



A CALIFORNIA DISTINGUISHED SCHOOL

PCHS USING STUDENTS IN RESEARCH POLICY

Approved by Board of Trustees January 15, 2008

Policy for Using Students in Research

BACKGROUND:

Action research is the process by which educators seek to improve educational practices through conducting research and taking actions based upon the results of that research. For example, an educator might explore the relationship between a particular instructional strategy and student response. If the results are favorable, then this instructional strategy may be applied and shared with colleagues. Based upon the outcomes, other actions might be taken to improve instruction, educational practices, or the educational community.

REASONING:

We need a policy so that educators are consistent and have integrity when doing educational research involving people. Furthermore, we need to protect our school and those who participate in the research as well as those conducting the research.

ACTION:

Adopt the following policy which is a modification of the LAUSD policy from

http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,136510&_dad=ptl&_schema=PTL_EP

GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH

Palisades Charter High School (PCHS) recognizes professional development as an important and essential component to maintaining and developing excellent instruction and curriculum programs. These programs are strengthened by the incorporation of formal and informal action research.

On the other hand, the PCHS has legal and moral obligations that require oversight of research activities conducted with PCHS resources (such as data, facilities, employee time, and access to students). These obligations include:

- Protecting students and employees from risk of harm, violations of rights, and losses of privacy
- Protecting the educational process from unwarranted distractions and interruptions
- Protecting public resources including data from misappropriation for private or unjustified use

Therefore, all research projects not initiated by Palisades Charter High School, including research done by Staff on behalf of external entities, must be approved by the Academic Principal or equivalent educational authority as recognized by the Board of Palisades

Charter High School. Approval is based upon Researchers following the legal and ethical principles set forth later in this document, as well as the approval procedure.

Approval requires that the research is designed to answer well-formed research questions of educational importance, and uses methods that are appropriate to the research questions. Elements of the research design, including the theoretical framework, hypotheses, sample selection, instruments, and analysis plan should support the goals of the research, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to communicate these things clearly in the proposal. Even research that imposes no risks may be rejected by if it is poorly designed, described, or justified.

Approval does not impose any obligation on any person, school, or office to cooperate with researchers. Researchers bear responsibility to inform potential participants of the anticipated benefits and burdens in obtaining their consent. The burden on participants should not be excessive and cannot cause any harm to participants.

Furthermore, approval does not constitute any agreement to release administrative or educational data to researchers. Requests for data should not interrupt the normal operation of school. Depending on the research design, substantial time and effort may be required for staff to provide requested data with the appropriate selection and matching of records and concealment of personal identities. Such assistance must be requested directly from the appropriate offices, and provided at their discretion.

I. Legal and Ethical Principles

A. Legal Protections

Approval requires that all research adhere to federal regulations regarding the protection of human subjects, and regarding family and pupil rights, privacy, and protection. Researchers must become familiar with these guidelines. Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (34 CFR Part 97). It can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/fund/reg/humansub/part97.html>. One subsection in particular should be noted, Additional ED Protections for Children Involved as Subjects in Research: <http://www.ed.gov/print/policy/fund/reg/humansub/part97-3.html>

Note that research involving “normal educational practices” is exempt from IRB (Institute Review Board) review under 34 CFR Part 97.101(b)(1). However, 34 CFR Part 97.101(b)(2) makes it clear that survey and interview procedures are not included in the definition of normal educational practices. For such procedures, what is required for exemption from IRB review is that information be recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified, and that any disclosure outside of the research cannot reasonably be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Because of the special relationship that schools have with students and their families, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA: 34 CFR Part 99) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA: 34 CFR Part 98) impose stricter requirements on the PCHS than those imposed on researchers by IRB review or its exemption. These rules may be found at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/pdf/ferparegs.pdf> http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/34cfr98_04.html

In any case, the proposal should identify the protections relevant to working with students and student data. If the research involves contact with students other than normal educational practices, student and parent consent forms must be included. Note that even with parental consent, minors in school settings must be given the opportunity to assent or refuse to participate in research activities other than routine educational practices.

B. Ethical Principles

Researchers are expected to abide by the code of ethics for their respective disciplines. When students are involved the following principles for student participation must be followed:

- ✓ **Primary Focus:** Primary focus must remain on what is best for the INDIVIDUAL student, not the study.
- ✓ **Protect Identity of Student :** Study must protect identity of student (example: removal of student name from displayed work)
- ✓ **No negative consequences:** Students can choose to NOT participate or may withdraw at any time with no negative consequences.

In addition, the following principles adapted from the American Psychological Association's (1992) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct should be incorporated in the research design. (The entire code is available at <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code.html>.)

- ✓ **Familiarity with Ethics Code.** Researchers have an obligation to be familiar with applicable ethics codes and their application to research. Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an ethical standard is not itself a defense to a charge of unethical conduct.
- ✓ **Compliance with Law and Standards.** Researchers must plan and conduct research in a manner consistent with federal and state law and regulations, as well as professional standards governing the conduct of research, and particularly those standards governing research with human participants.
- ✓ **Informed Consent to Research.** Researchers must use language that is reasonably understandable to research participants in obtaining their appropriate informed consent (except when consent is waive-able). Such informed consent is appropriately documented. For persons who are legally incapable of giving informed consent, researchers nevertheless must (1) provide an appropriate explanation, (2) obtain the participant's assent, and (3) obtain appropriate permission from a legally authorized person, if such substitute consent is permitted by law. An example of an informed consent letter must be submitted as part of the approval process and follow the guidelines set forth in the approval procedure. The Academic Principal as well as the researcher must sign the letter and provide contact information.
- ✓ **Minimizing Intrusions on Privacy.** In order to minimize intrusions on privacy, researchers shall include in written and oral reports, consultations, and the like, only information germane to the purpose for which the communication is made. Researchers may discuss confidential information obtained in schools, or evaluative data concerning students, teachers, and other research participants, only for appropriate scientific or professional purposes and only with persons who are clearly concerned with such matters and have pledged to uphold confidentiality.

II. The Approval Process

The approval process has three parts: 1. Submission of the proposal, 2. Review of proposal, 3. Statement of agreement. Once completed the researcher may start the research project.

A. Submitting the Research Proposal

The proposal must be submitted to the Academic Principal. It should include the following letters and plan:

- a letter to the Academic Principal that outlines the research project and methods.
- the letter(s) of consent to participate in research. Consent must be obtained from
 1. Parents/Guardians:
Parents /guardians of students must give consent in writing and, when appropriate, students should also give their consent.

In writing the letter of consent, the researcher should

- ✓ Explain research purpose and goals.
- ✓ Explain role of student
- ✓ Explain how data will be collected and give timeline for student involvement
- ✓ Explain any risks and benefits for the students.
- ✓ Explain how to obtain end of study results.
- ✓ Give assurance of confidentiality and privacy.
- ✓ Explain rights to participate or not participate, and assure that this decision will not affect student education or grade
- ✓ Have Academic Principal sign letter as act of approval and knowledge of research

✓ Provide contact information

A sample fill-in-the-blank letter is included.

2. Other adults

Consent is implied when an adult agrees to participate in an interview, survey, or questionnaire.

3. Institutional Review must be done by either by the university/college teaching program or PCHS. If the study is done in conjunction with a university, the university must also approve the study, including the research methods, and methods to obtain consent. A university sponsor and contact information must be provided

- A plan for the results should be discussed with the Academic Principal
Results of the study must be available upon request
Results should be shared with colleagues and interested persons
Submission of articles written as a result of the study must be approved by the Academic Principal

B. Review of the Research Proposal

Proposal review can take up to up to two weeks and will yield one of three possible outcomes:

- 1) Approval: If approved, notification will be made by e-mail, perhaps with suggestions for minor alterations to the research design. The approval letter will indicate that the Academic Principal has approved the proposal for research, but will not act as an endorsement for the research.
- 2) Conditional Approval: The proposal may be conditionally approved, subject to specific changes or additional documentation. Upon satisfaction of the conditions, which does not require submission of a full revised proposal, an approval letter will be provided. The Academic Principal can discuss changes and progress with the researcher(s).. Any revision or additional documentation, the statement of agreement, and an executive summary of findings should be submitted to the committee.
- 3) Rejection. If the proposal is not approved, the researcher(s) might be given the opportunity to submit a revised proposal. This is not the same as a conditional acceptance, and a full revised proposal must be submitted for review.

C. Statement of Agreement

All researchers must sign a statement of agreement. This statement establishes that the research activities are in compliance with existing legal and ethical codes. It further establishes that the research you performed will not differ significantly from the research proposed, and that the researcher(s) are to provide the Academic Principal with a summary of the findings. Violation of this statement of agreement will be considered a breach of contract.

D. Execution of Research

All research shall follow guidelines and approval procedures. The Academic Principal must be made aware of any problem as quickly as possible

PCHS holds the right to stop the project due to any non-compliance to this policy or potential adverse affects.



DATE

Dear (Parent/Guardian Name),

Thank you for allowing me to use **name of student's** work in my research. Here is a copy of the "informed consent" letter indicating your permission for me to use **name of student's** work.

Again I assure you that student privacy will be respected and protected and that this study does not impact student grades or school curriculum.

I really appreciate your cooperation.

Warmest regards,

NAME OF RESEARCHER



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Dear Parents:

I am conducting research on _____ and would like you to allow your child to participate in my research project. My project investigates _____. My research question is: _____

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? HOW WILL RESULT BE USED? EXAMPLE: I believe that the results of this research will benefit the students in this class as it allows me to see if using cartoons will help uncover misconceptions and understand student thinking. Results will be discussed in the integrated science professional learning community team meetings.

My research will be carried out during (**WHEN AND LONG/HOW MANY CLASS SESSIONS?**), and will not interfere with the class curriculum. **HOW WILL STUDENTS BE INVOLVED? EXAMPLE:** Students will be asked to describe their ideas on a topic before and after the lesson. One class will receive a cartoon with their journal prompt, while the other class will not. The journals will be analyzed and compared to see if the use of cartoons resulted in a difference between the two classes. A follow-up questionnaire will be given to all students to gather information about their perceptions.

STATEMENT ABOUT HOW PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY WILL BE RESPECTED & PRESERVED. EXAMPLE: None of the students' names will be used when presenting the results of this research project. Nor will any student be penalized if he or she does not participate in this study or follow-up questionnaire. In addition, I would like to assure you that this research has been reviewed and approved by the (name of university/college), as well as by (the Academic Principal).

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about this research project and will also be willing to share the results with you if you are interested. I can be reached at phone number or via e-mail at Email address. If you have additional questions, you may contact (the Academic Principal) at (310) 230-6623.

Please return this letter with your signature indicating your decision about your child's participation in the research project. A copy of this letter will be sent upon request.

Sincerely,

NAME OF RESEARCHER

PAMELA MAGEE, PH.D.
Executive Director and Principal
Palisades Charter High School

Yes, I _____ give permission for my child, _____,
(Parent signature) (Child's name)
to be included in the research project carried out by **NAME OF RESEARCHER**, regarding the **NAME OF RESEARCH PROJECT**. I understand that my child's name will not be used in the presentation of the results of this study.

No, I _____ will not allow my child _____ to be included in this research project.
(Parent signature) (Child's name)

I _____ (do not need) _____ (would like) a copy of this letter.