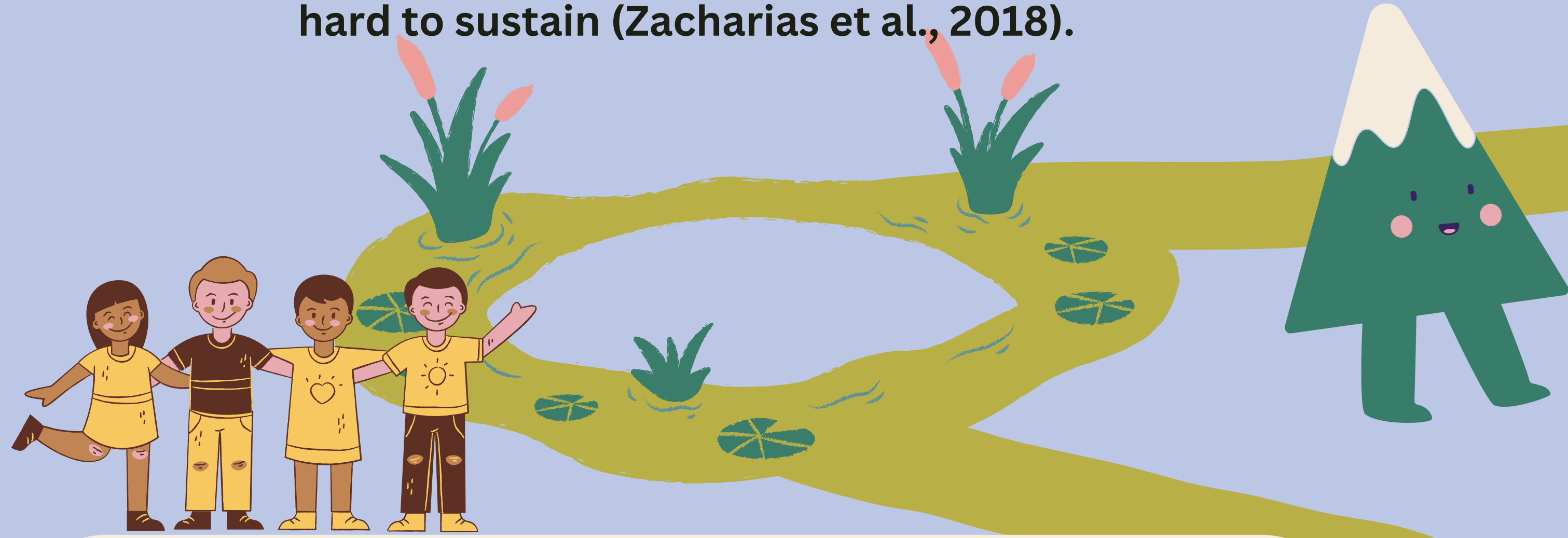
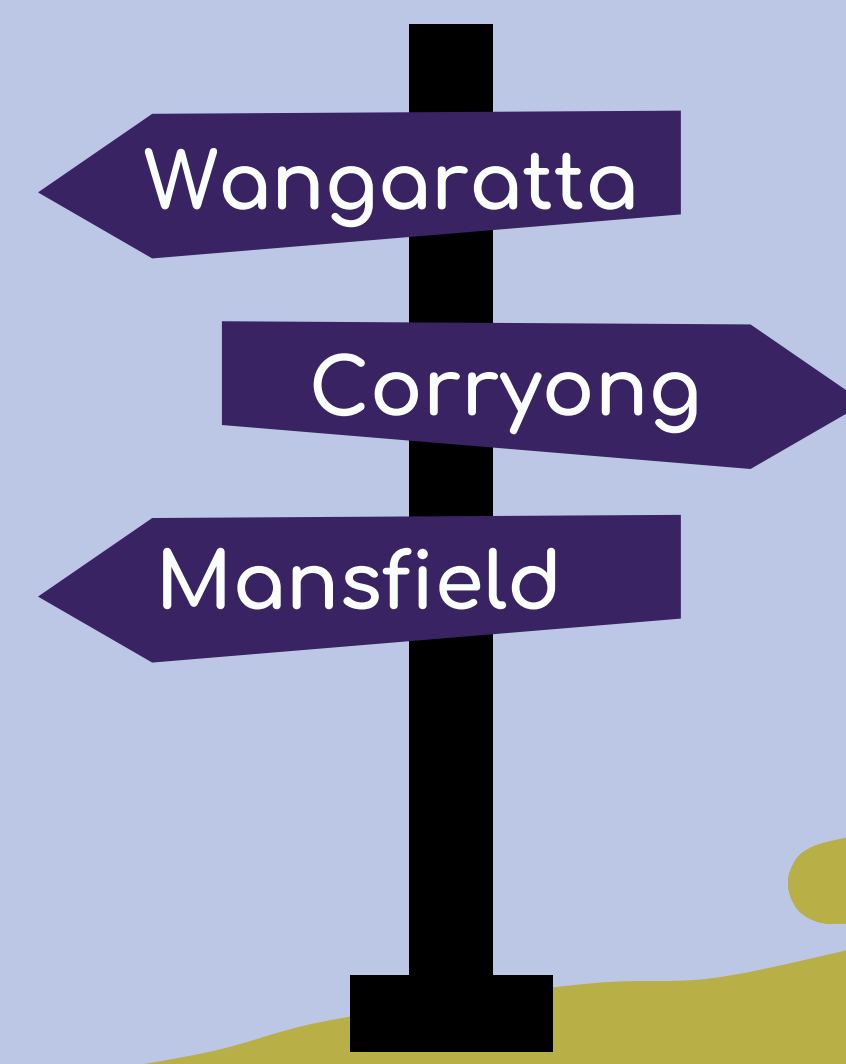


How does co-design of Outreach programs change Higher Education narratives in regional school communities?



Undergraduate degree attainment levels in the Ovens Murray district lag both the National and Regional averages (Naphthine et al, 2019). RMIT and La Trobe University are working with the Country Universities Centre (CUC) Ovens Murray to co-design sustainable Outreach programs for Years 5-7 students at three distinctively different school sites. Part of a larger Federally funded project. Previous Outreach efforts by Universities have been positive but hard to sustain (Zacharias et al., 2018).



Innovative project and research method

Community centred co-design is an innovation that flips ownership of problems and solutions on its head (Blomkamp, 2018) giving CUCs and regional school communities a role and a voice to determine the programs happening at their schools. Collaborative auto-ethnographic research (ethics approved) also gives CUC staff a voice in the associated research described here. Data: whiteboard summaries of discussions at co-design workshops; structured individual reflections focussed on surprising/outstanding outcomes and observed changes at the workshops.

Results: Outreach partnerships

At the end of the first round of co-design workshops, analysis found that co-design offered rare and refreshing conversations that were useful for the participants in different ways. The school teachers discussed curriculum and students' development across the primary and secondary school. CUCs and university partners gained confidence to tailor programs to community needs and unique strengths of the three distinct sites. Outreach partnerships have been strengthened: different options for shared future delivery are emerging along with ideas for further improvements to uni-school-CUC partnerships.



Results: Outreach experience

Analysis also suggests that co-design processes can produce positive changes to Outreach programs and curriculum through: improved trust and buy-in for working together; changes to narratives on who has the time and capacity to develop and deliver Outreach; changes in ideas on what young students are capable of grasping in Outreach workshops, and curiosity to discuss and continue to track subtle changes to classroom narratives about gender norms for career and study success.

What's now, what's next?

Phase 2 co-design, co-deliver and tweak pilot activities: **Business Brains, Job Jumble, Operation Outback and Sundae Smarts**

Re-branding with new Peak Pathways logos. Part of the sustainability of the program is the development of institution neutral branding and curriculum (new joint IP.)



Hi I'm Peaky!



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