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Signed Informed Consent

Title of Project: Exploring Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences of Middle School STEM Education Programs

Principle Investigator(s): Dr. Brandi Worsham

Principle Investigator Contact Information: bworsham@brenau.edu, 770-541-3142

Researcher's Statement

I am inviting you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what will be asked of you. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. A copy of this form will be given to you.

Key Information

- Your consent is being sought for participation in a research study and your participation is voluntary.
- The purpose of the research is to learn about teachers' perceptions and experiences as middle school STEM teachers.
- The anticipated amount of time for participation is 2 hours.
- You will be asked to complete:
 - one individual initial interview of 45 minutes to an hour
 - a maximum of 2 follow-up interviews, each 30 minutes or less
 - consent forms will be emailed to participants to be signed and returned via email
- The foreseeable risks include:
 - The handling of sensitive information
 - The economic cost of time.
- The potential benefits include:
 - Potential to improve academic practice.
 - Ability to inform about middle school STEM programs.
 - Opportunity to talk and reflect.
 - To contribute toward the advancement of STEM education.

Why am I being asked to take part in this study?

I am asking you to be in this study because you are a middle school STEM teacher teaching in a certified STEM education program for at least one year and you have a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Your insight may offer valuable contributions to STEM education.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to learn about ways to improve science,



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technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education programs for middle school students by examining the perceptions of STEM educators.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you to participate in one initial one-to-one interview for 45 minutes to an hour. Additionally, a maximum of two follow-up interviews may be conducted to clarify any misunderstandings and allow time to review transcriptions, if necessary. Follow-up interviews will last no more than 30 minutes each. All interviews will be conducted virtually via Zoom..

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

All interviews will be conducted virtually using Zoom conferencing and Otter.ai transcription software. The approximate time commitment for the initial interview will be 45-60 minutes and follow-up interviews will be a maximum of 30 minutes each. Participants may opt-out at any time.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

The potential risks associated with this study are the time commitment and trusting the researcher with handling sensitive information. Sensitive information includes recorded interviews, participant identities, and transcribed interviews. To mitigate participant risk, the following protections will be in place:

- Written informed consent forms from each participant will be collected and included in the research documents.
- Participants will be allowed to review the interview transcripts and participate in member checks to ensure accurate documentation of the participants' experiences.
- Further, participant confidentiality will be ensured using pseudonyms and any identifiable information will be protected and locked in a secure filing system including a locked computer and protected files.
- All transcripts will be saved in a secure Google Drive for electronic files. The interview recordings will be deleted upon transcription.
- Consent forms will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's locked classroom.
- Participants will be informed that participation in the study is strictly voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time.

Will I benefit by being in this study? The benefits of this study include:

- Potential to improve academic practice.
- Ability to inform about middle school STEM programs.
- Opportunity to talk and reflect.
- A chance to contribute toward the advancement of STEM education.

Who will see the information about me?

Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project.



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If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?

You do not have to take part in the study. Your participation is voluntary.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

The risks of this study are minimal because the topic is non-sensitive and based on teachers' everyday experiences with STEM Programs. Steps will be taken to protect participant confidentiality and respect time commitments. Participant confidentiality will be ensured by the use of pseudonyms and any identifiable information will be protected and locked in a secure filing system including a locked computer and protected files. A key will be created and password protected to ensure participant confidentiality. Additionally, informed consent forms will be read to each participant prior to each interview to describe the risks and benefits of participating in the study as well as details regarding the procedures and opt out options. The risk to human subjects will be minimal for the participants. All recorded data will be kept confidential and interviews will be conducted using Zoom with Otter.ai integration, a private web-based platform.

Will I be paid to be in this study?

Participants will be given a \$10 gift card as a gesture of consideration for agreeing to participate in the study.

Will it cost me anything to be in this study?

Participants will incur no costs for participating.

Is there anything else I need to know?

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose to opt-out at any time.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Shamair Watkins at 404.399.6535 or swatkins4@tiger.brenau.edu, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Brandi Worsham, the Principal Investigator at bworsham@brenau.edu.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, contact the Brenau University Institutional Review Board by phone at (678)707-5029 or via email at irb@brenau.edu.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Brenau University Institutional Review Board.



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By signing below, I agree to take part in this research.

Signature of person agreeing to take part Date

Printed name of person above

Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent Date

Printed name of person above

Audio/Video Recording

Please provide initials below if you agree to be recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

- _____ I am willing to be recorded.
- _____ I do not want to be recorded.