

The Literacy Research Association is a diverse group of literacy professionals drawn together by their interest in research. As a consequence, there is a need to provide guidance to our members and to those with whom we interact about the ethical principles that we presume to guide our actions. We further recognize that literacy professionals have roles that go beyond those of researchers. We have tried to address those other roles that apply to LRA members. We recognize that these principles are guidelines. Extenuating circumstances can always make the best principles seem artificial and inappropriate. In producing these principles, we realized that we could not isolate each concern from every other concern. Consequently, ethical principles described in one section should be assumed to be applicable to other sections when appropriate.

While the material presented below is largely original, we do owe a substantial debt to other organizations who have prepared their own ethical guidelines that we freely consulted and paraphrased during the process of writing these guidelines. Among these organizations are: American Anthropological Association, American Psychological Association, American Educational Research Association and the American Sociological Association.

---

## **CONTENTS**

- [I. Publishing, Editing, Reviewing and Appraising Research](#)
  - [II. Peer Promotion and Tenure Evaluations](#)
  - [III. Teaching and Professional Interactions with Students](#)
-

## **I. Publishing, Editing, Reviewing and Appraising Research**

- A. Publishing Research
- B. Editing, Reviewing and Appraising Research
- C. Sponsorship of Research
- D. Financial Interests
- E. Policy Relationships
- F. Professional Integrity and Competence
- G. Classroom Research Involving University Researchers

### **A. Publishing research**

1. Literacy researchers should present their research conclusions in a way consistent with the standards of their own theoretical and methodological perspectives. They should keep themselves well informed in both their own and competing paradigms where those are relevant to their research, and they should continually evaluate the criteria of adequacy by which research is judged.
2. Literacy researchers must not fabricate, falsify or misrepresent authorship, evidence, data, findings or conclusions.
3. Literacy researchers should attempt to report their findings to all relevant stakeholders and should refrain from keeping secret or selectively communicating their findings.
4. For research reports, literacy researchers should report research conceptions, procedures, results, analyses and limitations accurately and in sufficient detail to allow knowledgeable, trained researchers to understand and interpret them.

5. Literacy researchers ' published policy reports should be written in a straightforward manner to communicate the practical significance for policy, including limits in effectiveness and in generalizability to situations, problems and contexts.

6. Literacy researchers ' reports to practitioners and lay persons should be written without jargon and communicate the practical significance for instruction or implementation in either school and non-school settings, including limitation in effectiveness due to individual differences and in generalizability to situations, problems and contexts.

## **B. Editing, reviewing and appraising research**

1. Editors and reviewers of LRA publications and conference proposals have a responsibility to recognize a wide variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives and to ensure that manuscripts and proposals meet the highest standards as defined in the various perspectives. LRA publications and proposals should be refereed in a manner consistent with the following principles:

a. Fairness requires a review process that evaluates works solely on the basis of merit. Merit shall be understood to include both the competence with which the argument is conducted and the significance of the results achieved.

b. LRA publications should be open to all disciplines and perspectives represented in the membership supporting a tradition of responsible educational scholarship. This standard is not intended to exclude worthy innovations.

c. Anonymous review, with multiple readers, should be used for each submission, except where explicitly waived.

- d. Judgments of the adequacy of an inquiry should be made by reviewers who are competent to read the work submitted to them. Editors should strive to select reviewers who are familiar with the research paradigm and who can make a fair judgment of the merit of the work.
  - e. Editors should insist that even unfavorable reviews be dispassionate and constructive. Authors have the right to know the grounds for rejection of their work.
2. LRA publications should have written, published policies for refereeing articles and proposals.
  3. LRA publications should have written, published policies stating when solicited and nonrefereed submissions are permissible.
  4. LRA publications should publish statements indicating any special emphases expected to characterize articles submitted for review.
  5. In addition to enforcing standing strictures against sexist and racist language, editors should reject articles that contain ad hominem attacks on individuals or groups or insist that such language or attacks be removed prior to publication.
  6. Editors of LRA publications should require authors to disclose the full publication history of material substantially similar in content and form to that submitted to other journals.

## **C. Sponsorship of research**

1. The data and results of a research study belong to the researchers who design and conduct the study, unless

specific contractual arrangements are made with respect to either the data or results or both.

2. Literacy researchers should be free to interpret and publish their findings under their own names without constraint or approval from sponsors, funding agencies or participating organizations. This provision should be made prior to the conduct of the research.
3. Literacy researchers should not conduct studies that are subject to scientific or professional constraints related to undue or questionable influences of funding agencies.
4. Literacy researchers should fully disclose the sponsorship of their research when they perform the work and report results or implications to any audience, except where such disclosure would violate the confidentiality or rights of participants.
5. Literacy researchers should not accept funds from any agency that requires reports that distort the results of a study or mislead an audience regarding the representations, limitations or certainty of the findings.
6. Literacy researchers should fulfill their obligations to supporting agencies by providing reports of the design, procedures, findings and interpretations of the work, as well as a financial accounting of the uses of the funds to perform the work.

#### **D. Financial interests**

1. Literacy researchers should disclose to participants, collaborators, or sponsors those cases where they would stand to benefit financially from a specific study.

2. Literacy researchers who publish commercial products such as tests, instructional materials, teacher guides, computer software, etc., should design the products to be consistent with published research, particularly of their own authorship. Apparent inconsistencies between commercial products and accepted research findings should be accompanied by disclaimers.

3. Literacy researchers who develop and conduct assessments and tests for commercial or public consumption should use scientific procedures for design, standardization, interpretation and elimination of bias in the assessments. They should present disclaimers where these standards cannot be met due to practical or research limitations.

## **E. Policy relationships**

1. Literacy researchers should make clear the bases and rationales, and the limits thereof, of their professionally rendered policy judgments in consultation with the public, government, private or commercial organizations. In controversial issues, opinions that contrast with the one being recommended should be presented.

2. In policy making situations, the researchers' vested interests should be disclosed. In situations where policy decisions would have a significant financial impact on a researcher serving on that policy board, she/he should resign or abstain from influencing that particular decision.

3. Literacy researchers should provide legal or forensic recommendations and testimony that are well substantiated by research and professional practice.

Qualifications of the researcher should be stated fully prior to any such presentation.

## **F. Professional integrity and competence**

1. Literacy researchers should honestly and fully disclose their qualifications and limitations when providing professional opinions to the public, to government agencies, and others who may avail themselves of the expertise possessed by literacy researchers.
2. Literacy researchers should strive to maintain high standards of competence in their work. They should recognize the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitations of their expertise. They should be cognizant of the fact that competencies required in serving, teaching or studying groups of individuals vary with the distinctive character of those groups.
3. Literacy researchers should provide services, teach and conduct research only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience or appropriate professional experience.
4. Where differences of age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language or socioeconomic status significantly affect literacy researchers' work concerning particular individuals or groups, they should obtain the training or experience necessary to ensure the competence of their service or research.
5. Literacy researchers should recognize that their personal problems and conflicts may interfere with their professional effectiveness. Accordingly, they should refrain from

undertaking an activity or research when they know or should know such problems are likely to lead to harm to a research participant, colleague, student or other person to whom they may owe a professional or scientific obligation.

6. Because literacy researchers' scientific and professional judgments and actions may affect the well-being of others, they are alert to and guard against personal, financial, social, organizational or political factors that may lead to misuse of their influence.

7. Literacy researchers should refrain from entering into a scientific, professional, financial or other relationship with another party if it appears likely that such a relationship reasonably might impair the researcher's objectivity or otherwise interfere with the researcher's effective conduct of research or lead to exploitation of that party.

## **G. Classroom research involving University researchers**

1. Researchers should keep the best interests of students in mind at all points in the research project. If students in the classroom serve as research collaborators, the guidelines listed below should apply to them.

2. Classroom research should be collaborative. This collaboration may be initiated by any of the parties involved, or teachers may agree to participate in research conducted in their classrooms by university researchers that is not collaborative. In classroom research all parties should be fully informed of the other parties' intentions, to the extent the intentions are known, a priori.

3. In collaborative arrangements, negotiation of collaboration should extend to all phases of the research, with all parties being made aware of traditional definitions of roles. Equitable and reasonable distributions of tasks and roles should be negotiated.
4. All parties should have access to data collected throughout the research, unless those data are explicitly confidential (e.g., interviews, private documents), within the limits of the law.
5. All collaborating parties should have opportunities to respond to all research documents and potential publications with a reasonable time for response. All collaborating parties in a research project should be encouraged to participate in the publications related to the research. Each collaborator has an obligation to take into account objections and reservations of the other collaborators. If agreement cannot be reached, alternative options might include separate reports, statement of alternative positions in a single report or withdrawal of permission to continue the project.
6. Confidentiality of participants and sites should be negotiated to protect those who do not wish to be identified.
7. Commitments should be made to remain involved with the site after the research is completed to deal with any organizational consequences of the research.

## **II. Peer Promotion and Tenure Evaluations**

- A. When literacy professionals participate in actions relating to peer promotion and tenure evaluations, they should not discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, physical disabilities, marital status, color, social class, religion, ethnic background, national origin, or other attributes not relevant to the evaluation of academic or research competence.
- B. Literacy professionals have a responsibility to make candid, forthright personnel recommendations and not to recommend those who are manifestly unfit.
- C. Literacy educators should decline requests to review the work of others where strong conflicts of interest are involved, or when such requests cannot be conscientiously fulfilled on time. Materials sent for review should be read in their entirety and considered carefully, with evaluative comments justified with explicit reasons.
- D. Literacy professionals should decline requests to review the work of others when bias due to competing research topic, research approach, or theoretical orientation will interfere with a fair evaluation of academic or research competence.
- E. Literacy professionals have the responsibility of making candid recommendations for tenure and promotion in light of the candidate's specific workload assignments to teaching, research, service, or other designated responsibilities.
- F. Literacy professionals should use research and teaching standards that are widely accepted in the field of literacy

education when evaluating a candidate for promotion or tenure.

### **III. Teaching and Professional Interactions with Students**

A. Students should be selected on the basis of competence and potential to contribute to the field, avoiding the possibility of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnic group, social class or other categories of persons indistinguishable by their academic abilities. Students should be provided with a list of the appropriate criteria for admission, retention and graduation.

B. Literacy professionals have a responsibility to instruct their students in ethical principles related to research, teaching and other activities.

C. Literacy professionals who work cooperatively with students on research must acknowledge the contributions of those students in print. Co-authorship must be given when student research is included. A student should always be the first author when an article is based primarily on a thesis or dissertation. Literacy professionals should avoid the exploitation of students by disclosing expectations. Coercion by position of authority should be avoided.

D. Competence in teaching

1. Literacy professionals who teach should be competent to teach the material. They should be current in their knowledge of the subject matter they wish to teach.

2. Literacy professionals should make decisions about textbooks and materials, course content and evaluations on

professional criteria without regard for financial or other incentives.

3. Assessment should be related to course content and objectives. Students should be informed of the basis for assessment at the outset of the course.

4. Literacy professionals should strive to ensure that the information disseminated about courses and workshops they offer is accurate, even when it is prepared by others.

5. Literacy professionals involved in certification programs strive to ensure that the programs are well designed and provide the proper knowledge and experiences to meet the requirements.

6. Literacy professionals should not teach the use of techniques or procedures that require specialized training to individuals who lack the prerequisite skills for such training.

E. Literacy professionals should ensure that students have the right to be free from sexual harassment. Students should be compensated for work performed for literacy professionals beyond classes. Such compensation should be agreed upon at the outset.