

Title of Project:

A Multiple Stakeholder Approach to the Interpretation
and Use of Chinese High School Students' Grades

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TIRF Research Topic Investigated:

Language Assessment

Project Summary:

Grading is one of the key classroom assessment practices where teachers collect and evaluate evidence from individual students' assessment tasks, and assign and report a composite grade at the end of a term. Grades are positioned at the center of students' educational experience, and serve important purposes such as communicating with various stakeholders about student achievement of learning goals and making high-stakes decisions such as admission and graduation (Brookhart et al., 2016). However, the validity of grade interpretation and use has been a consistent concern in grading research. Studies in language assessment mostly focus on the validity issue on large-scale testing programs, and validity theories in educational measurement do not fit well into classroom assessment context (e.g., Shepard, 2006). A research agenda on conceptualizing and investigating the validity of grade interpretation and use in classroom assessment has been repeatedly called for.

This research timely responds to the call by proposing a validation framework for grade interpretation and use that aligns with the principles of validity for classroom assessment (e.g., Moss, 2003): context dependency, information sufficiency, and consequences. Guided by this framework, this study investigates grades assigned by English language teachers in Chinese high schools and used by local stakeholders, including students, parents, and principals in China and their interpretation and use by admissions decision-makers across educational systems in Canada. The findings of this study will shed light on the alignment of grades' construct towards proper grade interpretation and use in helping Chinese high school students pursue higher education in Canada.