



METUCHEN HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parent or Guardian:

Our school has been selected to participate in a Department of Education funded research study this spring conducted in collaboration with researchers from the Educational Testing Service (ETS), a nationwide leader in educational assessment, Boston College, and the University of Maryland. Students in randomly selected math classes, in three New Jersey school districts will participate in this study.

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to examine a way in which educators can potentially bolster or maintain students' motivation to engage in challenging math tasks.

Procedure: Students will engage in the study as part of their regularly scheduled class time. Their math teacher will ask the students to complete two challenging math tasks on the computers in the classroom. During and after each of the math activities, the students will answer questions about their experience with the activities, such as how difficult they found the last problem to be, how good they are at math activities like the one they worked on, how enjoyable/important/ useful/effortful they found the activity to be, and how nervous or worried the activity made them. After completing both math activities, the students will be asked to compare them in a number of ways (e.g., which one was preferable, which one took longer, etc.). The entire session should take about 45 minutes.

Confidentiality: All of your child's responses during the in-class study session will be recorded on secure servers at ETS and will be stored with a unique ID number generated for the purposes of the study. Your child's individual responses will not be provided to us by the researchers. Any data shared with us will be in the form of general reports that summarize findings for groups of students (e.g., all the participating students from Metuchen High School).

After all of the study sessions have been completed at Metuchen High School, we will provide ETS with demographic information (e.g., age, race, gender, disability status) and achievement data (e.g., grades, standardized test scores) pertaining to all participating students. This information will be transmitted to ETS using the same ID numbers described above. We will not provide any information (e.g., names, social security numbers) that could be used to directly identify your child. Using these ID numbers to store and transmit students' data greatly reduces the possibility that anyone working at ETS, Boston College, or the University of Maryland would be able to correctly identify a particular child's responses or achievement scores. The only way that researchers would be able to identify the responses and achievement scores of a particular student is based on a knowledge of that student's unique demographic characteristics.

Risks and Benefits: Some students enjoy participating in this type of activity; however, it is likely that most students in the study will be unable to solve many of the math problems in the allotted time and that this may cause them to experience some level of discomfort. It is also possible that some students may feel uncomfortable about answering certain questions about the math activities. [*To minimize any risks associated with the study, students will be able to stop participating at any time.*] The researchers will also include instructions before they start the activity and a debriefing procedure at the end of the study session, which will involve describing the purpose of the study to the students and explaining to them that it is normal to experience feelings of discomfort or frustration during these types of challenging math tasks. As is always the case, the study may include risks that are unknown at this time. In terms of benefits, the researchers do not anticipate that participation will provide direct, individual benefit to the child. However, in addition to earning monetary incentives for our school, by participating in the research our students will be providing useful information for researchers and educators by helping them to better understand novel ways in which they can bolster or maintain students' motivation to engage in challenging math tasks.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal: Your child's participation is voluntary. If you prefer that your child not participate in this study, please contact Mr. Brian Stike, Assistant Principal and Testing Coordinator at bstike@metboe.k12.nj.us. Withdrawing your child from the study will have no effect on their standing in the school or any service they might receive at school.

Sincerely,



Edward C. Porowski