

School of Education

Family Information Letter

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Adolescent emotions and learning in the classroom: The role of student-teacher relationships and academic self-perceptions

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Your student's school has agreed to take part in the above research project over the next semester, which is currently being undertaken as part of a PhD in Education at The University of Queensland. Emotions play a key role in the wellbeing of individuals, as well as academic success. The emotional state of a student is directly linked to his/her motivation, interest, achievement, and character development, as well as the overall social climate within the classroom. However, little is known about real-time emotions in Australian adolescents and the influence of these emotions in a classroom setting. The goals of this study are to:

1. Identify emotions and triggers of emotional experiences of Australian adolescents;
2. Trial real-time methods of measuring social and emotional experiences in the school setting;
3. Investigate the effect of teacher-student relationships (as perceived by the student) on emotional experiences in the classroom;
4. Identify social and emotional indicators of low versus high achieving adolescents, as determined by teacher-reported achievement, effort and behaviour; and,
5. Explore students' thoughts and feelings on social and emotional experiences in the classroom and how this influences their relationships with teachers, their perceived ability to learn, and their overall reported grades.

This project includes three studies and will take place over the 2016 school year.

Below is an outline of the project:

Before we start, I would like to speak with all students to discuss the importance of the study and to explain what will be asked of them, as well as to answer any questions.

Study 1, Phase 1: Learning more about emotional experiences of Year 10 students, as well as the triggers for these emotions. This phase involves a discussion with all Year 10 students who wish to participate. Students will be given a worksheet and will be asked to write down all of the emotions they experience in Maths, Science and English classes, as well as potential triggers for their emotions; this should only take about 20 minutes. Next during one class period (for Maths, Science and English) students will be asked to write down the emotions they experience, as well as the triggers for the emotions throughout class. This feedback will not require any identifying information. The findings from this phase will be used to develop the S2 computer based emotion application.

Study 1, Phase 2: This phase will pilot the S2 emotion app with all Year 10 students in one Maths, Science and English class. Students will be asked to log into the app and track any emotional experiences, as well as the triggers for these experiences during class. Students will also be asked to wear wireless wristbands, which are non-invasive and measure heart rate and sweat response, informing us of physiological levels of arousal, excitement, or anxiety during class. These wristbands are completely safe and comfortable to wear. Students will also be asked to complete a brief feedback form for the S2 emotion app, based on ease of use and any concerns they may have encountered. This form will be completed at the end of class. This feedback will be used to make any necessary changes to the S2 emotion app, which will be used for measurement in a following study.

Study 2: This study will take place at three time points, over the course of a semester in some student's Maths, Science and English classes. During each time point students will be asked to complete a self-perceptions survey, asking questions about their relationship with their teacher (e.g. *How much do you value your relationship with your teacher?*), and their belief in their ability to learn (e.g. *How well can you get yourself to study Science when there are other interesting things to do?*; and *How easily can you remember what you learned in Maths class?*). Students will complete this 30 minute (or less) survey for their Maths, Science and English class.

Next, during three Maths, Science and English class sessions (over three time points), students will be asked to complete the S2 emotion app, providing self-reported emotions and triggers of these emotions throughout the class period. Finally at the end of Term 3 and 4, student report cards will be collected.

Study 3: In this study, some students will be asked to participate in interviews (maximum of 1 hour), which will provide greater insight on their thoughts and feelings around their emotional experiences in class, as well as their relationships with teachers and perceptions of themselves as learners. Examples of questions that might be asked: *Tell me how your emotional experience in class affects your ability to learn; Do you feel like your relationship with your teacher affects your ability to learn?*

What does my student need to do?

At different times over the course of the study we will ask your student if they want to take part in the study. **If they would like to be involved, we will ask them to sign a consent form.** If they decide at any time that they do not want to be part of the study, that's OK – they do not have to take part. Choosing not to take part will not affect their relationship with the school or the university. If you or your student would like to ask any questions about the study, I will answer them. You can contact me by email: a.bourgeois@uq.edu.au or by phone: 3365 6476.

This study has been cleared by the Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee at the University of Queensland, in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines. If you have any questions that you would like to discuss with me about the study, I will be pleased to answer them. You can contact me on 3365 6476 or via email: a.bourgeois@uq.edu.au.

This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Whilst you are free to discuss your participation in this study with project staff (Amanda Bourgeois, or my advisor: Associate Professor Annemaree Carroll 3365 6476), if you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on 3365 3924.

The research will be undertaken at your child's school and will not interfere or disrupt any child's schooling or staff teaching. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child's consent at any time, which will not affect you or your child's relationship with your school or future involvement with the University. The data collected for this study will only be shared with the research team at the University Of

Queensland. In keeping with university policies participants will be individually coded, and no names will be used in the research database. Once downloaded on a secured, password protected, desktop computer, all data from the emotion app and Empatica wristbands will be erased. All reports on this research will be written in a manner that protects the anonymity of all participants. All hard copies of data will be kept at the University of Queensland, stored in the researcher's locked cupboard. Access to this room is by swipe card and access is limited. All electronic data will be stored on the researcher's password protected hard drive, as supported by the University of Queensland. After completion of the project, data will be kept for a period of seven years before it is destroyed. I would like to emphasise that no information related to your child will be available to any authorities or anyone else. No names will be used in any reports written about the study.

Yours faithfully,

Amanda Bourgeois
PhD Candidate
The University of Queensland