

Considerations for the IRB when reviewing research protocols from College of Education Early Childhood, Special Education and Counselor Education program

Some Master's degree students in the College of Education, and especially in the Early Childhood, Special Education and Counselor Education program, face unique challenges with respect to recruitment for their degree-required research:

- These graduate students are typically employed full-time as primary or secondary level teachers and are studying behaviors of and/or strategies to use with students in an educational setting.
- This means that the research usually must be conducted during normal school hours when it is difficult (if not impossible) for them to leave their own classrooms to conduct research.
- Additionally, if they are special education teachers, it might be that students in their own classrooms are the only students they have access to who display the behaviors relevant to the research.
- For these reasons, some education students may not have another practicable course of action other than to recruit students from their own class.
- Because these studies frequently employ single-case designs, the number of participants enrolled is typically very low. However, they are not case studies because these studies can be designed “to have strong internal validity for assessing causal relationships between interventions and outcomes, and external validity for generalizability of results” (Lobo, et al., 2017).
- It is worth noting that these studies often present no greater than minimal risk and frequently have some chance of benefit for participants.

When researchers in the above situation are permitted to recruit students from their own classes, the IRB should likely expect the following:

- Greater than usual emphasis in the recruitment and consent process that the researcher is a student and that the study is part of the researcher's degree program.
- Greater than usual emphasis on the voluntariness of participation, including the ability to withdraw at any time.
- Greater than usual emphasis on consent and recruitment materials being easily understood by parents.

Citations

Lobo, M. A., Moeyaert, M., Cunha, A. B., & Babik, I. (2017). Single-Case Design, Analysis, and Quality Assessment for Intervention Research. *Journal of Neurologic Physical Therapy: JNPT*, 41(3), 187–197. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NPT.0000000000000187>

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