

Ngara Wumara Research Project

Improving outcomes for gifted and high-ability Aboriginal students

What is the research about?

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) in collaboration with Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (IPPE) at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) was awarded an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage grant in 2014 to conduct a four year longitudinal research study to address the educational and psychosocial needs of high-ability Aboriginal students which will ultimately benefit all students.

The title of the research is **Cultivating Capability: explicating critical psychosocial drivers of educational outcomes and wellbeing for high-ability Aboriginal students**. The project is also known as the **Ngara Wumara project**; Ngara meaning 'to run', Wumara meaning 'to listen'.

Jane Simmons, Executive Director, Public Schools leads the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee comprises of high level stake-holders including AECG NSW who guide the overall direction of the research.

What studies will be conducted?

The **four year longitudinal research** study involves four studies:

Study 1 will investigate what seeds success for Aboriginal students compared to other Australian and international students. The use of four large international databases will allow university personnel to compare and contrast results across groups and time points with a focus on numeracy, literacy and science.

Study 2 aims to identify the psychosocial determinants of high-ability Aboriginal primary and secondary students' educational outcomes and wellbeing in different settings (rural, remote, and urban). Self-concept and teaching pedagogy will be a focus of this study.

For the **quantitative** component of this study, parents, teachers, principals, and Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal students in Years 3 to 10 from NSW DoE schools will be invited to participate.

For the **qualitative** component of this study, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students will be interviewed at three time point intervals during their transition from Year 6 to Year 7. This component aims to identify factors and strategies for the individual, in the classroom, the school, and the community that optimise high-ability Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students' wellbeing and academic functioning, particularly during their transition from primary to secondary school.

Study 3 will employ an innovative, randomised controlled trial (RCT) intervention to test the saliency and impact of the drivers of success identified in Studies 1, 2, and previous research conducted by the DoE. The target group will be Years K-4 and students will primarily be drawn from Best Start assessment data.

Study 4 will see a pilot of a virtual hub environment for cultivating the capability of high ability Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in English or Mathematics. Hubs will be established based on geographical locations where high-ability Year 5 students are unable to access selective education or gifted and talented classes.

Who will be asked to participate?

An email will be sent to identified schools to invite them to participate.

Approximately 8,150 K-10 students from 1,359 schools will be invited to participate in the project across the various studies. These students have been identified using NAPLAN and Best Start assessment data.

Principals, teachers, parents, Aboriginal education workers, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers will be interviewed for the qualitative components of the research.

What type of feedback will we receive?

School communities involved in the project and AECG will be provided with a summary of the interim findings in December each year (2016, 2017, 2018) and then a final report in mid-2019.

Please note that individual student and schools data will not be identified in the report.

How will this research ultimately benefit students?

The expected outcomes of this research include:

- Improved assessment and tracking tools to identify high ability students
- Enhanced academic self-concepts of Aboriginal students
- Improved accessibility for rural/remote students to gifted and talented programs
- Improved communication about gifted and talented programs available

- Best practice models for improving the transition of Year 6 students to Year 7
- Building teacher capability through professional learning opportunities and establishing virtual networks

Who can we contact about this project?

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