

REGULATION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: AFA, EGG-RA, EGI-RA, EHC-RA
Responsible Office: Superintendent of Schools
Shared Accountability

Conducting Research in the Montgomery County Public Schools

I. PURPOSE

Approved research activities are coordinated through the Office of Shared Accountability in order to:

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

II. DEFINITION

A *research activity* is any one or any 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, 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 instructional 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
- 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 director of the Office of Shared Accountability and the chief of staff prior to initiation. (See Section IX below.) These activities include, but are not limited to, those generated within MCPS by staff, students, parents, community members, task forces, advisory groups, parent/teacher organizations, committees, etc., 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, national study groups, etc. The conducting of research in MCPS by individuals, private groups, and other agencies will not be approved except in instances where the benefit to MCPS of such research is very substantial or where such research may be required by law.
- B. No member of the MCPS 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 this regulation.
- C. Approval
 - 1. In approving research proposals, it is the responsibility of the director of the Office of Shared Accountability to certify that research methodology described in the projects is sound, has a reasonable chance of permitting the study's objectives to be met, is not duplicative of any ongoing or recently completed research or

research being planned by MCPS, and is not in violation of any MCPS policy or practice relating to issues such as the protection of human subjects and the protection of confidentiality and/or data.

2. In approving requests, the chief of staff is responsible for certifying that conduct of the research or study is in the best interest of the school system, and does not place an undue response or processing burden upon MCPS 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 Office of Shared Accountability and by other appropriate MCPS 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 the interruption required in 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 in the study
7. The need for the schools to safeguard the personal and legal rights of students, parents, and staff

E. The clearance process will usually require no more than four weeks, unless substantial problems are encountered with the proposed study's methodology. Applications to conduct research in MCPS cannot normally be accepted after April 1 in any given school year. Research activities involving students may not be conducted in MCPS from April 15 through September 30, unless the project is for MCPS.

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 MCPS offices, departments, divisions, and other units and transmitted through their central office administrative channels
- B. Responses to MCPS requests for proposal (RFP's) for external audits and research
- C. Unsolicited research proposals from individuals or organizations independent of MCPS
- D. Proposals for studies for master's theses and doctoral dissertations originating from MCPS employees
- E. Proposals for studies for doctoral dissertations originating from proponents other than MCPS employees

V. STUDIES THAT WILL NOT BE APPROVED OR SUPPORTED

- 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 MCPS employees
- C. Studies where research designs do not fully meet the technical standards set forth in this regulation

VI. DATA-GATHERING ACTIVITIES NOT REQUIRING CLEARANCE

The stipulations of this regulation do not apply to:

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

VII. CLEARANCE OF DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

All instruments or data-acquisition requests that are part of a research study are subject to the clearance procedure prescribed in Regulation EHC-RA: *Clearance of Data Acquisition Activities*. Instruments can be submitted for clearance under this regulation either simultaneously with the request for approval of the research activity or at a later date. No data collection can be initiated until the data acquisition forms have been cleared.

VIII. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. Proposal description requirements are set forth on MCPS Form 495-1: *Request for a Research Activity*.
- B. Any proposal that is submitted will include:
 - 1. A discussion of the research issues and rationale of the investigation
 - 2. A list of hypotheses
 - 3. Specific instruments that will be used to meet specific study requirements
 - 4. A detailed discussion of the sampling data collection, and data analysis strategies that will be used in the study
- C. Proposals are to be limited to no more than 50 pages and should be submitted to the director of the Office of Shared Accountability. Resumes and descriptions of previous personal experience, if required, need not be included in the above page count.

IX. PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN MCPS

- A. Submitting a Request for a Research Activity

A request for a research activity is submitted to the Office of Shared Accountability as follows:

- 1. Research by an MCPS Operating Unit

The supervisor of the unit will initiate the request by memorandum. Prior to implementing the proposed research/ evaluation activity, MCPS Form 495-1: *Request for a Research Activity* must be completed and submitted to the Office of Shared Accountability through appropriate administrative channels.

2. Research by an MCPS Employee

The employee will complete and submit MCPS Form: *Request for a Research Activity* to the Office of Shared Accountability.

3. Research Proposal From an Individual or Organization Independent of MCPS

An individual or organization independent of MCPS will complete and submit MCPS Form 495-1: *Request for a Research Activity* to the Office of Shared Accountability.

4. Research Proposal Submitted by MCPS 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 this regulation. Satisfactorily conforming with procedures for proposal submission specified in Regulation DDA-RA: *Seeking and Securing Federal, State, and Private Grants* 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 director of the Office of Shared Accountability is responsible for screening and evaluating the proposal based on its technical quality, and the chief of staff is responsible for screening and evaluating the proposal on the basis of its projected costs and benefits to MCPS. The signatures of both the director of the Office of Shared Accountability and the chief of staff are required for the study to proceed. If either party determines that the proposed activity is of such a nature as to require further review (e.g. study whose topic is particularly sensitive or a study requiring a significant commitment of MCPS resources), the proposal will be submitted to the superintendent, who will determine whether it should be approved, disapproved, or submitted to the Board of Education for comment or approval.

C. Research Activity Reports

When students, MCPS 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 provided to the Office of Shared Accountability. 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 MCPS for any of these reports, copies, or products; and all will 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.

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation 340-2, January 5, 1973, revised July 1984; revised November 19, 1991; revised January 10, 2003.