Information for Parents and Carers

Dear parent/carer,

My name is Professor Jenny Gore and I’m from the University of Newcastle. Your child’s school is a part of a research project I am leading. It’s called the Aspirations Longitudinal Study and runs until December 2015. We would like to invite you and your children to take part in the project. The NSW Department of Education is our partner in this important study and it is funded by the Australian Research Council.

This letter gives you more information about the project. It will help you decide if you want your children to take part. If you need to know more about the study, please get in touch.

Why are we doing this research?

We would like to identify the influences on young peoples’ education and job goals. Understanding these influences will help schools to support students to reach those goals.

Who can participate and what will they do?

Teachers will ask your child to fill out a survey in class time. This will happen once a year for three years. We also invite you to fill out a survey each year. The fully secure online surveys take about 30 minutes to fill out.

All information will be kept very secure. Only the research team will have access to the data. Special codes will be used so no names are linked to the data. The information will be destroyed at least five years after the project has finished.

Our research team will write reports, academic papers and theses on the information. We will never reveal your name or your child’s name – you will both be anonymous. You can get a copy of the report from the school office. The school will let you know when it’s available.

What choice do you have and how do you participate?

As a parent/carer, taking part in this project is entirely your choice. If you want to do the survey, please follow the web link. If you want to fill out a paper copy, please ask the school for one. Please put the paper copy in a privacy envelope and return it to the school. We will assume you consent to take part if you fill out and submit the survey.

Under the school’s standing consent arrangements for research, all students will fill out the survey at school. You and your child can decide if the education department gives me the survey data. It is important to find out how goals influence school achievement, so the education department will link the survey data to your child’s NAPLAN and demographic data.

If you do not want me to use your child’s data, please fill out the blue withdrawal form and return it to your child’s school. You can also telephone the school to withdraw your child from the study. The education department will delete your child’s survey information and will not give me their NAPLAN and demographic data.

You can withdraw at any time. Simply return the blue form to your child’s school. Please note that it’s not possible to withdraw data already given to me. There are no penalties for withdrawing.

Please talk to your child about the project and explain it to them. It is important they understand what it is about. They can decide if they want to take part. The decision made will not disadvantage either of you.
What are the risks and benefits of participating?

There are no direct benefits to people taking part. There are no foreseeable risks to your child. You may feel sensitive about some questions in the parent/carer survey. If you have any concerns, please contact Parent Line on 1300 130 052. It is a free and confidential telephone support service.

Would you like more information?

If you would like to ask questions about the project, please do whichever of the following suits your best:

- Read the enclosed information leaflet
- Visit the website – www.newcastle.edu.au/aspirations
- Email my team – aspirations@newcastle.edu.au
- Call the research hotline – (02) 4985 4908
- Connect with us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/uonAspirations) and Twitter (@uonAspirations)

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Kind regards,

Professor Jenny Gore
Head of School and Dean of Education

Working with me on this project are:

Professor James Albright
Director, Educational Research
Institute Newcastle

Dr Erica Southgate
Senior Lecturer in Education

Dr Kathryn Holmes
Senior Lecturer in Education

Professor Max Smith
Deputy Head of School
(Research Development)

Ms Elizabeth McDonald

Mr Hywel Ellis

Project Managers

Please note: We asked your child’s school to post this letter to you. We do not have your home address on file.

Complaints about this research

This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (approval no. H-2012-0276) and by the State Educational Research Approval Process (approval no. 2012188).

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 4921 6333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au.