

Plain Language Statement - Principals

Assessment Research Centre | Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Project: Development and Validation of an Instrument that Measures Opportunity to Learn for High Capacity Students

Dear Principal,

You are invited to participate in a research project to validate a tool that measures *classroom climate for growth*. We are primarily seeking teachers to complete an on-line questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, teachers receive a copy of the developmental progressions of *classroom climate for growth* together with where they sit on the developmental progressions. It would also be helpful to us if teachers were willing to be interviewed and to allow us access to their class's ARCOTS data.

This research is a PhD project undertaken by PhD Researcher Jolanta Szymakowski under the supervision of Professor Lorraine Graham at the University of Melbourne.

What is this research about?

Students in the top 25% of their class show less academic growth over a school year than students in the rest of the class. One finding of a recently completed project¹ investigating this was that teachers who were successful in achieving growth for their top students established an environment for growth. A tool that measures *classroom climate for growth* was then developed and piloted in the 42 project schools.

This research validates that tool in a broader range of Victorian secondary schools. The aims are to produce a valid set of developmental progressions describing classroom climate for growth that teachers can use to self-assess their classrooms, a valid questionnaire that can be used for research and evidence of a relationship between aspects of classroom climate for growth and student achievement.

What will participants be asked to do?

There are three parts to this study for research participants:

Part 1 is to complete a confidential online questionnaire (60 questions, taking about 18 minutes). This online questionnaire is the measurement tool. Questions related to four proposed dimensions of classroom climate will be asked. The questionnaire is on the online Qualtrics platform and may be completed on smart phones as well as tablets and computers. The questionnaire can be answered over a number of sittings and does not need to be completed in one sitting. The questionnaire may be taken anonymously, but with the teacher's consent, we will ask for the teacher's name and access to their class's ARCOTS data.

¹ *Realising the Potential of Australia's High Capacity Students (REAP)* Project, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.

Part 2 is to allow the researchers to access any relevant ARCOTS data about the teacher's classes. Comparing student growth data with questionnaire responses helps us validate the questionnaire and the underlying developmental progressions. This is optional and will only be done with their consent.

Part 3 is an optional interview discussing classroom climate. If teachers consent to an interview, they will be sent a copy of the interview questions. The interview is expected to take around 30 minutes. The interview will take place at a time convenient to the teacher and may occur (i) over the phone, or (ii) face-to-face, the PhD researcher travelling to the school or a nearby public place of convenience. If consent is given, this interview will be recorded to allow for transcribing of responses for analysis. The interview topics cover impressions and feedback on the developmental progressions of classroom climate for growth as well as the questionnaire, and helps and hindrances to developing a classroom for classroom climate for growth.

The interview is optional. After interviewing, teachers may also change their minds and request that their data not be used in the research.

What are the possible benefits?

The benefits of this research lie in the provision of a measurement tool for *classroom climate for growth* as well as developmental progressions about classroom climate for growth that teachers can use to self-assess their classrooms. Moving beyond teaching strategies, this research allows teachers to quantify and measure aspects of their context and environment.

After completing the questionnaire, teachers will receive a copy of the developmental progressions of classroom climate for growth together with their score on the developmental progressions. Teachers may develop a different understanding of what leads to growth for top students as well as how to plan and implement a high growth classroom. The pilot data suggests a higher classroom climate for growth is consistent with greater student growth.

What are the possible risks?

Taking part in the research will not entail risks for teachers. The online questionnaire is confidential, may be taken anonymously and is voluntary. If teachers provide their name when completing the questionnaire so that ARCOTS data can be matched, the linked data will have names replaced with codes to restore anonymity. The interviews are voluntary and all results will be reported so that no teacher and no school can be identified.

Teacher's decisions regarding participation in the research will not in any way affect their employment opportunities. Confidentiality will be ensured, and no individual participant or school will be identified in any reports or publications arising from the study. All data will be de-identified and reported at the aggregate level only.

The project processes will be subject to the ongoing scrutiny of University research staff who will ensure that any unforeseen risks are minimised and that support is available should it be required.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. You and teachers are able to withdraw at any time. You and teachers may withdraw any data collected about you at any time up to when the data has been processed.

How will confidentiality be protected?

A database of survey responses will hold the data. The database will be stored on a secure server at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education that requires password access. Any paper research data such as written notes from interviews and signed consent forms will be scanned and also stored on a Melbourne Graduate School of Education secure server that requires password access. After uploading the scans, the original paper forms will be shredded. Files will only be accessed by the researchers named on this information sheet.

All analysis will take place on a copy of the database that has the respondents' personal information de-identified. Names of participating schools will be replaced in the database with codes. No school or participant will be identifiable in the database. Questionnaire results will be reported in aggregate and interviews with pseudonyms.

How will I hear about the results of this project?

On completion of the research, a summary of the findings of the whole project will be provided on request. A summary presentation will be delivered to principals and teachers at participating schools if requested.

The project results will also be published in a PhD thesis published online at Minerva, publications in peer reviewed journals, conference papers and an overall project research summary on the REAP project ResearchGate page

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/Realising-the-Potential-of-Australias-High-Capacity-Students> .

What will happen to project data?

Information that is collected including recordings will be stored electronically on a password-protected server maintained by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Information will be accessed only by researchers named on this information sheet, and it will not be used for any future research.

Data will be retained for five years after the last publication or public release of information arising from the research. When that period of time has elapsed, data retention or disposal will be reviewed. Responsibility for oversight of data retention will be taken by Professor Lorraine Graham.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about the project, please contact Professor Lorraine Graham Lorraine on 03 8344 2630 or by email at lorraine.graham@unimelb.edu.au, or the PhD researcher Jolanta Szymakowski at szymakowskij@unimelb.edu.au or 03 8344 4000 xtn 76184.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this

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research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

Victoria's Department of Education and Training has approved this research in Victorian state schools.

What to do if you would like to participate

If you would like your school to participate, please pass details of this project to your teachers. I have attached an advertisement for the project. The link to the online questionnaire is in the advertisement.

Yours faithfully,
Jolanta Szymakowski
PhD Researcher

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