

REGULATION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: EGG-RA, EGI-RA, JFF-RA
Responsible Office: Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Shared Accountability

Research and Other Data Collection Activities in Montgomery County Public Schools

I. PURPOSE

To assign responsibilities and establish processes for reviewing and coordinating research and other data collection activities in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) 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. Ensure the technical competency, the feasibility, and the appropriateness of research and other data collection activities in the public school setting

II. BACKGROUND

MCPS encourages education research and data collection that informs instructional and administrative decision making. However, MCPS is cognizant of the demands placed on students and staff members to participate in these and other data collection activities mandated by state and federal agencies.

MCPS holds its internal research, evaluation, and assessment activities conducted through the Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) to high standards of methodological rigor. Similarly, MCPS holds external individuals or organizations seeking to collect data in schools or offices to high methodological standards of research. In specific circumstances, MCPS permits more informal data collection by those internal to MCPS to inform instructional or administrative decision making, consistent with the discharge of their responsibilities and job functions.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Calendar of Research and Other Data Collection Activities* is a calendar listing research and other data collection activities scheduled through procedures outlined in this regulation. This calendar is maintained on the OSA webpage.
- B. *External individuals or organizations* are for-profit and not-for-profit research organizations, local/state/federal agencies, national study groups, and other external researchers, as well as individuals involved in doctoral dissertations.
- C. *Instruments* are electronic or printed formats designed to acquire data. These include, but are not limited to, surveys or questionnaires, focus group or telephone scripts, observation guides, and other tools necessary to complete a research or other data collection activity.
- D. *Internal entities* are MCPS staff; parents; MCPS task forces, advisory groups, or committees; the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (MCCPTA), Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs).
- E. *Research* is the use of systematic observational or experimental designs and instruments that provide reliable, replicable, and generalizable findings. Research typically includes analysis adequate to support findings and the dissemination of findings to contribute to scientific knowledge.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Research by External Individuals or Organizations, as well as MCPS Employees Proposing Studies for Master's Theses or Doctoral Dissertations
 - 1. External individuals or organizations, as well as any MCPS employees proposing studies for master's theses or doctoral dissertations, or research projects must use the following research review process:
 - a) Applicants submit a request comprised of MCPS Form 495-1: *Request for a Research Activity*; MCPS Form 226-17: *Research Instrument Clearance Request*; and required attachments, which include a proposal narrative and all associated instruments, to OSA at least four weeks prior to the requested start date for research activity in MCPS.

- b) OSA reviews the request to ensure that the applicant demonstrates a technically sound research methodology and that the activity is appropriate for the public school setting.
 - c) The deputy superintendent of schools evaluates the request on the basis of its projected costs, response burden, and benefits to MCPS.
 - d) Signatures of both the associate superintendent of OSA and the deputy superintendent of schools are required for the study to proceed. If either party determines that the request requires further review, the request will be submitted to the superintendent of schools, who will determine whether it should be approved, disapproved, or submitted to the Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) for comment or approval.
2. Requests to conduct research in MCPS normally cannot be accepted after April 1 for the current academic year. Research activities involving students may not be conducted in MCPS from April 15 through September 15. MCPS reserves the right to establish other black-out dates as needed.
3. Research cannot be initiated until all instruments have been reviewed and approved. All instruments that are part of a request must be approved as described on MCPS Form 226-17: *Research Instrument Clearance Request*.
4. The following limitations apply:
- a) A school leadership team may not approve research proposals for master's theses or doctoral dissertations by MCPS staff members in their own schools or offices.
 - b) The following activities will not be approved:
 - (1) Activities designed to meet requirements for receiving credit in high school, undergraduate or graduate courses, seminars, practicums, or training workshops
 - (2) Master's degree studies by persons who are not MCPS employees
 - (3) Activities that do not fully meet the criteria set forth in this regulation

5. Student and parent participation in research projects is voluntary. Participation of MCPS personnel also is voluntary unless specifically indicated by the deputy superintendent of schools.
6. MCPS staff members may not authorize, support, or participate in a research activity as defined above, unless the activity has been formally approved under the provisions of this regulation. Similarly, MCPS staff members may not transmit instruments that have not been approved for distribution, consistent with this regulation.
7. Researchers must provide one complete copy of each report or product developed as a part or outcome of the research project, and, upon request from MCPS, an executive summary of no more than 25 pages. Researchers may not charge MCPS for any of these reports, products, or summaries; 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.

B. Data Collection by Entities Internal to MCPS

1. MCPS staff members; parents; MCPS task forces, advisory groups or committees; and MCCPTA, PTAs, and PTSAs are not required to submit a proposal narrative or an experimental design but must follow the steps below:
 - a) Applicants submit a request comprised of MCPS Form 226-21: *Request for an Internal Data Collection Activity*, and required attachments, which include a list of requested respondents and a copy of the instrument, to OSA at least two weeks prior to the requested start date for data collection activity in MCPS.
 - b) OSA reviews the request and makes a recommendation to the deputy superintendent of schools and the chief operating officer, on the basis of the timing of the request, compliance with relevant MCPS regulations, and response burden.
 - c) The deputy superintendent of schools and the chief operating officer review OSA's recommendation and evaluate the request to ensure that the activity is appropriate for the public school setting.
 - d) Signatures of the associate superintendent of OSA, the deputy superintendent of schools, and the chief operating officer are required for the study to proceed. If any party determines that the request requires further review, the request will be submitted to the

superintendent of schools, who will determine whether it should be approved, disapproved, or submitted to the Board for comment or approval.

2. The following limitations apply:
 - a) The burden on respondent must be minimal, and the proposed number of questions should be limited (i.e., approximately five to seven questions is considered appropriate).
 - b) Applicants must consult the Calendar of Research and Other Data Collection Activities, posted on the OSA webpage, and avoid scheduling data collection activities at the same time as previously scheduled research or during black-out dates for mandated assessments or surveys.
 - c) Respondent participation in such data collection activity is voluntary, as described in section IV.A.5.

C. Data Collection Activities not Subject to this Regulation

1. Employee associations wishing to conduct data collection activities (surveys) across units must gain approval from the Committee of the Association Leaders/Deputy Superintendent of Schools/Chief Operating Officer.
2. MCCPTA, PTAs, and PTSAs requesting information directly from parent members are not subject to this regulation. Data collection activities directed toward MCPS staff members are subject to this regulation.
3. This regulation does not apply to the following:
 - a) Data-gathering procedures, tests, or other data-accessing forms that teachers develop and use to assess their assigned students' educational status and growth
 - b) Teachers having access to and using existing data required for these same instruction-related purposes
 - c) School leadership teams gathering, having access to, or using data that are inherently required and customarily used in the discharge of their responsibilities and functions, including:

- (1) Requesting data from students in their schools, community members located within their schools' attendance areas, or staff in their schools
- (2) Requesting data from staff members under their direct supervision

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation 340-2, January 5, 1973, revised July 1984; revised November 19, 1991; revised January 10, 2003; revised December 14, 2011.