

# **Guidelines for Requesting to Conduct Research in Duval County Public Schools**

## **I. PURPOSE**

Approved research activities are coordinated through the Innovations Division Assessment in order to:

- A. Safeguard the privacy of current and former students, their parents, current or former staff members, and other participants in DCPS-sponsored activities;
- B. Limit interruptions in the instructional program; and
- C. Ensure the technical competency, feasibility, and appropriateness of the research activities in the public school setting.

## **II. DEFINITION**

*A research activity may be any one or a combination of the following:*

- A. Interviews, surveys by questionnaire, attitude and personality inventories, and scales;
- B. Observations and questionnaires designed to secure data on classroom processes, interaction patterns, teaching/learning behaviors, methods and materials of instruction in use, or use of classroom and building facilities;
- C. Development and validation of instruments and procedures intended to describe status or progress and to evaluate outcomes;
- D. Testing and assessment in connection with projects and research-oriented activities;
- E. Studies of staff organization, staff utilization, or staff reaction to organizational patterns or to instructional programs and materials for students, staff, and the adult community not conducted by administrators as part of ongoing management activities;
- F. Studies of the effectiveness of different approaches to instruction, of different instructional materials, or of instructional aides and devices;
- G. Studies involving the gathering of data on the reaction of staff, students, parents, or the general public to features of the educative process and to issues in education;
- H. Studies concerned with human growth and development and with characteristics of learning and social development;
- I. Studies assessing values, aspirations, and life goals; and

J. Studies requiring or seeking information about staff, students, or parents.

### III. GENERAL REQUIREMENT FOR REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

A. Research activities must be evaluated and approved by the Asst. Superintendent of The Innovations Division prior to initiation (Section VIII). These activities include, but are not limited to, those generated within DCPS by staff, students, parents, community members, task forces, advisory groups, parent/teacher organizations, or committees, and by external individuals and groups including, but not limited to, external researchers, doctoral candidates, for-profit and not-for-profit research organizations, local/state/federal agencies, or national study groups. **Conducting research in DCPS by individuals, private groups, and other agencies will not be approved unless the educational benefit to DCPS of such research is very substantial or such research is required by law.**

B. No member of the DCPS staff may authorize, support, or participate in a research activity as defined in Section II above, unless the activity has been formally approved under the provisions of these guidelines.

#### C. Approval

In approving research proposals, it is the responsibility of the Asst. Superintendent of the Innovations Division to certify the following:

1. The research methodology described in the projects is sound, has a reasonable chance of permitting the study's objectives to be met, does not duplicate any ongoing or recently completed research or research being planned by DCPS, and is not in violation of any DCPS policy or practice relating to issues such as the protection of human subjects and the protection of confidentiality and/or data; and
2. Conducting the research or study is in the best interest of the school system and does not place an undue response or processing burden upon DCPS operating units, staff, students, or parents, or an inordinate expense upon the system.

D. The following factors are also considered by staff members of the Innovations Division and by other appropriate DCPS staff in evaluating a proposed research activity:

1. The technical soundness of the proposed design;
2. The appropriateness of the research topic for support in the public school setting;
3. The availability of research sites and subjects of the kinds requested;
4. The nature and amount of interruption to the ongoing educational program;
5. The kinds of background data on subjects required for the proposed study and the kinds of information of a personal nature to be secured from the subjects themselves;
6. The kind and number of data-gathering procedures or instruments to be used, and
7. The need for schools to safeguard the personal and legal rights of students, parents, and staff.

E. The clearance process is usually completed within four to six weeks of submission unless substantial problems are encountered with the proposed study's methodology. **Applications to conduct research in DCPS will not normally be accepted after March 15 in any given school year, unless those studies are to begin the following school year. Research activities involving students may not be conducted in DCPS from March 1 through August 31 unless the project is initiated by DCPS.**

#### **IV. STUDIES THAT MAY BE APPROVED AFTER SCREENING AND EVALUATION**

Studies of the following types are eligible for the review and evaluation process:

- A. Proposals for research activities originating within DCPS offices, departments, divisions, and other units;
- B. Responses to DCPS requests for proposal (RFPs) for external audits and research;
- C. Unsolicited research proposals from individuals or organizations independent of DCPS;
- D. Proposals for studies for master's theses and doctoral dissertations originating from current DCPS employees; and
- E. Proposals for studies for doctoral dissertations originating from proponents other than DCPS employees.

#### **V. STUDIES THAT WILL NOT BE APPROVED OR SUPPORTED**

Studies of the following types are not eligible for the review and evaluation process:

- A. Studies designed to meet requirements for receiving credit in high school, undergraduate, or graduate courses, seminars, practicums, or training workshops;
- B. Master's degree studies by persons who are not current DCPS employees; or
- C. Studies with research designs that do not fully meet the technical standards set forth in these guidelines.

#### **VI. DATA-GATHERING ACTIVITIES NOT REQUIRING CLEARANCE**

The stipulations of these guidelines do not apply to the following:

- A. The gathering of, access to, and/or use of data that are inherently required and customarily used in the discharge of the responsibilities and functions of DCPS administrators and supervisors;
- B. Data-gathering procedures, tests, or other data-acquisition forms that DCPS teachers develop and use to assess their assigned students' educational status and growth; and
- C. DCPS teachers having access to and using existing data required for these same instruction-related purposes.

## VII. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Proposal description requirements are set forth in the Request to Conduct Research application form available from the Innovations Division or through its website.

B. Any proposal that is submitted must include the following:

1. A discussion of the research issues and rationale of the investigation;
2. A list of hypotheses;
3. Copies of all specific instruments that will be used to meet specified study requirements; and
4. A detailed discussion of the sampling data collection and data analysis strategies that will be used in the study.

C. **Proposals are limited to no more than 50 pages** and must be submitted to the Asst. Superintendent of the Innovations Division or the designee. Resumes and descriptions of previous personal experience, if required, need not be included in the above page count.

## VIII. PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN DCPS

A. Submitting a Request to Conduct Research form

The Request to Conduct Research form is submitted to the Asst. Superintendent of the Innovations Division as follows:

1. Research by a DCPS Operating Unit

The supervisor of the unit will initiate the request by memorandum. Prior to implementing the proposed research/evaluation activity, the Request to Conduct Research form must be completed and submitted to the Asst. Superintendent of the Innovations Division through appropriate administrative channels.

2. Research by a DCPS Employee

The employee will complete and submit the Request to Conduct Research form to the Innovations Division.

3. Research Proposal from an Individual or Organization Independent of DCPS

An individual or organization independent of DCPS will complete and submit the Request to Conduct Research form to the Innovations Division.

4. Research Proposal Submitted by DCPS to an External Funding Source

Personnel submitting a proposal for a research study or requesting research funds from an external funding source will be expected to meet the requirements of these guidelines. Satisfactorily conforming to procedures for proposal submission does not in any way negate the need to meet the requirements specified herein.

B. Responsibility for Reviewing and Approving a Request for Research

Using the guidelines in Section II and the requirements in Section III, the Asst. Superintendent of the Innovations Division is responsible for screening and evaluating each proposal based on its technical quality and the projected costs and benefits to DCPS. The signature of the Asst. Superintendent of the Innovations Division is required for the study to proceed.

If the Asst. Superintendent of the Innovations Division determines that the proposed activity requires further review (e.g., a study with a particularly sensitive topic or a study requiring significant commitment of DCPS resources), the proposal may be denied or submitted, as appropriate, to the District's School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), the Superintendent of Schools, and/or the Chief of Staff for further consideration to determine whether the request should be approved, rejected, or submitted to the School Board for comment or approval.

### C. Research Activity Reports

When students, DCPS staff members, or parents are participants in a research study, an executive summary of no more than 25 pages will be prepared and reproduced by the researcher, and one copy is to be provided to the Innovations Division. In addition, the department may request one complete copy of each report or product developed as a part or outcome of the research project. No charge will be made to DCPS for any of these reports, copies, or products; all are to be provided within 30 days of the development of the report or product, or within 30 days of the end of the study, whichever comes first. **All participants, subjects, schools, and the school district must remain anonymous within all findings, reports, and publications unless special permission is obtained from the Asst. Superintendent of the Innovations Division.**