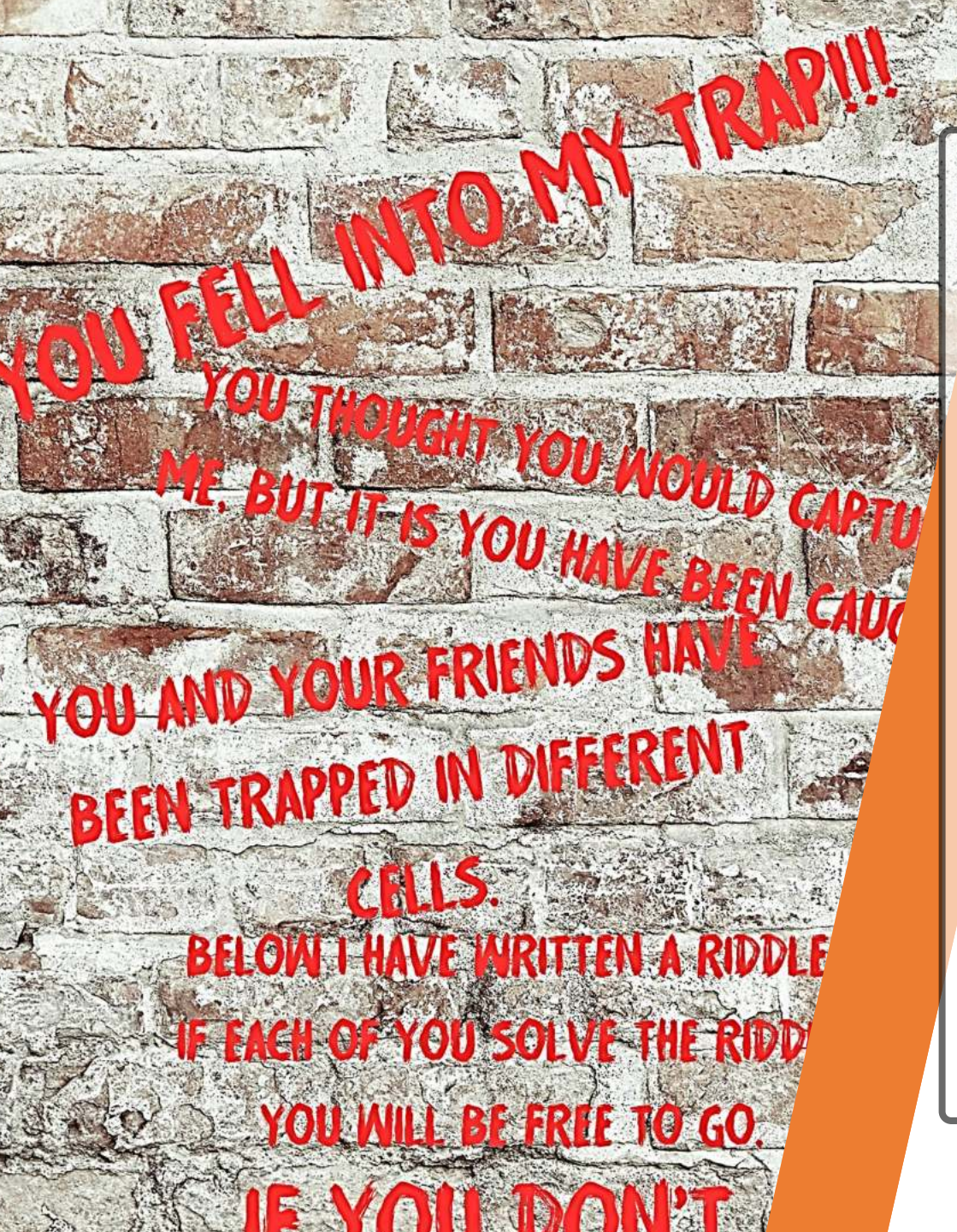
Brendan Fraser

Stage 3 – Kotara School SSP

extremely shy and quiet

Embarrassed to laugh

- Consultation with the classroom teacher
- Intentional and gradated response
- part of a whole school response
- PD3-3, PD1-10



CASE STUDY 2

Traps, Puzzles and Investigations

BTS

Stage 3 - maintream class

mixed abilities

Large spread difficulties with Word problems

- Traps, puzzles and investigations provide the perfect opportunity to practice set skills
- Whole class activity, not small groups
- Infinite variability

CASE STUDY 3

The Rise and Fall of Pindimar

Cross Curricular Outcomes and Learning Outcomes

Egyptian Mythology

Roman and European Empire

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

- Look ahead at upcoming curriculum
- Immersion builds schema
- Imply not state

FUTURE IDEAS

Art Theory

A one-shot detective adventure based on art crime.

Student's will be required to apply their knowledge learned in art to solve the case.

Languages

One or more of the people groups speak a language students are learning (Auslan).

Students and GM can communicate using Auslan.

STEM/Coding

Sci-fi or modern set game where students will need to create code, or build real world devices to solve problems their characters face.

FIND OUT MORE

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