# 2019 VATE Curriculum Committee Forum

Teachers in elementary and secondary classrooms monitor classroom behavior, collect information about student progress, and share information with parents with apps like Class Dojo, Active Classroom, and ParentSquare, as well as via larger platforms like BlackBoard.

However, education researchers and academics who prepare future teachers have only recently begun to examine the ways the proliferating use of these platforms may be shaping in class dialogue – and to what extent or how that might matter – new methods of classroom management, and changing the way teachers and parents communicate.

For instance, one popular app, Class Dojo, allows teachers to mass-message all parents in the class, or message parents individually. Teachers frequently use it as a behavior management tool in lieu of more old-fashioned methods, and much of the emerging work on Class Dojo and similar apps focuses on their behavior management functions. Some of this research examines the efficacy of the app for behavior management vs. paper and pencil methods.

Other research is beginning to focus on the extent to which the app's underlying social-emotional focus 'reinforces and rewards students for behaviours that are becoming the basis for emerging school accountability systems.'

What we do not yet know is how teachers are engaging with these apps in practice, and what theories teachers hold about app use.

In my research I have asked three kinds of questions related to:

- **practice**: What do teachers use apps and platforms for? How regularly do they engage with the apps in and out of school? How are their app use practices reshaping their behavior management and/or home-school communication practices?

- **conceptual**: What are teachers' conceptions of the apps themselves? What is their understanding of where the apps come from, why they are using them, why they chose one app over another?

- **data-related:** To what extent do teachers think about the data their practices are generating?  Do they understand who owns the data, and what rights they, their students, and their students' parent have vis a vis data ownership, sharing, and privacy? Do they attend to any of the privacy settings of the apps they use?

Findings suggest three main themes, with many implications for educator preparation and classroom and home-school life:

- Teacher participants focused on the ways they used apps to enhance their existing practices, from behavior management to sending out flyers and information to parents.

- Teachers did have concerns with privacy and data ownership, but those were mitigated in their minds by school districts' vetting of apps.

- Teachers' framings of access and inclusion. In the cases of apps that connected teachers with families or parents, teachers tended to see parents who used the apps as good at parent participation, and, conversely, those who did not choose to use the apps as uninterested or uninvolved with their child's schooling.

In this presentation, I discuss these findings, as well as the ways that teachers' use of apps and platforms is reshaping home-school communication, with little attention by teacher educators to date.  I am eager to talk through and discuss these findings, and their implications, with practicing teachers in Australia.