



iTEACH: Engaging students during the early years of secondary school: a scalable and sustainable teacher professional learning intervention

The influence that teachers have on the motivation of students and their engagement with classroom and school activities is a vital factor for student achievement. The level of engagement a student has at school has been shown to play a critical role in how well they do in key subjects, such as maths and physical education. This in turn is a strong indicator of how well they will do later in life. Those who perform poorly are more likely to drop out of school, have reduced employment opportunities, as well as decreased social and health prospects as adults.

In Australian secondary schools, research has shown that students from low socio-economic communities are less engaged in school than their peers from wealthier backgrounds, which compounds the disadvantages that this population faces. The sharpest decline in engagement happens in the transition from primary to secondary school. Therefore, helping students get involved in school life and study from their first year in high school is a crucial moment for positive change in the lives of underprivileged adolescents.

Australian Catholic University's Institute for Positive Psychology and Education and the Learning Sciences Institute of Australia are undertaking a research project led by Associate Professor Chris Lonsdale that focuses on how teachers can help their students become engaged from the day they arrive at secondary school. This study is aligned with the principles of positive psychology, which

aim to build on existing strengths and successful practices. Phase one of the project involves the observation of teaching practices to identify what teachers already do successfully to inspire and maintain engagement. Phase two utilizes information from these observations to design strategies, provided via online modules, that all teachers can use. The goal of this project is to ensure that students from low socio-economic backgrounds engage positively with learning, and ultimately do well academically, to lay the foundations for well-being and achievement in their adult lives.

Project title: Engaging students during the early years of secondary school: a scalable and sustainable teacher professional learning intervention (iTeach).

Researchers: Associate Professor Chris Lonsdale (IPPE), Professor Carmel Diezmann (LSIA), Professor Nikos Ntoumanis (Curtin), Professor Alexander Yeung (IPPE), Professor Richard Ryan (IPPE/University of Rochester), Associate Professor Mark Beauchamp (University of British Columbia), Professor Anthony Maeder (Western Sydney University), Dr Ryan Hulteen (IPPE)

Start Date: 1 January 2016

End Date: 31 December 2019

Funding Body: Australian Research Council Discovery Project
