



## **Guide to Writing the Informed Consent**

### **Colorado Springs School District 11**

### **Research Review Board**

At Colorado Springs School District 11 (D11), we require all researchers to follow ethical guidelines in conducting research with our students, faculty, and staff. That includes securing active consent from all participants. This means that they agree to voluntarily participate in research with the knowledge that they can discontinue at any time. As a school district, however, our informed consent forms have slight differences. Our first priority is to guarantee the wellbeing of our students and staff – educational or otherwise – and so certain policies must be followed over the course of research.

Many required components of a traditional informed consent form are still in place. Updating your forms to follow our district's policies are simple to do, as we only require slight deviations from a standard consent form. We wrote this guide to help explain the content of forms that we approve, including the changes that should be made with respect for D11 policy.

The guidelines below are firm, meaning that they need to be met in some way, shape, or form on your informed consent forms. We recommend using the following list as a guideline to shape the creation of your consent forms. As a reminder, informed consent forms should be written at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. That includes avoiding jargon and clearly explaining your research for our populations. Please also note that if you are sampling students or parents who do not speak English as their primary language, it will be your responsibility to provide consent forms that are properly translated into the participant's native language.

### **Required Components**

#### **1. Title of the study, and identification of the researcher(s) conducting the study.**

Your study's title, along with your name(s), title(s), and institution(s) should be present at the top of the first page. That tells participants who you are, where you're from, and what your expertise is in conducting your research.

#### **2. The purpose(s) for collecting data.**

Let the participants know exactly what you're collecting your data for, both in terms of the study (e.g., "We are collecting this data to learn about foreign language acquisition in high school students") and the outcomes of the study (e.g., "Results will be used to inform school policy on

secondary language acquisition. We also hope to publish our findings in an academic journal”). This helps participants understand the impact of their potential participation, and gives them a sense of what their time and efforts will contribute to.

### **3. Description of what participants will be asked to do, including the amount of time required.**

Tell participants *everything* that they will be expected to do, along with how long it will take for each task. For shorter research projects, you will likely say something like, “You will complete a 30-item online survey about your views towards second language acquisition.” You may find it helpful to bullet-point tasks for longer research projects, including what the tasks are, the expected completion date, and the time requirement. For example:

“You will be asked to complete the following list of tasks:

- Pre-Interview Questionnaire (20 questions, 15 minutes) – Emailed in September 2017
- In-Person Interview (45-60 minutes) – Scheduled at your convenience sometime between October 2017 and December 2017
- Post-Interview Questionnaire (20 questions, 15 minutes) Emailed in January 2018”

Of course, you may format this as you wish. Our only requirement is that it clearly relays information to participants.

### **4. Notice that participants will be audio- or video-taped.**

Sometimes researchers request the ability to audio- or video-record participants, often during interviews or classroom observations. While we do allow recordings, strict guidelines must be met both in the methodology and in the informed consent.

- Participants must be told how the recordings will be used in the study.
  - This should also include who will access the recordings.
- Participants must be told how the recordings will be kept secure and confidential during the study.
  - Detail your security plan for the participants.
- Participants must be told what will happen to the recordings after the completion of the study.
- Informed consent must include a yes/no checkbox where participants check their consent to be recorded and/or parental consent for their children to be recorded. For example:

- ☐ I have read and understand the above descriptions of how my recordings will be used. I consent to be recorded for these purposes.
- ☐ I **do not** give consent to be recorded.

Please note that participants may withdraw their consent to be recorded at any time, *even if they have signed the form to give consent*.

## **5. Description of any individually identifiable student data to which the researcher seeks access.**

*(Note: This section is not present in the sample consent letter.)*

Researchers who request de-identified data (i.e., data which has any personal identifiers removed so that it is impossible to identify the student) can receive this data directly from D11. However, some study designs make personally identifying students necessary, such as evaluation studies and longitudinal studies.

In cases where individually identifiable student data is requested, informed consent forms should clearly list what data is being requested. There should also be a description of how and when data will be destroyed. Informed consent must also include a yes/no checkbox – like with recordings – to show their consent to the data release. For example:

- ☐ I have read and understand what personally identifiable data is being requested from my child(ren). I consent for their data to be released.
- ☐ I **do not** give consent for my child(ren)'s personally identifiable data to be released.

## **6. Notice that all information will remain anonymous or confidential.**

Recall that anonymous data means that the researcher is unaware of the identity of the participant, which confidential data means the researcher knows, but is keeping the identity secret. You should tell participants that their responses will remain with anonymous or confidential.

Thus, the following text should be included in all informed consent involving participants:

“The researcher may disclose your name or identifiable information or document, under the following circumstances:

- To those connected with the research,
- If required by Federal, State or local laws,
- To comply with mandated reporting, such as a possible threat to harm yourself or others and reports of child abuse and neglect, or
- Under other circumstances with your consent.

We will do everything we can to keep your records a secret. It cannot be guaranteed. Both the records that identify you and the consent form signed by you may be looked at by others.

- Federal agencies that monitor human subject research
- Human Subject Research Committee
- The group doing the study
- The group paying for the study
- Regulatory officials from the institution where the research is being conducted who want to make sure the research is safe”

## **7. Details of your data protection and destruction plans.**

Tell participants how you will keep your data – and therefore, their responses – secure. Detail your use of password-protected computers, secure servers, or whatever you have set in place as protection. In addition, let participants know how long you plan to keep their data for, and when/if you decide to destroy the data.

## **8. Notice that participation is totally voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.**

This is self-explanatory. Participants should be informed that 1) participation is voluntary, 2) they can withdraw at any time, even after signing a consent form, and 3) they face zero negative consequences for withdrawing.

Note that some researchers offer compensation as incentives or payments for participation. Participants are entitled to any compensation once they consent to participate, even if they do not complete the study. Participants should be told this, as failure to do otherwise may coerce participation from participants.

## **9. Notice of any reasonably foreseeable risks or benefits to the participant.**

Participants must be told of any risks they face as a result of their participation. Recall that risk includes any psychological harm, physical harm, or loss of confidentiality. Most studies will include low to no risk. In fact, the most common type of risk we see is the risk of loss of confidentiality in the case of a data breach. Nonetheless, your form must outline the risks that participants face by being in your study, no matter how small, and how you plan to prevent these risks from happening.

Benefits should also be disclosed. Often, participants gain no benefits from participation, and this can simply be relayed.

## **10. A local or toll-free telephone number of researcher(s) where parents or participants may call.**

You need to include a direct number where parents or participants can call you if they have question or concerns. Note that our policy requires that you include **your** direct number, and **not** the number for your institution's IRB. We prefer that researchers maintain personal responsibility for their research, and thus we ask them to be personally involved in addressing participant concerns.

## **11. Space and lines for the student's name and parent/guardian signature.**

We require active consent, meaning that all participants need to sign their consent to participate before the beginning of the study. Thus, lines must be present for participants to both print and sign their names. Note that by policy, we respect a student's choice to withdraw from participation. Both parents *and* students must consent to participate in research. You will be

unable to collect data from a student if either the student themselves or their parents refused participation.

When obtaining consent for students, you must include four lines total: two for the student, and two for the parent/guardian. You must also include a yes/no checkbox where parents can check their permission for their children to participate.

- ☐ I am aware of the research procedures, risks, benefits, and outcomes. I agree to have my child participate.
- ☐ I **do not** give consent for my child to participate.

Another note for student consent: The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) passed under the No Child Left Behind legislation requires that parents/guardians have access to the material that will be used in school with their children. This includes any research materials that children may complete. Thus, the following text should be included in all informed consent involving students:

“Parents: please be aware that under the Protection of Pupil Rights Act, you have the right to review a copy of the questions asked of or materials that will be used with your students. If you would like to do so, you should contact [INSERT RESEARCHER NAME] at (XXX) XXX-XXXX to obtain a copy of the questions or materials.”

The following pages contain a sample informed consent form, written following the above guidelines. This form is an example of informed consent that would receive approval from the RRB. Each section is numbered to correspond with the above listed sections. Following the sample informed consent form is a checklist of all the above-mentioned criteria. Please follow this checklist when drafting your informed consent for your research.

Of course, informed consent will differ on a project-by-project basis, meaning that certain sections may alter or be omitted completely based on your needs. Feel free to contact us at [rrb@d11.org](mailto:rrb@d11.org) if you have questions or concerns about meeting these criteria.

(SAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT FORM)

[Title of Study]

[Name of Researcher]<sup>1</sup>

[Research Title] [Institution]

**Purpose:**<sup>2</sup> You and your child are being asked to take part in a research project conducted by [Name of Researcher]. The purpose of this research study is to examine how parents/family members of students from various cultural backgrounds value and support their child's learning of a musical instrument. The intended result of the study is to create and increase the quality of instrumental music education instructional strategies for students from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

**Your Role:**<sup>3</sup> Your child will be interviewed by [Name of Researcher] three times during the school year in the band room during student lunch hour. Each interview will last for about 20 minutes, for a total of an hour over the course of the study. You will also be interviewed twice during the school year for about 20 minutes at your convenience in your home or anywhere you are comfortable. All questions will center around your child's experiences playing a musical instrument.

**Notice of Recording:**<sup>4</sup> All interviews will be audio-recorded using a tape recorder for ease of referencing the interviews. These recordings will only be listened to by [Name of Researcher], in which she will transcribe the recordings and remove any identifiable information. The recording device will be kept in a locked file cabinet in [Name of Researcher] office, both of which are only accessible by [Name of Researcher]. Recordings will be deleted once notes are transcribed.

- ☐ I have read and understand the above descriptions of how my recordings will be used. I consent to be recorded for these purposes.
- ☐ I **do not** give consent to be recorded.

**Notice of Confidentiality:**<sup>6 & 7</sup> All information collected through this study will be held confidentially, meaning that [Name of Researcher] will not share any personally identifiable information about participants until data is de-identified. As a consequence of interviews, [Name of Researcher] will know the identities of students and parents participating in the study.

Participants will be assigned a personal identifier number, which will be used to link their responses during the course of the study. The document linking student/parent names and identifier numbers will be destroyed once all data has been linked and de-identified. Any audio-recordings will also be deleted once their content has been transcribed and linked with the participant's other responses.

The researcher may disclose your name or identifiable information or document, under the following circumstances:

- To those connected with the research,
- If required by Federal, State or local laws,
- To comply with mandated reporting, such as a possible threat to harm yourself or others and reports of child abuse and neglect, or

- Under other circumstances with your consent.

We will do everything we can to keep your records a secret. It cannot be guaranteed. Both the records that identify you and the consent form signed by you may be looked at by others.

- Federal agencies that monitor human subject research
- Human Subject Research Committee
- The group doing the study
- The group paying for the study
- Regulatory officials from the institution where the research is being conducted who want to make sure the research is safe

**Voluntary Participation:**<sup>8</sup> Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Choosing to withhold consent will not impact your child's band grades or musical playing opportunities. You and/or your child can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

**Risks and Benefits:**<sup>9</sup> There is a chance that a data breach could occur, in which data from your or your child could be accessed by someone other than [Name of Researcher]. However, steps are being taken to protect collected data. The chances of such a breach are minimal. Your child will not benefit directly from participating in the study. However, we believe that the results will help improve the education he or she receives.

**Contact Information:**<sup>10</sup> Please feel free to call the researcher, [Name of Researcher], at XXX- XXX-XXXX with any questions of concerns about participation in this study. You may also contact the [Institution], if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant. They can be reached at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

**11** Please mark below whether you agree to have your child participate in the study, sign the form and return it to [address@email.com / mailing address / fax number].

- ☐ **Yes**, I agree to have my child and myself participate in this study.
- ☐ **No**, I do not give consent for my child or me to participate in this study.

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Parent name (print)

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Student name (print)

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Parent signature

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Student signature

*Parents, please be aware that under the Protection of Pupil Rights Act, you have the right to review a copy of the questions asked of our materials that will be used with your student(s). If you would like to do so, you should contact [Name of Researcher] at XXX- XXX-XXXX to obtain a copy of the questions or materials.*

### Checklist for the Informed Consent Form

- Title of the study and identification of the researcher(s) conducting the study (e.g., doctoral candidate at University of Colorado)
- The purpose(s) for collecting data (e.g., to learn about foreign language acquisition in primary school students)
- Description of what participants will be asked to do (e.g., complete a written survey, respond to a group interview with eight other students)
- Amount of time required of participants
- Notice that participants will be audio- or videotaped (if applicable) with an explanation of how the recordings will be used and what happens to the tapes after the research is completed
- Description of any individually identifiable student data to which the researcher seeks access (e.g., test scores, attendance records, address and phone number)
  - There must also be a separate yes/no checkbox referring to the release of student level data
- Notice that all information will remain confidential
- Details of your data protection and data destruction plans
- Notice that participation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time, without negative consequences
- Notice of any reasonably foreseeable risks or benefits to the participant
- A local or toll-free telephone number of researcher(s), so that the parent or participant may call if there are questions or concerns
- Space and lines for the student's name and parent/guardian signature.
  - In the case of parent consent for student participation: there must be a check-off for either consent or refusal to participate.
- In addition, the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) passed under the No Child Left Behind Legislation requires that parents/guardians have access to the materials that will be used in school with their children. Therefore, all consent forms should include the following text:

"Parents: please be aware that under the Protection of Pupil Rights Act, you have the right to review a copy of the questions asked of or materials that will be used with your students. If you would like to do so, you should contact [INSERT RESEARCHER NAME] at (XXX) XXX-XXXX to obtain a copy of the questions or materials."