

Carnegie Mellon University
Children's School
Policies for Research Methods Projects
2024-2025

The Children's School's standard research policies have been adapted to meet the time constraints associated with research methods courses. The primary difference between the two sets of procedures is that methods course instructors complete some of the standard steps for their whole group of students.

Step 1: Becoming Research Eligible

The Carnegie Mellon Institutional Review Board stipulates that all individuals conducting research with human subjects must demonstrate completion of the education program on the use of human participants in research taken through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Specific instructions can be found on the IRB web site under Required Training (<https://www.cmu.edu/research-compliance/human-subjects-research/training.html>). Access the course at <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage/> and take Human Subjects Research course called Social - Behavioral - Educational Basic (if it's your first time) or Refresher (if you have taken it before). Present your completion certificate to Dr. Carver along with the other documents described below.

Step 2: Obtaining Research Approval

Dr. Sharon Carver (8-1499) must approve all requests to make observations or conduct research at the Children's School so that the costs and benefits of the study can be evaluated according to both research ethics and the school's philosophy (e.g., no competition, commercial characters, extrinsic rewards, etc.). For standard course assignments, this step is completed by the instructor prior to preparing the course syllabus to avoid conflicts between courses. Dr. Carver then forwards copies of the syllabus and course assignments to the Institutional Review Board for their records. In order to best meet the semester timeframe, Dr. Carver schedules very few other studies during the weeks that the research methods students are conducting research. For this reason, it is important that both instructors and students follow the syllabus closely.

For the **final projects**, each research team must submit **a complete proposal, including all instructions, stimuli, measures and the parent experiment description**, to the course instructor and to Dr. Carver. Including detail in these proposals is very important because the reviewers serve as the Institutional Review Board for these course projects, as well as fulfilling their regular roles. Students may not begin collecting data for their final projects until all requested revisions have been completed and shown to Dr. Carver.

Step 3: Reviewing the Study with the Educators

Dr. Carver communicates the nature and timing of course projects to the Children’s School educators.

Step 4: Establishing Rapport with the Children

Prior to beginning each study that will involve direct interaction with children (i.e., as opposed to pure observation), each researcher must schedule a time to **meet and interact with the children** (e.g., read a story to them, have lunch with them, etc.) **in each of the groups that will participate in the study**. It is important to establish rapport with the children so that they will behave as naturally as possible in the experimental situation.

- To **schedule familiarization sessions**, call Mrs. Kathie Stilinovich (412-268-2199) or email kstilino@andrew.cmu.edu. The sessions are typically scheduled Monday through Thursday at the children's circle, lunch, and journal times (see schedule below).

Familiarization Schedule 2024-2025

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS
AM Preschool				
3’s circle	9:30-10:00am	9:30-10:00am	9:30-10:00am	9:30-10:00am
3’s lunch	12:15-12:40pm	12:15-12:40pm	12:15-12:40pm	12:15-12:40pm
4s circle	9:30-10:00am	9:30-10:00am	9:30-10:00am	9:30-10:00am
4s lunch	12:30–1:00pm	12:30–1:00pm	12:30–1:00pm	12:30–1:00pm
Kindergarten				
5’s	9:45-10:15m (Circle) 1:30-2:05pm (Journal)			

- Plan to arrive at the Children’s School at least 5 minutes before your scheduled familiarization time. You will need to **buzz at the entrance** to gain admittance to the school.
- When you enter the school, go to the office to **sign the log book** and **get your nametag**. You must wear the nametag at all times during your visit to the school.
- **Turn off your cell phone**. Cell phone use is not permitted in classrooms or labs. If you must make a call while in the office suite, please ask a staff member for an unobtrusive place to do so.
- **Wait in the office** until a Children’s School staff person is available to walk you into the classroom. You may leave your belongings in the office.
- Plan to **spend about 15-20 minutes** talking with the children. For the 3’s and 4’s this will either be lunch time or circle time and for the Kindergarten it will be circle time or journal. The teacher will help guide your interaction so try to spend a little time at each table and be actively involved with the children (without causing disruption) so that they will

remember you when you come for your research sessions. The lunch/journal times are equally helpful for observing the teachers to learn effective ways to interact with young children.

- To engage young children in conversation, **use very specific topics** that are within their experience. During lunch, talk about foods (e.g., favorite foods, how foods are grown, colors and shapes of foods, etc.). Ask about the activities the child has done that day (e.g., Did you hear a story today? Tell me about it. OR Did you play in the red room today? Tell me what you played.). Once the child is sharing experiences, you can share yours and extend the conversation (e.g., I like to read stories about animals. What animals do you like? OR I like sand too, especially at the beach. Did you ever go to the beach?).
- When you are finished with your familiarization session, **return to the office**. When you are ready, ask a staff member to deactivate the alarm before you leave. Otherwise, the alarm will sound when you exit the school.

Step 5: Scheduling / Conducting Research Sessions

- To **schedule research sessions**, call or email Mrs. Kathie Stilinovich (412-268-2199) or kstilino@andrew.cmu.edu, **before noon** on the Friday before the week that you want to conduct the study. In your email, be sure to indicate the specific group of children you want as subjects and the particular time slot (see schedule below). The teachers are only responsible for having children available during the scheduled times that they are given on Friday afternoons for the following week. Students should be willing to flexibly adjust to the unavoidable fluctuations in the daily schedule.
- Follow the **same entry, sign-in, and exit procedures** as described in Step 4.

General Guidelines for working with young children

- Please review and follow the attached guidelines.

General Guidelines for Individual or Small Group Testing

- Children can participate in **only one study each day**.
- During most of the following time blocks, the teacher will conduct one “circle time” that involves gathering all of the children to discuss the school day. Since this time is both important and short, we ask that researchers refrain from taking children during that time. Kindergarten circle time typically begins at 9:45am, 4’s circle time at approximately 9:30 am, 3’s circle time about 9:30am. Feel free to ask the teacher about circle time plans when you enter the classroom to get a more precise estimate for that day.

RESEARCH SCHEDULE 2024-2025

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS
AM Preschool				
3	8:30-9:30am 10:15am-12:15pm	8:30-9:30am 10:15am-12:15pm	8:30-9:30am 10:15am-12:15pm	8:30-9:30am 10:15am-12:15pm
4	8:30-9:30am 10:15am-12:15pm 1:00-2:20pm	8:30-9:30am 10:15am-12:15pm 1:00-2:20pm	8:30-9:30am 10:15am-12:15pm 1:00-2:20pm	8:30-9:30am 10:15am-12:15pm 1:00-2:20pm
Kindergarten				
5	8:45 - 9:45am, 10:15-11:15am 1:15pm-2:20 pm			

Note: Research Groups that work well at the Children’s School may be offered additional timeslots for final project research, depending on availability.

- **Select one or two subjects** from the Eligible Subjects Box in the office. **Check the participation list** to make sure that the child has not already been tested that day or is not reserved for a longitudinal study. **Do not test** a child whose photo card is not in the box or who already has a code written in the space beside their name for that day.
- Enter the preschool or kindergarten and **use the photo cards to identify the child** you wish to test. **Do not test** a child who is already wearing a participation sticker.
- **Be sensitive when choosing** a child to participate. Choose children who are at free play stations before those at stations with specified activities/products to be completed and those who can quickly bring closure to an activity rather than those who are far from finishing. Please don't hover over the child as she finishes or rush her unnecessarily.
- **Use the phrase** "*Name, it's your turn to play my _____ game now. Let me help you put the blocks away (or whatever closure seems reasonable) and then we'll go.*"
- **Place the photo card** for the subject on the Research Participation Board when you take the child from the classroom. If possible, inform a teacher when you take a child to participate in a study and then return the child to a teacher, so he or she knows the child is back in the classroom.
- Each child has the right to refuse to participate in the study. If the child says, “Maybe later”, try to ask one more time later in the session. If the child refuses again, the card then goes into the **Refusal** envelope, and then you will approach another child.
- On your way to the lab with a participant, **enter your code number** beside the name of the subject on the Research Participation List posted in the office.
- Always **keep the door open** while working with a child.

- At the end of the session, put a "**participation sticker**" on the child to alert the parents that the child has been in a study. The sticker should give the parents a clue for asking the child about the activity, such as, "Ask me about the lemonade stand game."
- Put the child's name on a copy of your **Parent Experiment Description**. Have the child walk with you to his/her locker before returning to an activity so that you can **put a copy of your experiment description** in the child's backpack. Sample descriptions are attached.
- When you return with the child to the classroom, move his or her picture from the Research Participation Board into the **envelope marked "PARTICIPATION"**. The term "participation" applies even if the child did not complete the session.
- All participants receive the "participation sticker" and Parent Experiment Description, even if the child chooses to end the game early. If the child does not complete the session, use the red pen by the Research Participation List to **put an X next to the code number** that you entered for that child earlier.

NOTE: If the Fire Alarm rings while you are testing a child, take the child immediately to the nearest Reflection Garden exit to join the class along the fence. We will make every effort to avoid fire drills during testing sessions, so assume that an alarm is signaling a fire.

***** Hints for maintaining good relations with the Children's School Staff *****

- Speak, behave, and dress in a professional manner.
- **Make arrangements well ahead of time.**
- Keep your cell phone off while working at the Children's School.
- Remember that you might want to conduct additional studies at the Children's School, so work on developing a good reputation here.

Step 6: Reporting Results

After a project has been approved, Mrs. Stilinovich will post a description of it on the research bulletin board and, when possible, include a copy in our weekly news. At the completion of the project, the methods course instructor is responsible for submitting copies of students' **assignment reports** (one report per class) and **final projects** (one report per group) to Dr. Carver, who will then communicate them to the staff and the parents. If you do not want to keep your group's poster after the poster session, please bring it to the Children's School for display in the entrance hallway.

Special Considerations for Research at a Laboratory School

Prepared for Researchers at the Carnegie Mellon University Children's School
Dr. Sharon M. Carver

Because children in a laboratory school context participate in many studies each semester, everyone involved needs to collaborate to ensure that each research experience is positive and leaves the child interested in further participation. In addition, we must think beyond the ethics of any one study to consider the potential impact of studies on each other, the combined impact of studies, and the impact of the collective research endeavor on the school and classroom operations. Furthermore, because parents are signing the consent form prior to the study designs, we must take care to only approve studies that we are confident would pass the parents' scrutiny. All of these considerations require that the study review be in some ways more stringent than the standard Institutional Review Board process. At the same time, because it is all done by the laboratory school director, the process can also be timelier, access to a sizeable subject pool is ensured, and researchers can arrange for quick study modifications following pilot testing.

With that background in mind, here are some aspects of studies that will raise red flags in the review process at the Children's School.

- Studies with procedures inconsistent with Children's School philosophy, such as studies that induce competition between children or give extrinsic rewards for participation. We aim to help researchers design research tasks that the children will enjoy for their own sake, rather than because they can prove themselves better than others or because they get a reward. Note that the "participation sticker" is designed to help the parents know that the child played a game with a researcher, not as a reward for playing the game well. If, however, the task involves a creative activity with a product, the child may keep the artwork. Here again, it is not a reward but rather a direct result of the child's own effort.
- Studies that introduce topics or commercial characters to which some or all of our parents would prefer their children not be exposed. Such topics would include religion, sexuality, death, dark arts, monsters, zombies, etc. Since some of our families choose not to expose their children to television, even common children's characters from Sesame Street, Disney, etc. are not permitted as stimuli in research studies.
- Studies that might induce the negative characteristics that they are designed to investigate, such as gender stereotypes, peer pressure, guilt, etc. In these cases, approval will depend on whether researchers have included procedures to counter the potential induction effect (e.g., clearly state that both boys and girls can choose any career after asking children to rate whether men or women are more likely to have certain jobs). In all cases, researchers aim for children to leave the study in a positive mood with good feeling about themselves and their performance. The children have helped the researcher with his/her work, so they should understand that the researcher appreciates that help.

Sample Experiment Descriptions

****Research Methods Instructors will provide the experiment description for the whole class project. Make sure the description includes a “game name” that will be memorable to the children, the students’ and professor’s names, and information about the purpose, design, procedure, and relevance of the study. Including pictures of sample stimuli often helps with the explanation. NOTE: Please use a 12pt font and double spacing.**

The Face Game

Psychologists have studied face recognition to better understand the storage of visual information in long-term memory and to determine why certain features are remembered while others are not. In this experiment, we are studying whether or not children are able to locate faces in a crowd faster when the faces are familiar to them. At the beginning of the experiment, we show the child a series of adult faces, some familiar (Children’s School staff members) and some unfamiliar. After the child looks at each photograph, we replace it with a photograph of a crowd and ask the child to find the person whose picture we just showed. We record the child’s reaction time for locating the individual. In the second part of the game, children are shown three pictures of individuals at once and then asked to locate all of them in one crowd picture. We expect that children will locate familiar faces faster than unfamiliar ones and that working on three faces simultaneously will be more difficult. We will also compare the performance of 4 and 5 year olds to determine whether there are developmental differences on this task.

Experimenters: Student1, Student 2, Student 3

The Frog Hop Game

Our group from the Developmental Research Methods class taught by Dr. David Klahr is examining the effects of adult opinions on children age three and five. More specifically, our study focuses on how much children are influenced by adult opinion during a simple game.

Each child will be shown an image of a frog either moving or staying in the same place. An adult confederate will then report whether or not he/she thinks the frog moved and then ask the child, “Did you see the frog move?” We will be comparing the extent to which children’s private written responses and public oral responses conform to the adult opinion.

Previous research in this area has shown that people of all ages are subject to conformity. However, the majority of studies of this type have been performed with adult subjects. We expect that children will conform more when asked to respond publicly as opposed to privately. We also expect to find that children will be more likely to agree with a credible confederate, and will be more likely to answer independently when the confederate is presented with less credibility (e.g. “I’m not very good at this game.”).

Experimenters: list of student names

The Pebbles Game

Student1 and Student2, two students in Dr. Anne Fay’s Developmental Research Methods class, are conducting a study examining problem solving skills in three- and five-year-olds. The children will be asked to find a way to move five pebbles from a table into a shoebox on a nearby chair without touching the pebbles with their hands, arms or any other parts of their body. On a table will be the five small pebbles, a strainer, a pencil, some paper, and a cardboard piece. Children will be told that the objects on the table might help them to move the pebbles. If they have difficulty discovering ways to move the pebbles without touching them, more specific hints about what objects to use and how to use them will be given. We are interested in the strategies that children develop to move the pebbles, the kind of hints they need, and whether differences exist between the three and five year olds.

Children's School Guidelines

In addition to following the research procedures, it is essential that research methods students adhere to the following guidelines that apply to all participants in the laboratory school community.

Be Professional.

Keep confidential any discussions concerning the case of a specific child. The school staff trusts you to use such information and observations only to work more effectively with that child. Never discuss students with parents or in any situation other than with that child's teacher. **Please remember that you have signed a confidentiality agreement that is kept on file at the Children's School.**

Choose clothes that are professional and practical. Working with young children may mean stains, running, stretching, and bending, so clothes should be comfortable, modest and easily washable. Shoes should be close-toed and appropriate for outdoor activities.

Refrain from drinking or eating in the classroom except with a teacher's permission during the children's designated lunch times. Please leave coffee cups and other drink containers in the office.

Cell phones should not be used during classroom time. If there is a situation where you need to use your cell phone, please let the teacher know and leave the classroom.

Leave all bags/bookbags in the main office when you sign in.

Be a Model.

You are in our school as an adult model, not a playmate. If your behavior is calm and controlled and your tone of voice quiet and pleasant, the children's will be, too. Provide a consistent, fair model of behavior for children even when they are moody. A pleasant word from you may often change the direction of a situation. Children depend on you to be helpful, courteous and sincere.

Be Responsible.

Sign the log book in the school office each day; arrive and leave the school promptly as scheduled; call 412-268-2199 if you need to cancel a research session.

Be Open.

Take your direction from the staff. Accept criticism as constructive, realizing that the staff members are trying to assist you in developing procedures and techniques for working with children.

Working With Young Children

Ways With Children* - In Speech

1. Use your voice as a teaching tool (calm, moderate tones).
2. Use a tone of voice that will help the child feel confident and reassured, not afraid or guilty or ashamed.
3. Speak in a very matter of fact manner and **avoid baby talk with children.**
4. Make an effort to speak in simple sentences but in a regular tone of voice.
5. Make suggestions or state directions in a positive rather than a negative form.
Example: "Park your tricycle here." - rather than "No, don't do it that way."
6. Give children a choice only when you intend to leave the situation up to them; do not offer the child a choice when there is no choice. For example: "It's your turn to play this game" instead of "Do you want to play this game?".
7. Redirecting the child is likely to be most effective when it is consistent with the child's own motives or interests.
8. When young children are drawing, it is better to ask "Would you like to tell me something about your drawing?" than "What is it?" since children may not always know what it is themselves.
9. Avoid trying to motivate a child by making comparisons between the child and another or by encouraging competition.
10. If a child is tattling on another, respond with, "Thank you for telling me" and then deal with the situation as appropriate. That phrase is also helpful when a child is relating a story to you but you aren't sure you understand.

*Extracted from pages 313-331 of *The Nursery School* by Katherine Read, published by W. B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia, 1971. Permission to reprint granted by the publisher.