



## Research Activities at Falk School

Falk School's primary purpose is to provide excellent educational experiences for its children. Its role as a campus laboratory school and its location at the University of Pittsburgh make educational excellence and uniqueness possible. The relationship between the laboratory school and the University brings with it mutual responsibilities.

A review of the goals of Falk School and the University of Pittsburgh School of Education suggests that the priorities of the laboratory school that contribute most significantly to the mission of the larger institution are the following:

1. Provide high-quality educational opportunities for children
2. Encourage educational research
3. Develop new educational techniques
4. Disseminate information
5. Provide firsthand teacher education experiences

In order to meet the obligation for Item 2, encouraging educational research, the school has established the following policies.

### Policies Governing Educational Research Conducted at Falk School

- **All applicants for enrollment at Falk School are informed of the fact that the school is a campus laboratory school where children participate as subjects in research.**
- **All requests for subjects are reviewed by the Falk School Research Review Committee.**
- **When the Falk School Research Review Committee determines that individual parental permission is needed for a child's participation in a study, the researcher is responsible for obtaining that permission.**
- **Research projects conducted by the school as part of its ongoing operation are reviewed by the Falk School Research Review Committee.**

### Guidelines for Administering the Policy Governing Educational Research Conducted at Falk School

1. All applicants for enrollment at Falk School are informed of the fact that the school is a campus laboratory school where children participate as subjects in research projects.

A copy of these policies and guidelines is included in the packet of admissions materials that is given to parents of prospective students. Parents are asked to sign a parental consent form indicating that they have read the statement and are prepared to cooperate with the school within the established policies and guidelines.

For our purposes, informed consent means that the subjects, or their legal representatives, voluntarily agree to participate after having been informed, in lay terms, of the purposes, procedures, and possible risks or benefits of the research. For children, legal representatives are parents or those designated to act *in loco parentis*.

2. All requests for subjects are reviewed by the Falk School Research Review Committee.

Falk School seeks to meet its obligation to the field of education, the research community, and society at large by contributing to the generation of new knowledge. This obligation, however, is secondary to the school's concern for the rights and safety of children who are in attendance. All requests to conduct research at Falk School or to involve Falk School children as subjects for research are reviewed by a research review committee. The committee is composed of the director and Falk School faculty. The committee serves to protect all human subjects who are involved in school-related research and to satisfy the requirements for informed consent.

Research requests fall into broad categories. The types of educational research activities conducted at Falk School fall into an "exempt" category. A complete description of the concept of exempt research and an identification of exempt research activities are explained in the following section.

EXEMPT RESEARCH REVIEW AT 46.10(b) of the [Code of Federal Regulations](#), a number of categories of research are exempted from federal regulatory requirements. The psychosocial IRB of the University requires that exempt research be certified as such by an official independent of the investigator. If a department of another division of the University has designated an official to serve in this function for its research, then this official should indicate his/her certification that a project is exempt through a letter to the IRB chair, which the investigator can submit with his/her other materials. Otherwise, the psychosocial IRB will certify exemptions itself. The chair of the psychosocial IRB retains the prerogative to review decisions of other officials regarding exemptions, but in such cases, he/she will notify the investigator of any problems within 10 working days of receipt of the submitted materials.

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CFR 46.10(B) states as follows:

“Research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from these regulations unless the research is covered by the subparts of this part.

- (1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), if information taken from these sources is recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
- (3) Research involving survey or interview procedures, except where all of the following conditions exist: (i) responses are recorded in such a manner that the human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and (ii) the subject’s responses, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject’s own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol. All research involving survey or interview procedures is exempt, without exemption, when the respondents are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.
- (4) Research involving the observation (including observation by participants) of public behavior, except where all of the following conditions exist (i) observations are recorded in such a manner that the human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, (ii) the observation recorded about the individual, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject’s financial standing or employability, and (iii) the research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject’s own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.
- (5) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.”

The Falk School Research Review Committee imposes different kinds of responsibilities on the investigator depending upon the nature of the request. Requests to conduct research at Falk School include:

- a. **Requests to come to the school and observe classroom processes, teacher behavior, or children’s interactions.** These requests require no alteration or interruption of classroom procedures. Investigators are permitted to make their observations and individual parent consent is not solicited. Your signature on a general consent form is considered to satisfy the requirements for informed consent. For example, a researcher might be interested in the intervention strategies experienced teachers employ to resolve conflicts between students. The researcher would be permitted to sit in the classroom and record exactly what the teacher did when conflict situations between pupils arose.
- b. **Requests that include instructional interventions that the school thinks would be beneficial to the subject.** These submissions suggest strategies or content that amplify or enrich what the school is already trying to do. For example, if a researcher has formally identified a technique for teaching a concept in math that a number of our children are having difficulty understanding, we help the investigator to identify those children and permit the study to proceed. Your signature on the general consent form is considered sufficient to satisfy the requirement of informed consent, and individual parent consent is not solicited.
- c. **Requests to conduct controlled experiments that require an experimental group and a control group.** Studies of this sort may compare instructional approaches, curricular content or other experimental variables. Because direct intervention is normally required for the experimental group and the omission of that intervention is normally required for the control group, the research review committee requires the researcher to obtain individual parent permission for participation of a child in studies of this type.
- d. **Requests to solicit from children information that is associated with their social, emotional, or personal reactions or circumstances.** Noncognitive data are needed in educational research. Periodically we receive requests from researchers to use our children as the normal group against which they can measure extreme behavior. The research review committee requires the investigator to obtain individual parent permission to have a child included in studies of this type.
- e. **Requests that fall outside the above categories** are unusual and the research review committee requires the researcher to obtain individual parent permission to have a child participate in these studies.

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**When the Falk School Research Review Committee determines that individual parent permission is needed for a child's participation in a study, the researcher is responsible for obtaining that permission.**

Researchers in the field of education and in other social sciences seek to meet their obligations to their fields of study, the research community, and society at large by contributing to the generation of new knowledge. When investigators conduct their research at Falk School, it is imperative that they understand that those obligations are secondary to the school's concern for the rights and safety of all human subjects who are involved in research. All researchers who are granted permission to work at Falk School or with Falk School children have the following obligations:

- a. **Liability.** Irrespective of how consent is obtained and whether or not subjects are placed at risk, no exculpatory language may be included through which the subject is made to waive any of his/her legal rights, including any release of the researcher from liability or negligence.
- b. **Risk.** On rare occasions and in a very small number of studies, the question of physical, emotional, or educational risk presents itself. No circumstance would enable the school to permit research to be conducted that places human subjects at risk. Researchers must be fully responsible for making known to the school and to each subject any and all of the attendant discomforts associated with a study. The investigator also is required to make clear why the discomfort is essential to the study and why the information cannot be obtained in any other way.
- c. **Privacy.** Data obtained directly or indirectly about Falk School personnel and children are entirely confidential. Research reports are to be written in such form that anonymity is guaranteed. Individual permission to make public information about individual participants must be obtained from both the school and the participant.
- d. **Deception.** There are occasions when a full disclosure of the research purpose and/or procedures will invalidate the study. Included in this type of research are studies that require deception. In cases of this kind, the entire burden of responsibility is upon the researcher. The investigator is required to make clear why the deception is essential to the study and why the information cannot be obtained in any other way. Procedures for debriefing deceived subjects are required, and with children, the deceptive strategy should be turned into some instructional advantage. The overall effect of deception need not be negative and it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide adequate debriefing procedures. When deception is essential to the study, consent from individual parents must be required to make contacts in person or by telephone.

e. **Informed Consent.** Although disclosure of every detail of a research study may be neither useful nor necessary, there are basic elements of information that are required for effective informed consent. The following elements of informed consent are required of investigators who have received permission to conduct research at Falk School:

1. A fair explanation of the procedures to be followed and their purposes, including identification of any procedures that are experimental
2. A description of any attendant discomforts and risks reasonably to be expected, if any
3. A description of any benefits reasonably to be expected, either for the subject or for society
4. An offer to answer any inquiries concerning the study
5. An instruction that the individual is free to withdraw his or her consent and to *discontinue participation* in a project or activity at any time *without prejudice* to the subject
6. An instruction that the individual is free to withhold his or her initial consent and *not participate* in a project or activity *without prejudice* to the subject

**Research projects conducted by the school as part of its ongoing operation are reviewed by the Falk School Research Review Committee.**

Ongoing school-sponsored research projects may continue for long periods of time and may have effects on the school program. Projects of such are reviewed by the Research Review Committee because of their possible impact on the school program.

Human learning is the focus of the research and development activities that are carried out in Falk School. The main objective of the policies and procedures set forth in this document is to ensure protection of the rights and well-being of all human participants, in accordance with University of Pittsburgh Guidelines to the Use of Human Subjects in Psychosocial Research.

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