



KINDLINGS

2026 – *Resilience*



KINDLEHILL
STEINER SCHOOL

Introduction

I often find myself smiling — sometimes inwardly — when families and students, as they approach the end of their journey with us and prepare to move into new educational settings for their senior years, ask whether they will “cope”.

*Will they adjust to tests?
To frequent assessments?
To larger social circles and less familiar teachers?*

I smile not because the question is unimportant, but because with a little distance — perhaps the gift of becoming older — I can see the bigger picture. When you zoom out, the immediate details feel smaller against the vast landscape of what has truly been formed.

A Steiner education does not simply prepare students for the next assessment cycle. It shapes the whole human being. It invites young people to understand that what they learn arises from their context — from history, from nature, from human striving. It gives them the capacity to imagine better futures and to recognise their role in shaping them.

Of course, I care deeply about academics. Intellectual rigour matters. Not because we are training children to pass tests, but because

scholarship is a beautiful pathway into complexity. It is a way of falling in love with the world. It offers independence of thought and autonomy in one’s own life.

When our students leave us, they leave with more than content knowledge. They know how to learn. They know how to think. They have practised perseverance. They have worked collaboratively and creatively. They have stood before others and spoken their ideas. They have experienced depth.

And so when I am asked whether they will cope, I return to a quieter, more essential question:

Who are they becoming?

Students who have experienced a Steiner education are strong in the ways that matter. They know something of the world. They are beginning to understand their place within it. They recognise that they carry responsibility. And — perhaps most importantly — they can imagine.

*Coping is a small word.
Becoming is the larger story.*



We explore how resilience, in our context, is not simply the ability to “cope” when things are difficult. It is something far richer.

In the following pages, we look more closely at how the journey from Kindergarten to High School gradually shapes our students into who they are becoming.

This is not an accidental process. It is thoughtful and intentional. Each stage builds upon the last — nurturing curiosity in the early years, strengthening perseverance and skill in the middle years, and fostering discernment, responsibility and vision in adolescence.

We explore how resilience, in our context, is not simply the ability to “cope” when things are difficult. It is something far richer. It is the steady sculpting of capable, compassionate young people who can respond to complexity with flexibility and imagination.

These are young people who will need to forge new ways of living in a changing world — ways grounded not only in knowledge, but in kindness, connection and creativity.

Education, at its best, is an act of faith in the future. And in these pages, you will see the quiet, steady work of shaping human beings who are ready not merely to manage what comes, but to contribute meaningfully to it.



Equally important is creating opportunities for each Kindy child to shine — to discover their strengths and experience success within our learning space.

Holding the Child

Resilience in the Kindy Garden through rhythm

At the beginning of each year, our task is to gently support children as they transition into a new journey. We do this with warmth, recognising and holding the rhythm of our days, weeks and seasons. Creating and sustaining the steady cadence of our Kindy and the natural environment helps each child feel safe and begin to build trust — in their relationships, in their feeling life, and in their own bodies.

Each day in the Kindy Garden carries its own rhythm: Morning Circle, shared mealtimes, play, rest and movement. These daily rhythms weave into the week, with bread baking, painting, gardening and our walks to the lake. When a young child is held by rhythm, their whole being breathes into it. This supports self-regulation and eases anxiety.

In the Kindy Garden, we thoughtfully observe every child, carefully considering how best to guide them towards becoming resilient and confident during this important stage of development. We intentionally nurture independence in daily activities. At times, this can lead to frustration or avoidance of a task. Rather than stepping in to fix the problem or shielding a child from challenge, we observe

closely and design strategies and systems to support them.

We allow children to sit with a little discomfort and frustration. In doing so, they learn to recognise and manage these feelings while practising newly learned strategies. Through intentional planning and teaching, children are able to explore challenges within a safe and supportive environment.

Equally important is creating opportunities for each Kindy child to shine — to discover their strengths and experience success within our learning space. Overcoming obstacles and recognising progress takes time. This process relies on strong, trusting relationships between child, carers and teacher. But what joy there is when growth unfolds. Children stand a little taller, filled with pride in what they have achieved.

Resilience is not built with green lights at every turn. It grows within the predictability and warmth of a gentle rhythm. When we accept challenges as part of the journey, we make space for confidence, capability and true happiness to follow.



The Will

Doing, Making and Persisting

At Kindlehill Steiner School, the development of the child's will is central to learning. The will lives in doing, making, and persisting, and it is through purposeful effort that resilience is practised. The students here are first invited to experience learning through their hands, their movement, and their practical engagement with the world. Then, as they grow, they are asked to think deeply about concepts, ideas and ethos.

One example is how we use handwork to provide a strong foundation for resilience. Beginning with finger knitting, progressing through various sewing stitches, weaving different medium, knitting and crochet, and later into woodworking and other practical crafts, the children gradually build skill, confidence, and stamina – and a little pride in the useful beautiful items they create. These experiences teach patience, accuracy, and perseverance, as well as pleasure in the work completed with care.

Children create useful items such as recorder bags and cushions, tend vegie gardens, prepare food for sharing, participate in eurythmy, and engage in extending their creative and practical efforts through little focus projects through to the year 6 Big Project. These activities are not simulations—they have genuine outcomes and responsibilities. Through them, children learn that their efforts matter.

Our Music Program Gurunggu bayumi (Towards the Music) and instrument tutorials further support this development. Mastery does not come quickly; it is built slowly through regular practice, persistence, and growing self-discipline. Over time, children develop stamina, concentration, teamwork and confidence in their ability to meet challenges.

Throughout these experiences, resilience is strengthened in meaningful ways. Children learn to tolerate frustration, work through difficulty, and remain engaged even when tasks feel demanding. They experience the satisfaction that comes from sustained effort and the deep pride that follows genuine accomplishment.

By nurturing the will through practical, artistic, and purposeful work, Kindlehill Steiner School is supporting the children not only in developing skills, but in forming strong inner qualities—perseverance, responsibility, and trust in their own capacity to grow. These qualities will serve them well, both in their learning and in their lives beyond the classroom.

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ancestral wisdom
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Imagination as a Protective Force

Imagination at its best is beautiful, life-imbued intelligence. It's why in a Steiner School we convey the content of our lessons in richly imagined stories.

Storytelling brings beautiful intelligence to children and young people in a way that is not one size fits all, and that supports understanding and inspiration beyond the lesson of the day. It allows each listener to individually imagine and feel, to actively engage in inner picture forming which resurfaces later as the forces of creative and innovating thinking.

Through stories children feel into the beauty and interconnectedness of all life. They listen to the voices of river and migrating songbirds. The wind whispers, spiders spin webs of wisdom, the lonely tree finds itself connected to cloud, songbird and every other tree in the orchard. The listeners take in the big ideas that grow with them as they grow. There is science behind these stories, science with personality!

For older primary children and into adolescence, there are biographies of those who faced obstacles, navigated the unpredictable, made mistakes, leapt across the impassable and found light in the darkest night. These biographies may be drawn from other cultures and from history, diversity of perspectives and worldviews is important. Such stories nourish wellsprings for the listeners' lives, developing capacities and

mindsets that can be drawn on as courage, inspiration and adaptability in responding to the trials and wonders that come toward them.

Story telling also brings richness of language, playfulness, and lessons in going wayward. Story enchants, unsettles, stirs our curiosity, invites the quest in the question. Daring to imagine our world differently, futures of optimism, of kindness and wisdom, supports a more glass half full confidence in navigating unpredictable times. Through story we lean into empathy, feeling and understanding the pain of another, be it person or ecosystem. We "soften" otherness, imagining ourselves in their situation, growing a language that connects and cares.

Conveying wisdom through story and imaginations has been a significant way of teaching/learning for 10's of 1000's of years! We all have wells of ancestral wisdom about how to live well in relationship to place and people. Story is ceremony, wisdom, play, gifted as seed, that can grow and develop, that can come alive again and again. Ideas and concepts take on skin and blood, they disarm our biases, deepen our listening, heal our woundings, transforming how we relate to others be they ideas or people.

This is beautiful life-imbued intelligence! The stories and imaginations that sit behind them really do matter!

Reading, Writing and Resilience

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Resilience

Learning to read and write is not always easy. Every child experiences moments where they can't quite work out how to read a word, a sentence feels hard to write, or a task takes more time and effort than expected. These moments are a natural part of learning. They are also where resilience begins to grow. When children feel safe to try, make mistakes, and keep going, they develop confidence in their ability to learn.

For some children, learning to read and write takes longer. They may find it harder to hear the sounds in words, remember spelling patterns, or apply new skills independently. When this happens, children benefit from extra time, explicit teaching, and plenty of opportunities to practise. With the right support, the pieces gradually begin to fall into place.

At Kindlehill, the literacy support team use the MiniLit and MacqLit programs to support students who need a little extra help with reading. Developed by the MultiLit research unit at Macquarie University, these programs provide structured and systematic guidance to help children strengthen the foundations of reading and writing, building skills in a clear, manageable way.

In these sessions, children work on essential building blocks such as phonics, vowel discrimination, letter-sound correspondence, reading fluency, and spelling. But alongside these academic skills, other important lessons are

quietly developing: persevering when something feels frustrating, sticking with a task when it is challenging, and returning again and again to give it another try.

In this way, the work is about more than literacy alone. It is about helping children discover that effort matters, that progress comes step by step, and that challenges can be met with patience and courage. Alongside lessons in reading and writing, children also learn *resilience*... a quiet, steady confidence that will carry them not only through the classroom, but through all the challenges of life.

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SEEN

Teen Portrait Photography Exhibition

Affirming Identity & Breaking Down Stereotypes

Year 11 & 12 at Buran Nalgarra: Kindlehill
proudly present **SEEN**: a student-run portrait
photography exhibition.



Thursday October 30 – Monday November 10



The strength of being known over time

There is a great deal of conversation at the moment about being seen. Our High School students even initiated an exhibition titled *Seen*, exploring what it means to feel recognised and understood. Beneath the language, the need is universal: to be known in our individuality — in our strengths, our emerging capacities, and our areas of growth.

Research in developmental psychology consistently shows that children and adolescents thrive when they experience secure relationships and a strong sense of belonging. Feeling known is not simply affirming; it is regulating. It provides stability from which young people can take risks in learning, navigate social complexity, and recover from setbacks.

This foundation begins in early childhood through secure attachment and responsive caregiving. Over time, it is strengthened by consistent relationships with adults who combine warmth with clear expectations. Contemporary research often describes this as an authoritative approach — high in support and high in structure. When young people experience adults as steady, fair and genuinely invested in them, they are more likely to engage, to persist, and to develop resilience.

Education, at its best, is relational. Learning does not occur in isolation from human connection. When a teacher knows a student well — their temperament, patterns of learning, social dynamics and emotional rhythms — the classroom becomes a space of psychological safety. In such environments, students are more willing to ask questions, attempt challenging work, and tolerate mistakes.

In our primary school model, teachers remain with their class over multiple years. This continuity allows trust to deepen and reduces the repeated disruption of starting over. It means students are known in more dimensions than assessment data can capture. Growth is observed longitudinally, patterns are understood in context, and support can be more precisely tailored.

As students transition to high school, there is a growing readiness to be taught by experts in their subjects. Young people, despite the nonchalant swagger, are hungry to be impressed by their elders and to find value in the worlds they are being invited into. They judge and critique, and the mistakes adults make are microscopically analysed. That is not a bad thing. In fact, it is part of how young people test the strength of the relationships around them. They are forging an independent relationship with their teachers — one built on trust that must be earned. The scrutiny is not a rejection of relational education; it is a plea not to be let down. Resilience grows when young people discover that adults are not perfect, but are steady: able to acknowledge mistakes, repair them, and remain present. Over time it is this reliability — who we are in the inevitable muddied mistakes — that teaches young people that relationships can endure difficulty and still hold.

Being known over time is not sentimental. It is structural. It is one of the protective factors that supports wellbeing, engagement and sustained learning. In a rapidly changing world, relational continuity provides a steady reference point — an adult who remembers who you were, who you are becoming, and who holds the long view of your development.



Teaching in Deep Water

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Resilience

Recently I found myself on the edge of the deep ocean with my Year 9 students. We were where the reef drops off to the ocean, beside towering gardens of coral that swirled and branched and glittered with fish. Minutes earlier, we had caught sight of a green sea turtle, a huge one, and had all followed her as she glided ever so slowly into deep water.

We popped up to the surface, adjusting goggles, and generally starting to chatter with each other, just as if we were standing on solid ground. The moment made me smile as it seemed so natural for us to be there with our newfound confidence, in the classroom of the Great Barrier Reef. A thought struck me: here I was, learning in deep water and that is fitting for teenagers and our times.

There are experiences on camp that mirror teenagers. Some young folk are looking to see how far they can dive before spiralling back up into the light. Some are having their heart cracked open, love leaking like paint into water. Some are finding purpose, the spark that kindles a life of passion. Some are trying to keep up with friends. Others are just trying to swim.

It's hard being a young person and we often can't tell what the waters hold. Sometimes, it seems like the snorkel is leaky, goggles foggy and it is a hard swim just to be there.

So, what do we do?

Spit in the mask, grab the gaffer tape, tighten your fins and get in. You never regret a swim, right? There are the most remarkable things to see at the edge. In fact, nature is there, ready for us to drink deep and learn about resilience for life.



When you look to the reef, its systems are resilient because of their diversity and interrelatedness, their capacity to collaborate creatively. The reef teaches us that resilience is our capacity to become softer, more open and entangled. It is about our capacity to nurture, care for and respect all of life with joy and responsibility.

Perhaps the lesson the reef offers is that resilience is not just withstanding but adapting to and welcoming adversity. It teaches us we can relish our capacity to be creative, to learn and to feel, and ultimately, to know the privilege of being alive.

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I notice that while we are here swimming above the reef, we are learning about the deep water we are in as humanity in this moment. We have swum out into a culture that is most alluring and unsustainable to the point of recklessness for our planet. Collectively, it feels like this, swimming in something so much bigger with our heads above the water, while chatting away like it's all normal.

So how does this prepare us for the real world, these lovely camps in sunny places? I could speak to you about getting through the rough boat ride, or being away from home and surviving homesickness, coping with bird poop

in your hair, or even the strength of carting your stuff across an island in the heat. But the true gift of a high school camp is always that we become a little more interrelated, and a lot more in love, with our world. Experiencing the wild preciousness of our Earth, embracing diversity and feeling ourselves entangled is medicine in our times. We learn that there are ways to live that are cooperative, beautiful and interdependent, ways to flourish together. We become “better places,” and this is a map to a thriving world.



Reasons to Stay Inside tackles youth mental health with insight and positivity, and encourages resilience, peer support, and open conversation about emotions.

Adolescence – Meaning, Identity, Purpose

In Term 4, 2024, Kindlehill's Year 7 Drama class presented a very special production of *Reasons to Stay Inside*, by Australian playwright, Katy Warner. The performance sparked deep and positive conversations in our year 5-8 classes, and the response from parents was a unanimous, "Everyone should see this play!".

So, in 2025, we prepared to remount the production and take it further afield. This insightful, funny, and moving exploration of friendship, resilience, and social anxiety offered an excellent opportunity to start an accessible and supported conversation about youth mental health in Blue Mountains schools. Our Senior High School class took the lead, producing the tour as part of their community-based Problems That Matter unit, which seeks to build local partnerships to address real world problems in our community. This led to a powerful collaboration with Headspace Katoomba, whose team mentored our students through rehearsals and joined us on the road.

The tour saw our now-Year 9's travel to St Thomas Aquinas Primary School in Springwood, where we performed for their Stage 3 cohort. We were accompanied by two social workers from Headspace, who ran a panel conversation with the audience and our cast afterwards. The response from students was overwhelmingly positive and we were thrilled to hear them adopt



the language of the play as they asked Headspace and our students questions about social anxiety, friendship, and performing.

We then moved the production into the Wentworth Falls School of Arts, where we were joined by Stage 3 classes from Blue Mountains Grammar School, Blue Mountains Steiner School, and the home-school community. Another wonderful response from our audience made it clear that this show that has legs and in 2026, our current Year 8 cohort is preparing to take the show off the mountain to schools in the Sydney's Inner West.

Reasons to Stay Inside tackles youth mental health with insight and positivity, and encourages resilience, peer support, and open conversation about emotions. Seeing our young people share this story with warmth and confidence – sometimes pushing through their own challenges to take to the stage – underscores the transformative impact of storytelling and peer-to-peer learning. It doesn't just start a conversation for our audience – it empowers our young people to trust their voices and cultivate resilience through the power of story and connection.

Showing Resilience through Community Action

When students turn their attention to real-world problems, resilience stops being a theory and starts becoming a practice. In this co-inquiry project, students set out to reduce environmental harm by encouraging local cafés to explore plastic-free alternatives for milk.

The issue is complex. The conversations are real. The outcomes are not guaranteed. And that is precisely where resilience is formed. Through research, dialogue and community engagement, students exercised agency, persistence and adaptability.

What follows is a review of the project — its intentions, its challenges and what was learned along the way.

A little less harm

Milk – it nourishes and sustains. When added to the coffee in the barista style of your choice, it brings pleasure and a reset. Yet, it largely comes from cow to cup via plastic, making our simple daily ritual complicit in the exploitative impacts of extraction and contamination. Can you disentangle the sustaining brew from unsustainable practices?

Our Kindleshill High School students began with a big idea and a small intention: to do a little less harm while imbibing the daily pleasure brew. It was a co-inquiry chosen by a small cohort of students led by their dynamic and persistent teacher. “Let’s make a difference in a way that is

replicable in lots of other places!” said Georgia Adamson. The group swung a deal with ten cafes on Katoomba Street, a Sydney based manufacturing company called 6 Things, the Office of the NSW Environment Minister, and local community groups and individuals. The plan was to reduce 2 litre plastic milk containers by 80% on one popular café strip.

We did the research, spruiked for sponsors. The project could only work if it was financially affordable which meant serious fundraising for the cafes to access the “juggler” system that would dramatically decrease the 2 litre plastic waste that ends up in our landfill and waterways. We raised \$80,000 through sponsorship from community organisations and putting the fun in the fundraiser at community events. The NSW Bin Trim program got behind the project, appreciating the engagement of young people in their efforts to make a small difference.

It took two years to raise enough money that would enable us to secure the Bin Trim grant. In this time, several of the cafes had closed, some due to increased rents and hardship, but in general because becoming more sustainable has a financial cost that is hard to balance in a small business.

Coffees on the Katoomba café strip are still imbibed with connection and conversation. More often the talk of the “weather” has a climate change edge with excessive rains causing landslips and the tension of unprecedented fires ever present when we lean into summer. Our cup



of coffee holds our pleasures, our fix to get us through the day and our fears. The milk sustains us and yet its container, the 2 litre plastic, contaminates land and water.

So, did we make a difference? In the long run we didn't manage to convert the café strip to the more sustainable Juggler milk delivery system. Perhaps it depends on how you measure success: the collaborations, the connections, the beautiful way a community supported the big idea-small action of a small cohort of teenagers, the gratitude of local elders, the ongoing willingness to align our actions in ways that respect and care for Country. We like to think all of this is in your coffee, too. And so is the gratitude to the very many who supported and engaged with our project.

Early in the project, we composed and performed a spoken word piece that enlisted the imagination of a murmuration. When the collective moves with agility for a common

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purpose, the small actions of one influence the six or so around and so on until a collective and agile wing around a common purpose, is tangible. The murmuration was temporal and fleeting, but we are all still somewhere touched by the experience, a little more open to being part of the changes we want to see, more open to the perspectives of Elders, of forest and swamp who are our teachers in living interconnectedness. Can we ever really be certain of the outcomes? Our lingering sense is that a small step, in the company of others matters.

Acknowledgement



Kindlehill is situated on Dharug and Gundungurra land; we pay respects to the traditional custodians whose cultures and customs continue to nurture this land.

We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart, Truth-telling, and a process of Treaty making to address the impacts of colonisation.



Kindlehill is a K-12 school with a philosophy in Rudolf Steiner Education

www.kindlehill.nsw.edu.au

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