

## RESEARCH IN ACTION

### KEY POINTS IN THE CHAPTER REFLECTED IN THIS BOX:

- Anticipating the various ethical issues in conducting action research.
- Determining what approvals will be needed from institutional organizations.
- Checking guidelines regarding participant consent and assent.
- Anticipating questions about potential hazards, confidentiality, and other risk factors presented in action research studies (all of which will be asked by approval groups such as IRBs and school research committees).



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### OBJECTIVES TO LEARN FROM THIS BOX:

- Understand how action research conducted in a field setting present challenging contexts pertaining to anticipating ethical issues.
- Reflect on how action researchers anticipate and resolve potential risk issues.
- Determine how consent and assent are obtained for these action research studies.

### SCENARIO 1: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN READING

Emily is beginning to study the effects of engagement on how young students learn to read. She is using what is labeled as concept-oriented reading instruction (CORI) as a means of engaging the experimental group, and her comparison group is going to receive drill and practice (DAP) on words and sentences. Emily reviews the notes on action research found in the AERA Guiding Standards and is a little confused by the wording. Both reading instruction approaches are found in different teacher's teaching styles and she is not sure whether she can consider both of her instructional methods to be normal teaching processes. Surely Emily intends to maintain confidentiality, protect her students' welfare, and the information will be used to benefit students' instruction in general. But do the guidelines mean that she doesn't need consent because this can be considered a normal part of the teaching process?

Emily will need to have her research approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for her university. The best guideline for her to follow is found in the wording "when in doubt, obtain consent." In fact since she is studying young students, Emily will need to obtain consent from her students' parents and also have her students complete an *assent* form that indicates they agree to participate. Before she can begin the study she will need to outline the details of her protocol and have it approved by the IRB. She will need to also obtain permission to conduct her study in the school district where the students are enrolled and then seek consent from parents and assent from the students themselves.

It is unlikely that there is much if any potential hazard to the students. Emily will need to maintain confidentiality of her students' performance (her data). Although confidentiality is an important matter, the data do not raise huge red flags regarding sensitive information. Emily's study will not likely encounter significant ethical issues.

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SOURCE: This action research scenario is roughly based on Swan, E. A. (2003). *Concept-oriented reading instruction: Engaging classrooms, lifelong learners*. New York: Guilford Press.