

Dear Parent and Student,

The National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) and West Virginia University will be sponsoring an out-of-school science experience this year at your child's school, the Pulsar Search Collaboratory (PSC). Students can join PSC clubs, learn about radio astronomy and pulsar searching through online educational experiences provided by NRAO, and search for pulsars. Pulsars are rare astronomical objects that emit intense bursts of energy and may be the key to fully understandings Einstein's theories. We hope this activity allows students to contribute to science and to begin to see themselves as scientists. Your child has expressed interest and been select to participate in the PSC. As part of evaluating the project and fulfilling the educational research mission of the National Science Foundation which funds the project, we hope to understand students' ideas about themselves as scientists and their plans for their future careers and how these relate to science. As such, club members will be given a few short surveys about their career thinking and attitudes towards science over their PSC experience. Much of the searching for and learning to search for pulsars will be done online at the PSC website. The use of this website will be analyzed to further understand the effect of the PSC in helping children to develop into scientists and how the program can be changed to improve the experience.

The attached form asks for your consent for your child to participate in the PSC and the research study associated with it. Your child will also sign an assent form giving their permission to participate. There are no known risks in participating in this study or being involved in the PSC. Your child's grades will not be affected, and all responses are confidential – we won't share them with anyone else. For information regarding your child's rights as a research subject, to discuss problems, concerns, or suggestions related to the research, to obtain information or offer input about the research, contact the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance at (304) 293-7073. For any questions about the consent process, please contact Dr. John Stewart at West Virginia University (jdstewart1@mail.wvu.edu).

**To participate, please sign the attached consent form and have your child sign the assent form and return to (Teacher Name) by (Date).**

Thank you for your help with this important research study!

Sincerely,

Kathryn Williamson, PhD, West Virginia University

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