

Superintendent Procedure 4280SP

Research Review Process

Approved by: s/Larry Nyland Date: 12/6/17

Dr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent



While Seattle Public Schools recognizes the value of supporting research, it does not guarantee the right to access Seattle Public Schools students, staff, or data for research purposes. If access is granted, the researcher may only access schools, students, staff, and data relevant to the research as approved by the district. Furthermore, the district reserves the right to modify the guidelines as needed and to request changes to multi-year approved research proposals or research proposals.

Research Proposal Categories

The District reviews three types of research proposals: internal research, external research, and partnerships/grants.

- A. Internal Research – Internal research does not require an application. Internal research includes: central office managers and directors who plan and conduct research on how to improve District services and programs within their area of supervision or as part of their general job duties; and school staff who conduct informal inquiries into classroom practices or piloting of new programs, products, or services.
- B. External Research – External research requires a full application (for first time applicants on a given project) or amendment form (for changes or extensions of ongoing approved external research). External Research includes:
 - Independent research conducted by individuals, organizations, or agencies not affiliated with the District. This includes community based organizations (CBOs) who do not have a formal research agreement as part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and/or DSA with the district and are conducting research studies;
 - Research conducted by District employees for purposes outside of their work duties and/or work hours (e.g. research conducted to fulfill degree program requirements);
 - Product research conducted by a company or entity to study a product's effectiveness; or
 - Voluntary surveys of District staff, students, or families developed by outside research institutions, non-governmental agencies or other entities.
- C. Partnerships and Grants – Partnerships and grants are evaluated on a case-by-case basis through consultation with the District, and may require that applicants fill out an application. Examples of Partnerships/Grants include:
 - Planned evaluation in grants to external sources with the District as sole or joint applicant;

- Voluntary government agency (federal, state, municipal, etc.) data collection efforts (e.g. state surveys) (Note: mandatory data reporting to state or federal agencies is not subject to research review);
- Mandatory surveys developed by outside non-governmental agencies or entities; or
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs) whose activities do not fall into the “research study” category as outlined in these guidelines, and who have a formal Memorandum of Understanding and/or Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) with SPS.

Additional Requirements

Depending on the nature of the proposed study, the following requirements may apply.

- A. **Data Requests** – If the research involves a request for secondary data (e.g., student achievement data) collected or maintained by Seattle Public Schools, a Data Request Form is required in addition to the Research Application.
- B. **Community-Based Organization (CBO) Research** – Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) frequently collect and/or request data from participating students, teachers, and/or staff within District schools and the central office. Standard language will be inserted in all Memoranda of Understanding and/or Data Sharing Agreements with the District that asks CBOs to determine if their data collection and analysis efforts constitute a research activity that merit review as part of the research review process. A research study by a CBO involves quantitative or qualitative data that are: a) systematically collected and analyzed to determine the degree to which services provided are “working”; and b) are presented to an external audience (e.g. funders, conferences, media). Examples of systematic studies of impact include quasi-experimental designs, Randomized Control Trial designs, and qualitative studies of perceived program effectiveness. Studies in this category must go through the full external research review process. CBOs with data collection activities that do not meet the definition above do not need to submit a research proposal. However, all materials using District data must contain caveats that explain that all reported information are purely descriptive in nature and do not indicate causal relationships.
- C. **Clearances** – If the assigned staff/researcher will be working with district students and have the potential to be unsupervised, they will need to obtain clearances in accordant with Board Policy 4265 SP.
- D. **Human Subjects/IRB** – If the research includes an intervention or interaction with a living person (i.e., student, teacher, staff, or parent) that would not occur but for the research, or if the researcher will obtain identifiable private data or information, then the researcher must get advance approval from a Human Subjects/Institutional Review Board (IRB). Surveys, interviews, student-level questionnaires and reviews of student files are all interventions or interactions that would require IRB review. Research that is typically exempted from IRB must include an exemption letter as part of the application. The fact that an IRB has approved a proposal for research does not mean that the District must approve it. IRB approval only means that the proposed research design is in compliance with the federal regulations regarding human subject research (which are consistent with Washington state law and SPS policy).

- E. Active Informed Consent and Assent – All external research that includes the collection of student-level data must have District-approved consent forms, as well as the prior written and active informed consent of a parent or legal guardian on behalf of a minor student before data collection commences. Active consent from the parent/guardian is also required for external research study recruitment if the study seeks students based on specific criteria considered to be protected information (e.g., a research study wishing to recruit bilingual students who have not met standard on the state assessment). Research that involves the collection of identifiable information must also have a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) with the District. The researcher must retain all consent and assent forms, provide copies to the District, and must be prepared to make them available if a parent/guardian, teacher or school official questions a student's or staff member's participation. To avoid any perceived coercion, the invitation to participate in research is to be printed on the researcher's stationery, and not on that of any office or school of the Seattle Public Schools. Consent and assent forms may not indicate District support or approval of the research study. Students who agree to participate in a research study are required to sign an assent form. Active informed consent forms must also be signed by any staff asked to participate in research.

Research Review Committee

All external and partnership/grant proposals must be reviewed and approved by the Seattle Public School's Research Review Committee (RRC), which is comprised of staff from the Research & Evaluation department who will invite other relevant District or school staff as necessitated by the portfolio of research requests being reviewed.

Approval from the RRC to conduct external research activities provides the researcher(s) with official permission to contact schools that may be interested in participating. Approval by the RRC does not (in itself) constitute permission to carry out the research, nor does RRC approval equate to official district sponsorship of the research activities. Schools are under no obligation to participate in a study that was initiated by outside researchers or other entities.

The RRC will evaluate proposals via the following criteria:

- A. **Relevance:** Degree to which the proposed research aligned to District strategic goals and priorities.
- B. **Rigor:** Degree to which the research methodology be expected to reveal valid and meaningful findings.
- C. **Participant Risks/Benefits:** Degree to which the research poses any potential risks to the emotional and/or physical health of human subjects, as well as yield meaningful benefits for study participants. (Except in exceptional circumstances, research proposals that involve the collection of student video recordings for study recruitment or data collection will not be approved. Additionally, any compensation for participation in research must be described in the application.)
- D. **Burden:** Degree to which the study imposes undue burden on subjects, schools or the District.

Approval of Research

If a research proposal is approved, the RRC will issue a research approval letter. The RRC's approval of a research proposal is limited to the study scope and methods outlined in the proposal. Following approval, researchers may approach principals for signatures on a cooperation form. Principals must agree to participate in the research project and sign the cooperation form for researchers to begin their work in schools. Each principal is ultimately responsible for the decision relative to the involvement of students, staff, or facilities under his or her direction. Principals may decide to appoint an appropriate designee at their schools to oversee research activities.

Upon completion of the research study, the researcher must send a letter to the RRC notifying the committee of completion of the study. A copy of the final report or summary of the results must be provided to the Research Review Committee, to the principal of the school at which the study took place, if applicable, and all District central office departments that provided a letter of support for the research proposal. Seattle Public Schools reserves the right to use the information in the research report or summary for educational programming or services, planning, solicitation of grants, staff development and any other purposes to improve instruction or services to students of the Seattle Public Schools.

Approved: December 2017

Revised:

Cross Reference: School Board Policy No. 4280