



Introduction to Student Research

Each year the Center for Early Childhood Education (CECE) recruits highly qualified students from various disciplines to assist with one or more research studies. These student researchers engage in many of the same activities that doctoral level students would at research universities—they observe and videorecord children and teachers, code interactions, test faculty-developed evaluation tools, analyze data, and present findings at the national conferences of such groups as the National Association for the Education of Young Children and at the American Educational Research Association conference. Student researchers have co-published with faculty, appeared at press conferences and on radio shows, and have been interviewed by the print media. In summary, student researchers at the CECE have engaged in a variety of academic activities that typical undergraduate students rarely do.

Although the student research experience is extremely useful for learning and future employment opportunities, it comes with important responsibilities. The following are just a few of these:

Ethical Conduct

Student researchers have access to important and often sensitive data on children, families and teachers. They observe and interpret countless personal conversations and interactions in classrooms. They must maintain the very highest ethical standards in all work on a study. Students who conduct research at our center must complete and earn a passing score on a free training program on treatment of human subjects in research. The training is lengthy, but is good for three years. Students will receive a certificate that can be used for other purposes (and ECE students can include the certificate in their portfolios).

The following areas of ethical behavior are particularly critical for research assistants:

1. **Confidentiality.** Any experiences or information related to research may be shared only with the supervising professor and the student research team, during formal meetings. No anecdotes, observations, or conversations related to a study may be shared with friends, family, or **even in university classes**. Presentation of research experiences may be made only with prior approval of the principal investigator of the study.
2. **Protecting Data.** In most studies, names of participants are not used; a code number is assigned to each to protect confidentiality. Names of participants should not be used in any written document or shared with anyone other than the supervising professor or research team. Written documents with data of any kind—coding sheets, field notes, completed

surveys—must be stored, immediately after they are completed, in the locked CECE research file drawer. Electronic data may only be entered on a CECE computer and may not be saved on any other device or sent to another computer **Absolutely no photos or video from cell phones or other devices may be taken or distributed.**

3. **Commitment and Attention to the Quality of Work.** Unlike assignments for classes, all work completed by research assistants is part of an important, often grant-funded or endowment-funded study that results in findings to be presented nationally. Any error that is made in data entry, coding, or interpretation of findings might have serious repercussions for the validity of the study and the reputation and future work of the principal investigator, and may even comprise academic misconduct. So, research assistants should carry out tasks with extreme care and concern. **Suddenly ending involvement in a study, or poor attendance or reliability, can cause severe hardship and may even prohibit the project from continuing.**
4. **Professional Behavior.** Research assistants are viewed as a professionals working for the Center for Early Childhood Education. They must conduct themselves in ways that adhere to the high ethical standards of the Center, as well as *NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct*, the *Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers*, *SRCD's Ethical Standards for Research*, and *NIH and HHS Statement of Ethical Standards*. This includes positive interactions with teachers and children, faculty, administrators of the center, and one another. It also involves being reliable and on time for work and dressing in a manner appropriate for the site in which you will work.
5. **Plagiarism and Other Academic Misconduct.** One of the most serious ethics violations in research is plagiarism. Research assistants must be extremely cautious not to use, in any written or electronic document, the sentences, parts of sentences, or even ideas of another person without proper attribution. Even unintentional use of another's work is considered plagiarism. In addition, any fabrication of data, the misrepresenting of research findings, or inappropriate consultation with co-raters in reliability studies are considered academic misconduct.

Student Researcher Information Sheet and Payroll Procedures

On some projects, student researchers are paid as university student employees. It is the responsibility of such students to submit hours that they have worked every two weeks to the Center. In most cases time sheets must be submitted by the close of business on Thursday at the end of each pay period. Turning in a time sheet late may result in a two-week delay in when the student receives his or her paycheck. Student researchers are asked to keep time logs in their mailboxes, and to fill out their exact start and end times each day of working (e.g., if you start work at 12:03, write 12:03, not 12:00).

Responsiveness and Communication

Faculty and staff at the CECE use email as the primary mode of communication about changes in research protocols, scheduling, and other critical information—and student response to these communications affects how the work proceeds. It is essential that each student researcher checks his/her student email at least once a day and respond to any queries from faculty and staff within 1 business day.

Conference Presentations, Publications, and Compensation

Many research projects conducted by the center result in publication and presentation at conferences. If the budget allows, student researchers who have been involved in a study will be subsidized for part or all of their travel, housing, and per diem costs if findings are being presented at a conference. However, participation in conferences is voluntary, and hours spent in attendance at the conference are not considered work hours for student employees. Only if a research assistant's regularly scheduled work hours occur at a time when they are in attendance at a conference will they be paid—and only for those normally paid hours.

In many cases, articles that are published about a study will include the names of research assistants as co-authors. Those who do not wish to have their names used must let the principal investigator know during the study. (Articles can take up to two years to publish—after a student researcher has graduated.) There will not be compensation for helping to write a manuscript for publication or preparing for a presentation at a conference. These are considered voluntary, enriching activities that are professionally rewarding, in and of themselves. In most cases, the copyright for journal articles is retained by the journal or professional organization, and can appear elsewhere or be used in educational settings without co-authors' permission. Any document that student researchers write or contribute to may also be used by the Center for educational purposes without co-authors' consent.

Video Interviews, Press Conferences, Radio Broadcasts

In some studies, the Center and the university will plan media events to disseminate research findings and heighten attention to our work. For nearly every study, we ask student researchers to be interviewed for a video to be posted on the Center's website. Student researchers who appear in videos are asked to sign a waiver allowing the Center to use these videos at conferences, public events, or on the website. We also invite student researchers to attend or participate in interviews and press conferences. These are voluntary, but give students a unique learning opportunity.