

Carnegie Mellon University
Children's School

Policies for Non-Research Projects
2024-2025

The Children's School is the laboratory school for the Psychology Department in the college of Humanities and Social Sciences. After all of the Psychology research and course projects have been scheduled, requests for course or individual projects from other departments and colleges will be considered.

Step 1: Obtaining Project Approval

- Dr. Sharon Carver (8-1499) must approve all requests to make observations or conduct projects at the Children's School. Individuals must complete a project request form and submit it to Dr. Carver. Requests for individual projects will be honored only if they do not significantly disrupt the school's educational program or conflict with the needs of Psychology courses.

- Dr. Carver communicates the nature and timing of projects to the Children's School staff. Because of tight scheduling, it is important that both instructors and students follow the approved schedule closely. Note that child observations and interactions are scheduled when the school program is in session, so the teachers are not available for conversation. Separate sessions must be approved and scheduled if interaction with educators is necessary.

***** 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 projects at the Children's School, so work on developing a good reputation here.

Step 2: Scheduling Project Sessions

- To **schedule individual project sessions**, call Mrs. Stilinovich (8-2199), or email at kstilino@andrew.cmu.edu no later than noon on the Friday before the week that you want to conduct the project. Be as clear as possible about your needs so that Mrs. Stilinovich can find the best time slot for your project.
- 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.

Step 3: Conducting Project Sessions

- Plan to arrive at the Children's School at least 5 minutes before your scheduled session 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 a 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 Mrs. Stilinovich for an unobtrusive place to do so.
- **Wait in the office** until Mrs. Stilinovich, or another Children's School staff person, is available to walk you into the classroom. You may leave your belongings in the office.
- Plan to **spend only the specified project time in the assigned classroom space**. Do not wander through the school or interact with children other than those assigned to you. REMEMBER, there may be over one hundred students conducting projects in the Children's School each week, so we depend on each one being as unobtrusive and causing as little disruption as possible.
- When approved in advance, **photographs** may be taken of children who have photo permission. Photos may only be used for project purposes and may never be posted in places where they could be seen by individuals outside the project course. **Audiotaping** is acceptable at any time. **Video recording** may be approved in special circumstances, with the same constraints regarding sharing and posting.
- When you are finished with your 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.

General Guidelines for Classroom Observation

1. No more than two observers may enter the classroom at a time. (Three can use the kindergarten observation window and eight can use the preschool observation room.)
2. Observers do not join the group time circle or interfere with children's activities. (Please watch from a distance.)
3. Observers do not talk to each other while in the classroom.
4. Observers do not play with classroom materials that are not specifically identified in the project request.

NOTE: If the Fire Alarm rings while you are observing or interacting with a child, follow the teacher's direction and walk with the class outside. Be a good model for the children to follow. We will make every effort to avoid fire drills during project sessions, so assume that an alarm is signaling a fire.

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Project Request Form 2024-2025

Contact Information

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Date of Request:

Project Description:

Number of Students:

Working Individually or in Groups?

Specific Request for Children's School (Which children, doing what, where, when?)

Observation:

Interaction:

Recording (Notes, Audio, Photos, Video?):

Acceptance of Responsibility for Following Written Procedures

I have read the Children's School **2024-25** Policies for Non-Psychology Course Projects and agree to comply with them in full, as well as to keep all personal information encountered during my time at the Children's School confidential. I understand that my failure to comply with policies may result in my exclusion from further project work at the Children's School.

Signature:

Date:

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 more timely, 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.

Children's School Guidelines

In addition to following the project procedures, it is essential that undergraduates 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 snack or 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 268-2199 if you need to cancel a research or observation 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

General Guidelines for Individual or Small Group Interaction

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.

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