

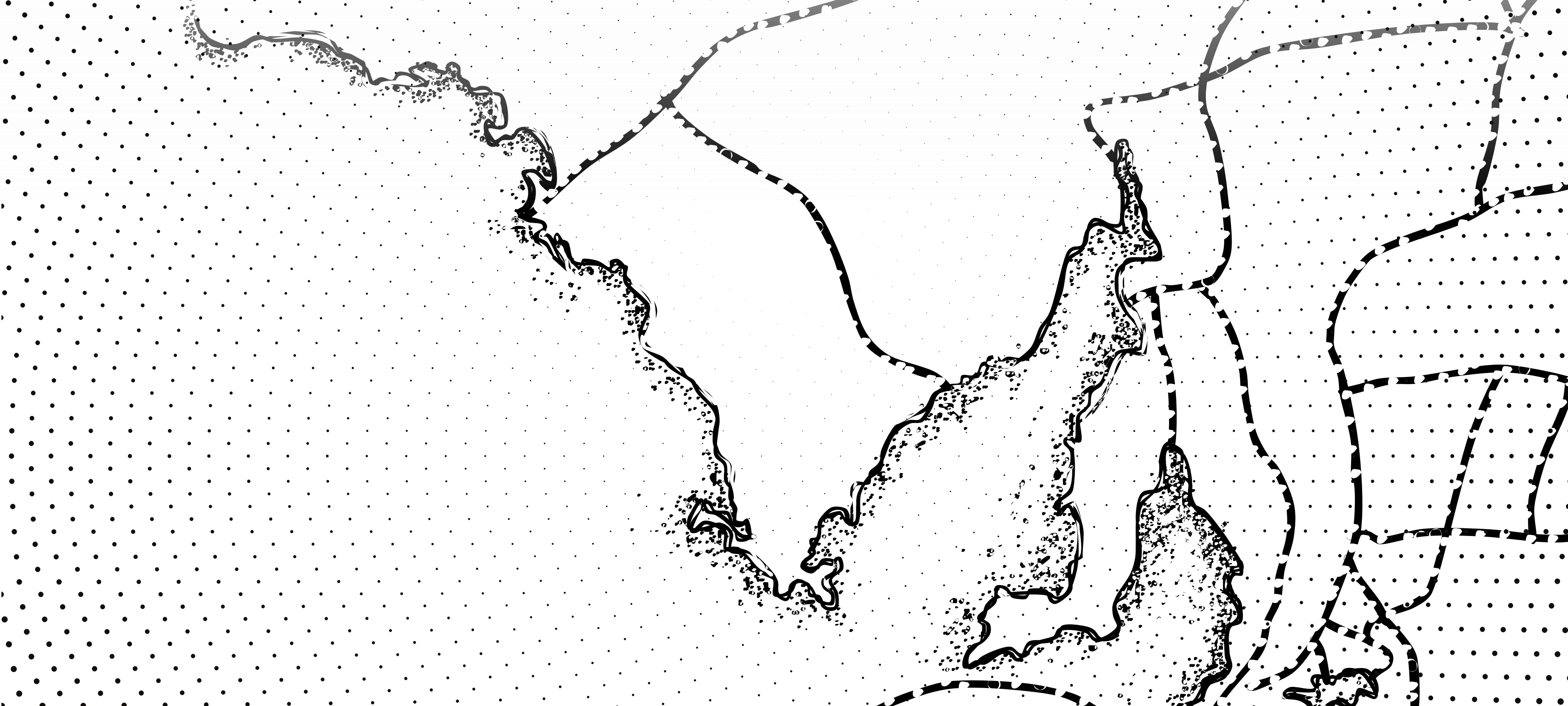
A top-down photograph of a person's legs wearing blue denim jeans and red sneakers with white laces and soles. The person is standing on a black laptop keyboard, with their hands visible at the bottom of the frame typing on the keys.

Keeping Students Engaged Through Personalisation

Prof. Eddie Blass

Founder and CEO, Inventorium

Principal: Inventorium Academy (SAS school)



Inventorium Academy acknowledges

that underneath our feet is a land criss-crossed with the lines of a map that has existed for thousands of years. Our staff live and work on the land of the Kurna, Ramindjeri, and Ngarrindjeri people in the South, and the Wurundjeri and Bunurong, and Eora peoples in the East. We honour and extend respect to the indigenous members of our community, and recognise their connection with Country, and we are grateful to be able to share this country with Australians from all nations.

What *this session* is going to try to achieve

Inventorium is a research-informed, learner-centred education model achieving 95% completion rates with students who haven't thrived in mainstream settings — proving that structure and personalisation can co-exist.

So how do you personalise learning when the content is fixed?

You'll explore:

- How to separate content from process
- How to personalise pathways without rewriting programs
- How to design rubrics that assess thinking and growth, not just outputs
- And how to create meaningful agency inside structured learning environments

Bring a real classroom challenge. You'll leave with a clear framework and a redesigned learning moment ready to trial immediately.

Disclaimer

- Sorry if anything I say offends anyone - this presentation may challenge the core identity of people working in education.
- Teachers are the MOST important element in the Inventorium. Their role is not diminished – it is enhanced – but it is different to the mainstream teaching model.
- Teachers in the Inventorium can have a hard time transitioning. It can take 6 months to find a rhythm and develop a style.
- Teaching Inventorium pedagogy is not easier than mainstream – it is different to mainstream. A FTE workload is 20-22 hours of teaching per week (depending on age group).

Brief *history* of Inventorium

- 20-40% of kids who start year 8 don't complete year 12 (2016) depending on which statistic you look at
- 2 years of research into why students disengage from school
- Mix of personal and systemic factors. Would addressing systemic factors allow for personal factors to be less impactful?
- Core systemic factors: pace, relevance, teacher relationships
- Why is nobody addressing this? Maybe you can't?
- Inventorium blueprint. Challenges core assumptions underpinning education system (hours, teacher role, curriculum)
- Not *'the'* solution; it's a blueprint of what *'a'* solution might be

What does Inventorium *teaching* look like?

- Platforms (middleyears covers big interdisciplinary questions; senior years covers life and employability skills, mapping loosely to SACE core plus some electives)
- Platform content is the form of introducing an idea; curated video of someone discussing the idea; reflective task or question – plus additional activities that cross the whole unit.
- Teachers use the platform and anything else that is available that might support the student (use IXL, Twinkl, Mathspace, schoolhouse technologies).
- Platform is lightly gamified, has built in tutorial room and 'big brother diary room', personal learning hub, and assessment submission points.
- Teachers meet students one on one for one hour per week only! Need to teach the students to be adult learners?
- One teacher teaches the student every subject..... Pedagogic content knowledge?
- Students set the agenda. We go where they want to learn – and then we build from there to introduce basics that they might not cover otherwise.
- Assessments are negotiated against assessment criteria. Can have a single LAP per student per subject in SACE.
- Students set their aspirations. They are not going to achieve something unless they want to.
- Teacher works 'in service' to the student within boundaries.
- Up until now, 100% online and a Tailored Learning Provision or alternative pathway (OAC). Over 300 students.
- BUT now we have a school (just accredited as a Special Assistance School) so will start adding on-site activities and options from July.



How to separate *content* from *process*

- Most ACARA and SACE curriculum outcomes are expressed as processes with exemplars of how they might be fulfilled.
- Mainstream rhythm requires planning in advance; approval in advance; teaching materials in advance; standardisation across classes and cohorts.
- Personalisation requires minimal advanced planning; it requires you to be able to adapt a process to any context that a student wants to follow. Planning is about development of a cognitive process not content delivery.
- There is more knowledge than we know as an individual on any subject on the internet. Students will check out what we say to find errors; let them find it for themselves and challenge us to find the errors.
- Plan a process to be covered and then let the students decide how they want to apply the process to prove they have mastered it.
- In the mixed ability classroom there are a number of options. Those who are fast can either support someone who is not as fast or do another task with a more complex application. Those who are fast can 'mark' each others work – peer assessment works really well.
- Mix up ability levels in some groupwork with 'reward' for the group that works best together, and has everyone contribute rather than the cleverer students doing all the work; teach them to work as a group and support each other.
- **EXAMPLES FROM THE ATTENDEES?**



How to personalise *pathways* without rewriting *programs*

- If you already have your mainstream program preset for the year, how can you now personalise it?
- Your preset becomes an exemplar.
- Ask the students to find their own focus and then demonstrate what you want them to do using what you had preplanned.
- The students then need to take that idea and apply it to their focus area.
- For students who cannot think of an area initially, they can use your preset but get other students to talk about what they are doing, and everyone should get an idea in a few weeks.
- **EXAMPLES FROM THE ATTENDEES?**



How to design *rubrics* that assess thinking and growth, not just outputs

- This is the difference between AIF and the old research project
- To a degree, the output doesn't matter.
- What matters is how the students go about achieving the output, and their realisation around the value of the output.
- Students learn to scaffold, pivot, problem-solve and make decisions.
- If we do all the above for them, what are they learning? Content?
- Most ACARA and SACE outcomes are processes not content so they should be the rubrics.
- We teach AIF straight after EIF – it sets students up for every other subject in SACE.



How to create meaningful *agency* inside structured learning environments

- Agency stems from the students being in control of their learning:
 - Pace
 - Relevance (content and curriculum)
 - Teacher engagement (in service, NOT in control)
- Structured learning environments need to focus on developing learning skills and cognitive process rather than structured curriculum content
- PAC student feedback on Inventorium – ‘You can’t cheat in this’
- ATAR matters for one week of a students life; meaningful agency matters for the rest of their life. What should we focus on?



Conclusions and warnings

- Inventorium currently works with students who have disengaged from mainstream. We are almost the 'final option' for many schools and families. 95% of our students achieve the outcome they aspire to when they join us.
- Parents need education also, particularly around the importance (or not) of ATAR. Most parents do not realise it is not compulsory or how it is loaded. Only 49% of students at UniSA in 2025 got in on ATAR.
- Personalising learning is difficult. It means you have fundamentally change pretty much everything you do in the classroom and how you manage your class time. It's a huge step and it needs you to be supported. Half measures tend not to work but frustrate students.
- Do not think that AI can replace teachers; it can help us and provide instant subject knowledge and feedback, but it does not provide connection. Students don't mind if they are teaching us something if they have that connection. We don't need to be the expert at what they are doing, we just need enough expertise to understand that the way they are going about what they are doing is sound.



**Thank you for being
open to discussing
these ideas**

If you would like to talk more about this, contact me:

Prof. Eddie Blass

eddie@inventorium.com.au

