

Teens and Screens Digital Media in Schools

Dear Parent/Carer

My name is Janene Sproul and I teach high school Biology in Australia. Due to the increase in use of digital media in classrooms, I am conducting a research project to examine how much digital media is used in schools and also the ways students who are sensitive to light are supported. For this research, light sensitivity refers to the heightened response to visual light stimuli. The project is being conducted as part of a PhD degree at Murdoch University, Australia.

This letter is an invitation for you and your child/ren to take part in the project, whether they are light sensitive or not. The more information gathered, the more accurate I can be explaining current school digital media use. There is also an information letter for your child that I encourage you to discuss with him/her. More than one child per family can participate, as each child would have his/her own codename and information for the project. When you add your child's codename to your own questionnaire, it provides parental permission for your child to participate. It also links the two groups of data to allow better analysis of your child's answers regarding school environment. More than one child per family can participate, as each child would have his/her own information for the project. Your child's participation in the project would involve completing an online survey.

As a parent/carer of a student participating in this research, the Parent Survey provides additional information on definitions used in schools. It does not matter whether your child is light sensitive or not, all the information is helpful. The survey takes about 10 minutes and asks questions about digital media and schooling. The demographic questions in the parent survey provide information about your child's school environment, which allows better analysis of digital media use. If you answer 'no' to the light sensitive question, then the survey is very short. If you answer 'yes' to the light sensitive question, it continues regarding light sensitive diagnoses and the educational support for your child. If you would like to add information for more than one child, then this option is offered for up to three children in the Parent Survey. Additional child/ren's information will extend the duration of the survey for 2 - 5 minutes per child.

The time taken for the student survey should be about 10 minutes one day after school. Students are asked about amount of sleep and breakfast as this can affect light sensitivity, to comment whether they had 'Lots', 'Some' or 'None' of these items. It also asks whether they take medication or not. The medication question does not ask for type or amount – just whether it is taken every day (preventative) or only when the student begins to feel unwell (intervention). The survey also asks how much digital media is used in each class during the school day. As parental consent to participate in the project, you are invited to share the link to the Student Information Letter found at the bottom of this letter with your child. As with your own survey, your child/ren will be asked for their own consent to participate in the opening page of their survey.

Participation is voluntary. If you, or your child, decide to participate and then later change your mind, you are able to withdraw at any time by exiting the website. Exiting the website before completion of the questionnaire will remove the information from the research and withdrawal from research will not affect participant's relationship with the research team and Murdoch University. The privacy and confidentiality of participants is assured since limited demographic information will be collected. The data will be stored securely on thumbdrive and hard copy within a locked drawer and can only be accessed by Janene Sproul, Dr MacCallum and Dr Ledger. The data will be stored for a minimum period of 5 years, after which it will be destroyed. Data will be destroyed in 2023 by shredding the hard copy and deleting the files on the thumbdrives (Murdoch University Library IT).

Participant privacy and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured except in circumstances that require reporting under the Department of Education *Child Protection* policy, or where the research team is legally required to disclose that information. The information you provide will be used only for this project, and will not be used in any extended or future research. An overall summary of the results will be provided to the principals of each school that participates in the research.

Are there any special requirements for students to be part of this research?

Yes, there are 5. Students need to

- be between the ages of 12 and 18 years old, therefore eligible to be studying high school courses.

- have parental permission to participate in this research.
- be studying high school courses. This is because the questionnaire is structured around a high school timetable.
- be able to understand written English. This is because the questionnaires are written in English.
- be able to access the internet after school hours for 10 mins. This is because the questionnaires are only accessible on the internet.

Do students have to use digital media at school every day to participate?

No. All the information from students using differing amounts of digital media helps. The more information students send in, the more accurate I can be when talking to other teachers how much digital media is currently being used in schools.

Do students have to be sensitive to light to participate?

No. All the information from people with and without light sensitivity helps build a better picture.

As a parent, are there any special requirements to be part of this research?

Yes, there are 2. You need to be

- able to understand written English, as the survey is written in English.
- able to access the internet to complete the survey.

As a parent, what will happen to the information I give - is it private and confidential?

I use Survey Monkey for the surveys because the information collected does not contain your name, email or IP address. It is intended that the findings of this study will be published in journal articles, sent to schools and spoken of at conferences. As the data submitted to the surveys is anonymous, it cannot be withdrawn once it is submitted. A summary of findings from this research will be available from the www.photosensitivity.info website 'Digital Media in Schools' page after November 2018.

You can ask for a copy of early results by requesting 'Preliminary Findings' at janene.sproul@murdoch.edu.au by November 2018, and an email with a summary of the preliminary findings will be sent to you.

The research has been approved by Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (ref 2016/033).

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please contact me by email provided below. If you wish to speak with an independent person about the conduct of the project, please contact Dr Erich von Dietze, Murdoch University Ethics Department, on +61 8 9360 6170.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2016/033). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics & Integrity on Tel. 08 9360 6677 (+61 8 9360 6677 for overseas studies) or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.