

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

<b>Type of Procedure:</b>	Information Services	<b>Procedure No.:</b>	F-3
<b>Title:</b>	Research Request & Review Process	<b>Policy No.:</b>	3.21, 3.23
<b>Authority:</b>	1001.41, F.S.	<b>Date Issued:</b>	August 13, 2009
<b>Fla. Statute:</b>	1001.42, 1001.57, 1002.22, F.S.	<b>Superintendent's Signature:</b>	
<b>State Board Rule:</b>	N/A	<b><u>Signature on File</u></b>	

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### **Purpose:**

To provide procedures to be followed prior to, during and after the initiation and/or completion of any data collection or analysis of data beyond that which is typical of classroom use or common curriculum functions.

### **Definitions:**

1. “Research” is defined as data collection, observation or data analysis activities which relate to verification of hypotheses or substantiation of claims. Research includes data collection activities not common to routine classroom, curriculum or administrative functions, which involve or impact upon school(s) or program(s). This includes cases where research collection activities involve controversial, sensitive topics or confidential information which is restricted by Board policy or state statute. This includes electronic surveys sent via internet. All such activities are construed as research regardless of whether they originate within or external to the district. Research activities do not include prior-reviewed program evaluation activities; periodic reports required by state/federal/local agencies; routine, classroom, curriculum or administrative data collection, or data collection which is not related to verification of hypotheses or substantiation of claims.
2. “Researcher” shall refer to individuals who propose, have approval for and/or who conduct research in Leon County Schools. This includes principal investigator, co-researcher, research assistant, evaluator, graduate student, and other such titles.
3. “Principal Investigator” shall refer to the one individual who serves as the person of authority and contact related to the research.
4. “University” shall refer to any college, university, or institution that proposes, supports or conducts research.

5. "Sponsor" shall refer to any person, company, corporation, business or entity who serves to oversee the research. This includes the university and the major professor of graduate students.
6. "Cleared List" is the LCS list of persons with security clearance who may enter schools for the purpose of practicum teaching or research. This list is developed and distributed weekly by the LCS University Student Placement Office in coordination with the LCS Safety and Security and Risk Management Offices.

## **Procedures:**

### **1. Submission**

Anyone desiring to conduct research within (i.e., collect data in or from) Leon County District Schools shall submit an original, with original signature(s), and five (5) copies of:

- A. Request for Research. The Request for Research form is available from the Office of Testing, Research and Evaluation, 3955 W. Pensacola Street or on the LCS web site.
- B. Abstract. An abstract of the proposed study; including a brief statement of the need for such research (e.g., the problem addressed), the rationale, the design, subjects, sampling procedures, type of results, major hypotheses, and utility of the results. This abstract should be no longer than three pages; preferably 100-200 words.
- C. Literature review. A summarized review of the appropriate areas of literature or evidence of a review process and rationale.
- D. Instruments. Copies of any tests or data collection instruments (survey, forms, etc.) and interview guides, when not already available within the school system, that are proposed for use.

### **2. Research Review Board**

- A. The Superintendent's designee will appoint the Chairperson of the Research Review Board. The chairperson of the Research Review Board shall handle all communications, follow-up, recordkeeping, documentation, and coordination of research activities.
- B. Five individuals will be selected by the Chairman and these reviewers will constitute the "Research Review Board." Membership on this Board may include:
  - 1) The appropriate Area Leaders and representatives of the elementary, middle, secondary school, VocEd/ Adult, or special center principals (depending on the subjects and hypotheses of the proposed study);

- 2) The Director, a Facilitator or Manager(s) of the appropriate district departments or curriculum areas (depending on the subjects and hypotheses of the proposed study);
- 3) One or more selected reviewers with expertise in the areas involved in the study;
- 4) One or more selected reviewers expert in data collection procedures, forms design, research procedures; and/or,
- 5) One or more selected reviewers from the Testing, Research & Evaluation Office.

3. Review Criteria:

The Research Review Board will review requests based upon these criteria:

- A. Validity and Reliability. How appropriate are the procedures (design) for the analysis of the problem? Are the procedures likely to support valid conclusions or findings as are proposed by the researcher? These considerations must include instrument (tests, surveys, interviews, forms for data collection) reliability, appropriateness, etc.
- B. Efficiency/Practicality. Are the required data available from more readily accessible sources or through more appropriate methods? Is the data collection redundant or possibly something that should supplement an ongoing data collection effort? Are the methods for obtaining the data reasonable and practical given the way the district operates (in light of such "real" considerations as "other priorities," individual staff obligations, informal policies or protocol, etc.)?
- C. Cost/Benefit. Is the "cost" of this program or intervention, in terms of school personnel, utilities, curriculum interference, etc., justified in terms of potential benefits to the educational process or to our education support operations? Will the district sufficiently benefit from this research?
- D. Confidentiality/Records Access/Controversy. Is the problem dealt with or the proposed manner for dealing with the problem sufficiently controversial to require special conditions or monitoring? Does this study adequately respect the rights and privacy of the students and teachers involved? Is parental consent needed prior to the involvement of any students? Do you feel that this study merits a general meeting of the Research Review Board members?
- E. Willingness to Cooperate. Have there already been projects or are there projects/programs now ongoing that adequately cover this issue or problem, i.e., has enough been done with this already? Is there sufficient reason to warrant our

district's cooperation with the researchers to carry out this project? Bear in mind any obligations our district may have to higher educational purposes, to cooperating with our local universities, the State Department of Education, or to the general community as may be represented in or involved with the proposed research. Have cooperative ventures with these parties in the past been successful or appropriately handled?

4. Research Review Process

- A. Review Style. Requests for research shall be reviewed "referee style" (i.e., sent to the reviewers immediately upon receipt of the research request material) to minimize turnaround time.
- B. Timing. The principal investigator will be notified, in writing, of the Research Review Board's recommendations within four weeks of the date of the receipt of:
- 1) The Request for Research;
  - 2) Abstract of the proposal;
  - 3) Review of relevant research; and
  - 4) Tests, data collection instruments or interview guides; as specified above.
- C. Reviewer Summary Sheet. The Reviewer Summary Sheet form shall be used by each reviewer to indicate approval or concerns. Any particular conditions, as may directly handle the concerns cited, shall be listed.
- D. Concerns. When concerns are expressed, they will be dealt with through one or more of these methods:
- 1) seeking input from the researcher to determine if changes can be made to the research request; or,
  - 2) adding one more reviewer to the board. This shall be an individual with experience or authority in the area of concern; or
  - 3) a called group meeting of the Research Review Board. Pending the discussion and majority consensus of the attending members (minimum of three), satisfactory conditions and approval/ rejection status will be determined in the group meeting of the Research Review Board. Research requests for which the concerns are adequately dealt to the satisfaction of the reviewer(s) citing the concern(s), will not require a group meeting of the Research Review Board.
- E. Consensus. Approval by the Research Review Board requires the consensus of at least 75% of those reviewing the proposal.
- F. Confidential student data. By action of the Leon County School Board and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974), the use of confidential student information not completely anonymous requires the notification and prior approval of the parent/guardian of the student or the approval of the student if married, or over 18 years of age. Most often, this dictates written parental

permission. The form and content of such permission must be approved by the Chairperson of the Research Review Board and the participating school principal(s) or program director(s) following approval of the research request. Samples of parental permission forms are available on the LCS web site.

- G. Intervention Consent. Any intervention that requires student participation in activities or participation in activities for periods of time not typically within the realm of the regular school curriculum, will require written permission from the student's parent/guardian, or the student, if over 18 years of age or married. These forms must be approved by the principal(s)/director(s) involved and the Chairperson of the Research Review Board.
- H. Duration. Approval is given for one school year or less. When the approval period expires, the researcher's name will be removed from the Cleared List.
- I. Outside the approval process. Researchers who seek to obtain data without seeking prior approval specified in policy and procedures; such as sending email and/or electronic survey directly to teachers or school personnel, etc., will be considered as operating outside the district's policy and procedures. This includes persons serving the district as volunteers and who are collecting data. Notice of violation will be sent when it is known. If a subsequent Request for Research is received, instances of operating outside the approval process will be communicated to the Research Review Board and may be considered negatively in their review. Researchers and/or sponsors who operate outside the approval process may be excluded from further research in Leon County Schools.
- J. Teachers and Practicum Classroom Teacher. Where teachers and practicum classroom teachers initiate or conduct research-type activities, and those activities do not extend beyond an individual school program, and where such activities are not controversial and not likely to result in any changes or recommendations for change beyond that setting, the Principal of that school may opt not to have these requests formally reviewed.

## 5. Research Review Board Approval

- A. Initial Consent. A decision of initial consent and approval by the Research Review Board does not, in itself, constitute permission to carry out the research as proposed. Approval is contingent upon and issued after:
  - 1) Written consent of the Principal(s) whose students, faculties or facilities would be involved in the proposed research. Each principal is ultimately responsible for the decision relative to the involvement of students, faculty or facilities under his or her direction. A Principal's Consent is provided with the initial consent letter. This completed form, with original signature, must be received by the Chairperson of the Research Review Board prior to the start of any research activities at the school site.

2) Security clearance through the researcher's university is specified in written contract. Proof of Level II clearance from Leon County Schools must be provided for every individual who, on behalf of the researcher, will seek access to students or to a school campus when students are present. Each university must also provide (a) proof of health insurance, and (b) proof of liability insurance for each individual. Researchers not affiliated with a university must provide the equivalent to the LCS University Student Placement Office.

- B. Approval with Conditions. The Research Review Board may opt to grant initial consent and approval with conditions. In these cases, adherence to the specified conditions is required. Researchers who do not adhere to the specified conditions of approval may be excluded from future research in Leon County Schools.
- C. Notice of Approval. Notice is sent to the Principal Investigator and the LCS University Placement Office after the above procedures are complete. Once all security and risk management requirements are met, each individual seeking access to students on behalf of the researcher will have their name included in the Cleared List sent weekly to the schools.
- D. Confidential information. When confidential information is necessary, prior permission is required. The specific form should conform to the guidelines for parental permission (attached) and must be approved by the Research Review Board Chairperson and the respective site school principals following initial consent and prior to approval.
- E. Withdrawal. Leon County Schools, as a district and/or each school therein, reserves the right to withdraw from any research, at any time, without reason.

## 6. Implementation

All research implementation shall adhere to the following guidelines:

- A. Inconvenience or disruption. All research personnel are responsible for minimizing the amount of inconvenience or disruption of normal school activities. Any violation or unacceptable conduct on the part of research personnel, either directly or indirectly, should be reported immediately to the Chairperson of the Research Review Board and the principal(s) of the school(s) involved.
- B. Changes. Any desired significant changes or amendments to the procedures or design of the study as described should be communicated to and confirmed by the Chairperson of the Research Review Board. Any questions relating to the above, or concerns over excepting some part of the above process, should be addressed to the Chairperson of the Research Review Board.

7. Completion

Obtaining valid, reliable and timely results from research is the reason why Leon County Schools participates in research.

- A. Clearance. Upon completion of data collection, the Principal Investigator will promptly notify the Office of Testing, Research and Evaluation and the researcher(s) will be removed from the cleared list. The responsibility for timely notification rests with the Principal Investigator's Department (or area) sponsor.
- B. District-held Data. If district-held data, such as standardized test scores, are part of the approved study, the data may be released when:
- 1) Researcher delivers to TRE an electronic file (such as Excel) populated with students names, school, grade, birth date, LCS identification number, gender and race
  - 2) Researcher delivers original signed consent forms placed in order by school, class and alphabetized by last name
  - 3) Leon County Schools verifies signed consent forms against the electronic file and releases data for only those students with signed consent forms.
  - 4) Researcher signs for receipt of data and LCS returns original consent forms to researcher for archiving.
- C. Extensions. Researchers must submit a completed "Progress Report" and request an extension for continuation. Extensions are reviewed by three (3) Research Review Board members using the criteria given above. Initial consent and clearance procedures, specified in Section 5 of this document, also apply to extensions. Extensions for multi-year studies are approved for one school year or less at a time.
- D. Results. One copy of the report of the results and appropriate discussion shall be sent to the Chairperson of the Research Review Board. The responsibility for timely submission of results rests with the Principal Investigator's Department (or area) sponsor. Continuing district support for research efforts requires the continued cooperation by research sponsors in following these procedures. Should a researcher fail to submit timely results, this will be communicated to the Research Review Board at the time of future research requests and this omission may be considered negatively in their review. Researchers and/or sponsors who do not report results shortly after completion of data collection may be excluded from further research in Leon County Schools.
- E. Public. Leon County Schools may make results available to the public, including posting research results to their web site.

Date adopted/amended: January 26, 1994; August 13, 2009