CCSD

CLARK COUNTY

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Research Application and Review Process

User Manual - External Researchers

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Introduction

The Clark County School District (CCSD) is among the largest school districts in the country. Because its highly diverse geography and demography offer a wide range of contexts for conducting educational research and program evaluations, the District receives numerous requests to conduct research from a variety of individuals and organizations. This manual sets forth the guidelines and practices for those requests.

What is Research?

By necessity, the District maintains a broad understanding of research. Research includes any project that aims to collect or create quantitative or qualitative data from students, parents, or staff from the greater school district community. This includes any project with defined, answerable questions and hypotheses which require the collection of data, survey responses, or other sources of data from participants. Research participants may be any individual associated with the District (students, employees, parents) about education related topics or which requires collected data from the District about matters related to education. This also includes any evaluation study meant to capture or measure the outcomes and impact of training, professional learning, grant programs, non-profit work, and more. Projects that are relying solely on publicly available data may not need to go through the research application process. If in doubt, please contact the CCSD Research Department to see if your project needs to go through the application process.

Purpose of the Research Application and Review Process

Internal and external applicants seeking approval to conduct a research project within the District must go through official review by the Research Department. The research application review process provides a mechanism to:

1) Protect the interests and well-being of the District. Any activities that receive approval must relate to the District's stated mission.
2) Demonstrate good stewardship of the time and resources of all employees and students of the district. The benefits must outweigh the costs to students and staff in terms of their time and resources for all research projects approved in the District. Research projects that are poorly designed or unlikely to produce useful results may be a poor use of District resources and it may not be in the best interest of the District to approve such research.
3) Protect the rights of proposed research subjects within CCSD. The United States Department of Education has established regulations governing all education institutions that use human subjects in research activities (Federal Policy for the

Protection of Human Subjects).[1] Research proposals that do not align with these laws are prohibited from taking place within the District.

Purpose of this Manual

This manual serves as guidance for those seeking to conduct research within the Clark County School District. This manual:

- Provides general guidance and considerations when engaging in research with the school district.
- Provides guidance on navigating the research application and review process.
- Provides answers to common questions involving research and research approval.

[1] Title 34, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 97, *Protection of Human Subjects*, which includes Subpart A, Basic Policy, and Subpart D, *Additional Protections for Children*. U.S. Department of Education, https://www2.ed.gov/policy/fund/guid/humansub/overview.html

Overview of Conducting Research as an External Researcher

What is an External Researcher?

The Research Department considers any non-student researcher to be an external researcher. In this context, “external" refers to the fact that you are a non-student researcher that is conducting research work external to the day-to-day operations of the District. A vast majority of the research review process for external researchers is similar to that of the process for students. The differences are limited to a small number of different questions and a slightly different order for providing proof of District support.

Limitations of Research Review for External Researchers

There are limitations to what the Research Department can review or approve. Many of the limitations relate to the limits of purview of the Research Department. Other limitations rely on the fact that the Research Department cannot, and should not, speak as a subject matter expert for all areas of educational research.

More often than that, external researchers are attempting to use research methods to evaluate some activity, intervention, product, or other educational effort that has been introduced to the District.

Here is a non-comprehensive list of the sort of activity that the Research Department will not review or approve along with the various departments that have a say in such work.

- Curriculum
  - This will be sent to the Curriculum and Instruction Division (CID)
- Programming or service offered by an external partner
  - This will be sent to the Office of the General Counsel for an MOU/MOA
- Educational or behavioral interventions
  - This will be sent to the Educational Services Division (ESD)
- Educational software/products/applications
  - This will be sent to Technology Information System Services (TISS)
- AI agents and systems
  - This will be sent to Technology Information System Services (TISS)
- Professional learning, training, workshops, etc.
  - This will be sent to the Leadership and Professional Learning Division (LPLD)
- After-school programs/Community Programs

    - This will be sent to Student Athletics/Activities
    - This could also be sent to Community Engagement
- Athletic or physical programming
    - This will be sent to Student Athletics/Activities
- Medical, psychological, or therapeutic practices
    - This will be sent to the Student Services Division (SSD)
- Budgetary approvals, such as Extra Time, Overtime, and Professional Learning Compensation
    - This needs to be approved by building principals
- Safety and Insurance Considerations with students and staff
    - Risk Management and Region supervisor approval
- Vendors - Product approvals
    - This will be sent to Purchasing

Each one of these efforts would rely on seeking support and approval from at least one of the above-mentioned departments.

Contractual Requirements Prior to Research Review

Given the extensive list of topics or actions the Research Department will not review, all prospective researchers will need to provide a copy of an existing agreement as part of their application to conduct research. For example, if you wish to conduct an evaluation of an athletic program, you will need to provide proof of support for said program to continue through the research review process.

These contracts may come in the form of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Interlocal Agreement (ILA), Data Sharing Agreement (DSA), or other similar contractual agreements.

The Research Department must have the details of these agreements prior to conducting their research review and approval.

Other Limitations on Conducting External Research

If you are seeking approval to evaluate a program or conduct research, the Research Department will only review research activities aligned with the evaluation efforts. In most cases, this would apply to external, third-party researchers hired to evaluate a program.

Keep in mind, there are strict limitations on what can be approved and data can be allowed for an external researcher. The most common example would be limitations on providing student identification numbers. The Research Department is fully aware of how critical student

identification numbers are to connecting a student to their educational outcomes. That said, the District does not allow the sharing of student identification numbers for research. If you choose to proceed through the research review process, you will be subject to all of the limitations of the research review process. In practice, this means that you will receive de-identified data for your evaluation work and the Research Department will coordinate.

Recommended Alternative to Seeking Research Review

Effectively, the Research Department suggests that all programming and evaluation be codified into contractual agreements whenever possible. These contracts may come in the form of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Interlocal Agreement (ILA), Data Sharing Agreement (DSA), or other similar contractual agreements

Establishing contracts with the District has several benefits:

- Explicitly outlines the details of your work and/or services
- Allows for multi-year projects without the need for annual renewal
- Explicitly outlines what, if anything, the District will provide to assist with the contractual agreement
- Explicitly outlines data you will receive as part of the agreement
- FERPA exemptions may apply regarding the data you require and what can be provided
- Research instruments and research activities can be codified into the contract(s) themselves, removing the need for research review

Critical General Guidance and Tips

There are several important factors to keep in mind when conducting research within the District.

1. **All research and evaluation is voluntary.** All research and evaluation activities fall outside of the official duties of the District and its staff. CCSD students, parents, and staff are not compelled to engage in research activities. Additionally, neither the District nor the Research Department will take action to compel or bolster participation in research. Each participant will decide on their involvement and, as such, we require active and informed consent/assent for all participants.

2. **For District staff members, you are conducting research as a student not District staff.** All individuals proceeding through the research review process as students are processed and reviewed as students, regardless of their potential role or position within the District. Any research activities conducted for personal student work are distinct from official work duties. Student researchers who hold a district staff position are not to use their role, their position, their access to District systems, their access to District data, or any other aspects of their job for their personal student work without approval or to

influence the research review process in any way. Further guidance on this topic appears throughout this manual.

3. **Take your time to ensure complete responses and documentation.** We understand that applicants may face deadlines causing concern about the time frame for approval. The Research Department works to ensure that we conduct review activities in a timely manner and maintain responsive communication with all applicants. Trying to accelerate the process by filling out the application, attaching documents, and submitting as fast as possible often leads to errors, which may slow down the process. Take your time to ensure that you have provided all documentation that has been required for your project. Review your submission to ensure all documentation is filled out correctly and comports to our expectations. Finally, ensure that your application and supporting documentation reflect a comprehensive and consistent research study.

4. **Subjects may be "direct" or "indirect".** Direct subjects are the primary focus of a research or evaluation project. Indirect subjects are not the focus of a project but they may be part of observations, studies, or have their data/information utilized in some capacity. For example, a study focused on measuring the impact of teachers (direct subject) may need information or test scores from students (indirect subjects) to determine results. For the purpose of research review, both of these examples could be subjects within a study and their consent/assent may need to be secured.

5. **The Research Department is neutral.** The Research Department must remain a neutral party throughout the research review process. Researchers may ask questions to clarify aspects of the research review process. The Research Department cannot advocate for your project nor serve as liaison between you and District administration as you proceed through this process.

6. Applications should be submitted by the research/evaluation team. We understand that research and evaluation may be collaborative efforts. We ask that applications be submitted by the individual(s) conducting the research. This ensures clear communication and understanding between the Research Department and research teams. This also ensures that questions are directed at the necessary parties.

7. **Applications are the responsibility of applicants**. It is the responsibility of applicants to complete and submit their applications. It is the responsibility of applicants to collect all required documentation and approvals. It is the responsibility of applicants to engage with their Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and other institutions they may need to contact as part of the research review process. District staff members are not obligated to engage in communication with the Research Department on behalf of research applicants.

8. **Applications must reflect a complete proposal for proposed actions with the District.** The research review process does not review or approve activities outside of CCSD or the related educational community. The research review process will not consider activities that have yet to be planned or developed. Your application must reflect your proposal as it has been developed and all supporting documentation and application responses must reflect the entirety of the project. Anything beyond that may be discussed as modifications or separate applications.

Additional Guidance by Topic

CCSD Staff and the Research Review Process

CCSD staff conducting research will undergo the same review process as non-staff applicants.

Each year, many CCSD staff members complete research studies as part of their academic coursework. The District must make a distinction between CCSD staff fulfilling their job duties and CCSD staff completing work for personal academic advancement. For the research review process, CCSD staff will proceed through the research review process with the same expectations and requirements as a student.

CCSD Staff Separating Work Duties and Research Activities

Activities undertaken by CCSD staff as part of official duties and responsibilities are distinct from activities undertaken as a researcher, even if the activities are the same.

CCSD must maintain a distinction between official duties and research work. Obligations and responsibilities carried out by CCSD staff members and academic activities a CCSD staff member may undertake as part of their coursework are separate.

Research work that emulates or utilizes typical classroom activities will be reviewed as research. Ultimately, the instruments used and data collected for research are to be treated as research, even if actions are identical to day-to-day activities in the classroom. Research activities must be reviewed as such even if they are identical to typical classroom activities. For example, if a CCSD staff member plans to administer a quiz in their own classroom for research purposes, this quiz will require consent and research review, even if it is identical to a quiz administered for official course assessment and grading.

All research instruments, consent/assent forms, recruitment materials, and any other research-related documents must not reference any affiliation with CCSD. This includes the exclusion of CCSD email addresses, phone numbers, and school addresses. Student researchers must use university or personal email addresses on research forms and must not include any CCSD-affiliated contact information.

CCSD Staff Using Their Position to Communicate with Other Departments

Student researchers will communicate with the Research Department and Not Utilize Their Official Position and Access to Administration to Influence the Review and Approval of Their Personal Research Work

All student applicants must direct all questions regarding the research application and review process to the Research Department and/or the research review team. The use of one's position and access through their official CCSD position to contact District administrators or otherwise influence the review process or secure support documentation represents a conflict of interest. You are engaging in this process as a student and your approval must be separated from your official work duties or position.

CCSD Staff Accessing District Data for Research

CCSD staff must proceed through proper procedure to utilize any data or information they may have access to as part of their duties.

CCSD staff members have access to private and personally-identifiable data to fulfill their job duties. This data is protected by several regulations and statutes including FERPA, HIPAA, and IDEA. CCSD staff cannot utilize this data for purposes outside of their official duties without going through proper procedures. This includes any data accessed through district-maintained systems, as well as, any data collected as part of official job duties. Additionally, no CCSD staff shall provide data from District systems to a student researcher without review and approval.

CCSD Staff Involvement in Research as a Subject

CCSD staff involvement in research must be voluntary and occur outside of contractual work hours.

CCSD staff members may play a critical role as research subjects. Approved research projects must secure the informed consent of all participating staff members as with any research participant. Additionally, research activities involving staff as subjects must occur outside of contractual work hours. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and more must occur outside of the time designation for official duties and responsibilities.

CCSD Staff Involvement in Research in Other Roles

CCSD staff involvement in research in other capacities must be voluntary and not disrupt normal classroom functions.

The Research Department recognizes that the classroom is a critical site of research. Even if CCSD staff are not the primary subjects of research, they may be asked to assist research in some capacity. This may include allowing observers into the classroom, allowing researchers to conduct research activities with consenting students, or providing de-identified classroom artifacts to researchers. Researchers may be required to secure the consent of CCSD staff and teachers involved in a research study even if they are not the direct subjects of said research.

Challenging Topics and Research Approval

The subject matter of a study or its research materials may impact approval.

The safety and privacy of research participants is the top priority of the research review process. Particular subject areas present issues for ensuring the safety of our research participants and the protection of their private information. The Research Department encourages research into difficult topics, however, applicants must understand that certain subject matter may require extra scrutiny, changes to question wording, or lead to the denial of a project. Each project will be reviewed as a comprehensive study with context taken into account. That said, it is important to provide a list of topics that may prove troubling for District approval.

- Political affiliation(s) or partisanship
- Religious affiliation(s) or beliefs
- Sexual orientation
- Sexual activity
- Physical and/or sexual violence
- Marital status
- Personal income
- Psychological issues faced by the respondent or their family
- Illegal or antisocial behavior
- Suicidal ideation and behavior

Fingerprinting and Badging

Researchers must be fingerprinted and badged to have unsupervised contact with students

Please note: All volunteers and researchers who may, through the course of their research, have unsupervised contact with students **MUST** get fingerprinted and badged through the CCSD Human Resources office. More information is available here: https://www.ccsd.net/community/protect-our-kids/

It is the researcher's responsibility to work with the principals at the schools where research is taking place to ensure that either the researcher will always have supervision, or that the researcher goes through the proper fingerprinting and badging procedures.

Grant Letters of Support

Grant letters of support are not part of the research review process and the Research Department is not where to seek such letters.

Grant letters of support demonstrate preliminary endorsement for projects as part of a grant application process. They are meant to demonstrate the feasibility of a project seeking grant funding. Grant letters of support are not part of the research review process administered by the Research Department. The research review process focuses on the review and approval of research ready to commence within the District. We expect that those currently seeking funding will eventually go through this review process before they begin their own work. As such, the Research Department does not provide preliminary grant letters of support for a project the department will later review as an objective party.

Longitudinal Study Considerations

Longitudinal studies and supporting documentation must be renewed annually.

All projects approved in one school year must seek renewal and re-approval to extend research into the subsequent school year. If an applicant is planning a five-year study, the study will require an initial approval and then seek renewal for each of the additional four years.

This process includes the renewal of all time-sensitive documentation and District approvals. This process may also include updating all research instruments should changes occur. Those who plan to submit an application for longitudinal studies must be aware of this commitment and potential issues.

There are many ways in which longitudinal studies may face challenges, including but not limited to:

- A District sponsor supporting a project may leave their position
- School principals approving research activity at their school site may switch schools
- Students in a longitudinal study may switch schools or move out of the District
- District priorities change as will support for research

The Research Department recommends that applicants consider these challenges and plan accordingly. If there is the potential to break up a longitudinal study into smaller portions, it may be beneficial (please refer to the guidance on multi-phase projects).

Longitudinal Studies and Tracking Participants

It is the responsibility of research applicants to track their participants and secure relevant approvals to ensure their continued participation.

As noted above, transiency is a major consideration for long-term projects. Administrators, staff, and students frequently move around the District or even move out of the District. Naturally, this is a concern for any longitudinal study that wishes to utilize the same participants over time.

It is the responsibility of the research team to keep track of their participants in the face of potential transiency. The Research Department cannot help researchers track down participants to ensure their continued involvement. Additionally, the research team is responsible for securing any additional approvals from additional school sites should a participant change schools.

Multi-Phase Projects

Each phase of a multi-phase project must be approved as separate research applications.

Some research studies are designed to be multi-phase projects. In such studies, the results from one phase of a project will inform or shape subsequent phases. For example, survey results from Phase 1 of a project will shape the interview questions for Phase 2 in the following year.

The Research Department does not review or approve of undeveloped or unplanned research activities. If results from one phase of a study inform the creation of research instruments in subsequent phases, then there will not be research instruments to review until earlier phases are complete. The Research Department will not review hypothetical future research instruments.

For a multi-phase project, your initial application should include only Phase 1 of the study. Subsequent phases of the project may be submitted as separate applications once they have been fully developed.

Research Reimbursement Amount and Format Limitations

Research reimbursements amounts for research projects must not exceed $200 for adult participants and $25 for student participants. Additionally, reimbursements must be in an acceptable format.

Ethical voluntary research requirements for the District include placing limitations on research reimbursement amounts. For adult participants, whether staff or parents/guardians, the

reimbursement limit is $200 total for each participant for all related research activities. For minor participants, the reimbursement limit is $25 total for each participant for all related research activities.

Note: If your suggested reimbursement amount is much higher, it is possible that you are seeking to reimburse individuals for time spent in professional learning, training sessions, product testing, etc. or other points addressed in this section.

Additionally, reimbursements must be in an acceptable format. This may include gift cards or checks for individual participants. This may also include checks written out to a school for participation. There are reimbursement that will not be accepted for approval. This includes private debit cards issued to a school or requiring research participants to go through additional processes such as applying for reimbursement through a university accounts payable department. Methods of reimbursement are in a constant state of evolution. The Research Department will review each reimbursement methodology individually.

Screener Instruments are Research Instruments

Instruments used to screen out participants who do not meet particular study criteria are still collecting information and require consent.

It is a common practice to utilize screener surveys or other comparable methods to ensure that only participants who meet specific criteria continue onto research instruments. Some research designs benefit from this type of front-end filtering of respondents. However, screener surveys are still collecting information from participants. A researcher is still inquiring about personal details if they ask a question as part of a screener survey or a full survey.

As such, we expect active consent to be collected prior to administering the screener survey. This may have an impact on the order in which researchers collect consent and administer instruments.

Tips:

- Digital consent forms make collecting consent and administering screener surveys a seamless process (see our notes on digital consent form below)
- Screener surveys may limit the ability to compare results and/or limit participation numbers
    - While it may seem beneficial to limit research participants to only those who meet specific criteria, you may be missing out on an entire comparison group.
    - Often times, it may make more sense to include these “screener” questions into the main survey
    - This will allow you to collect even more data and compare those participants who meet your criteria against those participants who do not

- Of course, this all depends on the needs of the researcher and the field of study but the Research Department has reviewed many studies that have limited their own participation by using screener methods

Seeking Approval for Products, Services, or Technological Applications

The Research Department will deny research applications that seek approval for deploying and/or testing a product, service, or technological application in the District.

The Research Department receives applications from third-party vendors and developers who are looking to receive approval in order to recruit staff, parents, or students for extensive product testing or feedback for product development. The Research Department does not consider such work to be research work and such applications will be denied. If applicants seek approval to deploy their product, service, or technological application within the District, there are other procedures for vendors to follow outside of the Research Department.

Separating Programs and Program Evaluations

Programs and program evaluations are distinct processes. The Research Department only reviews and approves evaluation studies.

Programs encapsulate any program, professional learning, training schedule, service, intervention, after-school activity, tutoring practice, technological application, etc. that may be approved and adopted by the District. Programs will proceed through their own approval processes. These programs do not constitute what we would consider research. As such, program approval is not under the purview of the Research Department.

Program evaluations are any study designed to evaluate the impact of a program. This includes work aimed at measuring the effectiveness of an intervention, the academic impact of a tutoring program, and any other study designed to collect and analyze data to determine the outcome of a program. The Research Department does consider such work to be research. Research evaluations studies must proceed through the research review process to receive approval.

Research applicants should not utilize a research application to seek out approval for a program. If a program has not yet received approval, applicants should proceed through the steps necessary to obtain program approval. Applicants will then return to the Research Department when they have an evaluation study to review.

When filling out an application for program evaluation, all responses and documentation must refer only to the evaluation work. The application must focus solely on the research activities and methods relevant to gathering data for an evaluation.

Use of Audio, Video, or Digital Recording

The use of recording as a source of research data will be reviewed on a case by case basis to maintain the privacy and protection of students, parents, and staff.

The Research Department recognizes that the audio, video, and digital recordings are an important source of data for research, particularly qualitative methodologies. For reference, digital recordings include activity meant to track forms of data such as computer keystrokes, eye movements, software application data, and other forms of data collected due to interactions with digital mediums. Recordings used for research purposes are distinct from recordings used for official district ends. Additionally, researchers must consider all individuals who may be present on recordings, regardless of the subject or focus of said recording(s).

As part of the research review process, all proposed methods of recording must: 1) Secure the consent/assent of all participants for said recording 2) Respect the privacy and confidentiality of non-consenting individuals and 3) Not pose any disruptions to typical classroom activities.

Any further guidance will be given on a case by case basis. Every research project is different and may use recording in different ways. In general, audio recording methods present less challenges in the educational space than video recording. This is especially true in the classroom setting where the entirety of the class may appear on recordings. However, video recording is more manageable in smaller, controlled situations such as individual interviews or focus groups.

Each research design will be reviewed based upon the facts of the project. Through the review process, the Research Department will review proposed methods for recording and provide guidance where necessary.

Overview of the Research Application Process

Introduction

Anyone looking to conduct research in CCSD must submit an application through the online Research Application housed within AARSIAPPS (https://aarsiapps.ccsd.net/v/rareview) according to the procedures outlined below. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Should an application be denied, applicants will be notified and given the opportunity to revise or complete their applications.

Please note: Any research conducted at a CCSD facility and/or research involving students requires the acknowledgment and consent of the site administrator. No research will be conducted at a CCSD location without the site administrator's permission---even if it is otherwise approved by the Research Department.

Submitting an application for review is a multi-step process to ensure protection of students and their information, the interests of the District, and the goals of the researcher. All questions asked in the Research Application are standard and we expect researchers would be familiar with them after writing any formal grant proposal, IRB proposal, or thesis/dissertation prospectus. The following provides a general explanation of each step of the research process. The specifics of each step and explanations of required documentation is in the next section.

Part A: Project Summary and Preliminary Details

Every research project is unique and the details of methodology, data collection, and other activities all vary. In order to provide guidance and what is necessary to secure District approval, we must have concrete details about your proposed research.

This section will:

- Request details about the researcher and their academic institution
- Request general details about the goals of your study
- Request general details about your proposed subject, methods, and data collection
- Request certification regarding training in human subject research

The Research Department will review this information to identify any potential concerns and provide guidance and what will be necessary to receive project approval. This is also an opportunity for the Research Department to reach out with any preliminary questions about the project and its scope. Understanding the scope of the project is essentially for us to provide guidance for the rest of the process.

The Research Department will:

- Review the preliminary details of the project
- Inquire about any further information necessary for the District to review
- Determine if the project may proceed onto Part B to finish the full application
- Provide guidance to the researcher and the documentation necessary to provide within Part B in order to seek approval

Part B: Full Project Details and Required Documentation

Part B involves a more detailed description of the study. Some of the questions in this section will ask for some of the same information provided in Part A. This allows applicants the chance to provide further details about their work and reflect the final details of their research study into the official application.

This section will:

- Request details about your proposed subjects, sample sizes, and participant recruitment procedures
- Request details about your research activities, procedures, and expectations for all participants
- Request details and documentation for all research instruments such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, etc.
- Request details and documentation for all relevant informed consent and assent procedures
- Request details about data management and potential data requests related to the study
- Request documentation related to Institutional Review Board (IRB) review or exemption
- Request documentation required to show necessary support from school-site or central office administrators

The Research Department will:

- Review the full details of the project and all supporting documentation
- Inquire about any further information necessary for the District to review
- Determine if the project is prepared for approval or if the application and documentation must be revised

Application Processing Fee

We charge an administration fee for each application submitted to the research department. This fee is collected through Stripe, a secure third party payer. The application fee is $25 for students. If you encounter any technical difficulties with the payment processing site, please contact the Research Department. Do not attempt re-process payments when facing technical site issues.

Application Revision and Resubmission

Upon review, research applications may need to address issues, questions, or concerns. The Research Department may ask questions via email or other communication. For any issues involving the application, responses on the application, or documentation, the application status may be set to “Revise and Resubmit”. This allows researchers the opportunity to review their responses, attach documentation, or edit other aspects of their design.
Common reasons for revision include, but are not limited to:

- Required documentation is missing
- Required documentation has incorrect/inaccurate information
- Required documentation information does not align with description provided on the application
- Information provided on the application is inconsistent (i.e. description in one response does not align with description elsewhere)
- Details provided on Informed consent/assent forms do not align with description provided in the application
- Inconsistent description of research subjects
- Inconsistent description of research activities and/or data sources
- Inconsistent description of recruitment activities

Overall, complete research applications but be thorough and consistent. Descriptions provided must align between the application, concert forms, and other documentation. An approved application must reflect all accurate information to a research design at the time of approval.

Conditional Approval

Many student researchers are required to provide documentation of approval or acceptance of research from Clark County School District prior to receiving full approval/exemption from their Institutional Review Board (IRB). In turn, the Research Department requires IRB review/exemption as part of the research review process. This presents a situation where each institution requires the final decision of the other institution before finalizing their own process.

For these situations, the Research Department offers a conditional approval pathway. Researchers may submit a complete application with all required documentation except for their IRB decision letter. The Research Department will review the application as normal. If the application is ready for approval, the Research Department will provide a letter of conditional approval. The researcher may then present this conditional approval letter to their IRB to signify the approval of the District. At such time, the IRB will provide their own final decision letter, which the researcher should forward to the Research Department to receive their final approval

letter.

The Research Department is familiar with institutions requiring this process, though, policies change. The Research Department may contact your institution's IRB with questions about their process if it is required.

Note: Once the Research Department provides the conditional approval letter, it typically does not take long for the IRB to finalize their process. However, every IRB is different and each researcher's experience is unique. If a significant amount of time has lapsed since receiving the conditional approval letter, the researcher may need to provide information on changes that have been made to the research design since initial review.

Approval

Should the research be approved, the final step in the process is for the researcher to sign the Conditions of Approval. The Conditions of Approval stipulates researchers must keep the data confidential and use for authorized purposes only. Additionally, it outlines the requirements should there be any changes to the research protocol as time goes on. Researchers agree to report progress and findings to CCSD.

The research project will be approved through the end of the fiscal year (coinciding with the school calendar). All research proposals expire on June 30 and we require researchers to complete the Check-In form in July if they intend to continue the research for another year.

Release of Student Information (ROSI) Request

If researchers require data, there is a request process for data gathered by the District. In order to submit a Release of Student Information (ROSI) Request, the researcher must have an approved research application with the District.

Check-Ins

Check-ins are additional submissions tied to approved research applications that allow researchers to a) extend their approval b) submit modifications to an approved research project or c) maintain the active status of their application while creating a final report.

Check-Ins: Renewals/Extensions

Each year, all research applicants who wish to extend their research approval must submit a check-in to renew. All research applications expire on June 30 of each year in alignment with the

fiscal calendar of the District. July 1 of each year represents the beginning of the next school year. Applicants submit a check-in for renewal along with updated supporting documentation.

➽FAQ**:** Why must all applications seek approval renewal each year?

There are several reasons for this policy. The most important is that the Research Department does not grant open-ended approvals to research projects. Researchers must keep the District up-to-date and informed of their activities at regular intervals. To coordinate this, it is most logical to have applicants check back in with the Research Department in alignment with the school year and fiscal calendar. This is the soundest way to ensure the Research Department can assist all applicants in their renewal process.

Additionally, researchers need to demonstrate continued support from District administrators. These administrators may be the school site administrators granting access to school sites for research. These administrators may be content-area experts signalling that a research study is in alignment with district expectations and educational goals. These administrators may also be the ones assisting researchers in their endeavors. On one hand, to ensure that researchers get the access and assistance they need, documentation of continued support of administrators must be shown. On the other hand, District administrators must have the opportunity to approve, deny, or modify their support of a project.

Finally, many administrative changes occur at the end of a school year. School principals may retire or switch schools. Assistant principals receive promotions. Central office administrators change positions as well. In short, there are many changes that occur between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next. If researchers were receiving support from an administrator, it is imperative to allow the new administrator the chance to review the project and ascertain their own approval stance.

➽FAQ**:** Can administrators change their mind on supporting my research project?

Yes. All research is voluntary within the District. This includes voluntary support from relevant administrators. Each administrator who has lent support to a project has the ability to end or modify their support.

➽FAQ**:** When should I start seeking updated documentation?

The Research Department typically recommends reaching out about renewed documentation in late May or early June. Updated documents with signed dates far earlier than the renewal time period may not be accepted. Additionally, securing documentation too early might increase the likelihood that you will be unaware of administration changes that occur at the end of the year.

➽FAQ**:** If my original approval occurred towards the end of the year, will I still need to update documentation for renewal?

Yes. Your approval was also set to expire at the end of June. We understand that approvals occurring late in the year can be challenging when renewals must occur right after. However, you will need to show continued support for administrators to extend a project from one year to the next. Using the original approval documentation for an extension is unacceptable. Additionally, even for projects approved towards the end of the year, administrative changes may still occur.

➽FAQ**:** What if I could only get documentation from an interim administrator or the administrator at a school changes?

If the principal of the school changes, it is your responsibility to obtain an updated approval and submit it to the Research Department. Failuring to do so means that your project is attempting to move forward without the support of the current administrator. If interim administrators are the only administrators available to show support for a project, you may obtain their support and submit it along with documentation. Though, we will expect updated documentation once the position is filled by a more permanent administrator.

Check-Ins: Project Modifications

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that their approved research project reflects the most current version of the research design. The Research Department understands that project details may change and modifications may be submitted for review and approval to reflect those changes.

To be clear, all modifications will be reviewed and approved independent of the approval status of the main application. Modifications are not simply a means to notify the Research Department about changes. Modifications may require additional documentation and all modifications will meet the same review procedures as the main application.

Engaging with unapproved modifications is a violation of District research expectations and may lead to escalatory action.

Check-Ins: Post-Research Renewal

All applicants are required to submit a final report of their findings in a Completion Form to finalize and close out their research application with the District. The Research Department understands that the data analysis and writing processes take time. This renewal option gives researchers the opportunity to renew their active application status while limiting the documentation they need to provide as all research activities are done.

This option allows researchers to demonstrate that they are, for all intents and purposes, done with all research work and simply need time to craft a final report. This means no more recruitment, no more contacting participants, no more research activities, no more observations, no more data collection, or any other related work.

This status cannot be reversed. If researchers need to continue research for this project, they must start an entirely new application to engage in more work. Post-research renewal is not a method to circumvent renewal documentation. Researchers that engage in research work while operating with a post-research approval are fundamentally compliant with all District expectations for researchers. Such researchers will be banned from all future research application work and the Research Department may seek further escalation.

Before considering this option, please ensure that you are completely done with all current and future research work for a project.

Completion Form

Once the researcher completes the project, we ask that researchers fill out a completion form. This closes the application and lets us know the research is concluded. As part of the conditions of approval researchers agree to share with us a copy of any findings, dissertation, article, or report that stems from this project. This can be uploaded within the Completion Form, along with any comments regarding the project. The Research Department reserves the right to share results either internally or externally (with proper attribution). Please let us know in the comment box if the research results are embargoed for any reason and the length of the embargo. We will not publicly release embargoed findings.

Researchers have the ability to work on multiple projects at once provided all have gone through the research application and review process. Completing one does not exclude the researcher from working with any other research protocol or applying for another. Likewise, denial of a research application does not exclude the researcher from working on another protocol, or submitting a new research project for review

Summary of Documentation

Requirements for All Research

District Sponsorships

District sponsorship is a form used to signal support received from an eligible sponsor within the District. Sponsors are required for a) projects that will not engage in research activities at a school site but that still require stakeholder support b) projects that will engage at multiple schools sites (3+) c) projects that may need additional support in light of a particularly vulnerable student population or challenging research topics or d) project that require data from a particular department in the District. All sponsorship is voluntary and administrators are under no obligation to assist research studies or researchers.

Who Can Serve as Sponsor?: Sponsors are CCSD administrators who hold the position of director or higher in the district. While both region-based area superintendents and assistant/deputy/district superintendent can officially serve as sponsor, they are often not able to assist projects in the same way as central office administrators and may introduce unexpected limitations to the work. The Research Department remains neutral in the sponsorship process. We will not suggest potential sponsors, we will not act as liaison between you and a potential sponsor, nor will we advocate on your behalf with a potential sponsor.

Overall, the Research Department highly recommends you identify a sponsor who:

- Closely related to the subjects and/or data you require for the project
- Can assess the applicability of your project in the District as a subject matter expert
- Can assist with recruitment using the communication networks used for their work
- Can provide data necessary for the project

What Does a Sponsor Do?: This is dependent on the design of the study. Studies will vary in the level of assistance they might require from a sponsor.

In most cases, a sponsor serves as a content area expert and representative of the District in supporting a project. In this role, sponsors serve as an additional approval to the Research Department. In other cases, researchers may require additional assistance from their sponsor. This often takes the form of assistance in recruiting for a study. For example, a sponsor might assist a researcher in contacting students or parents who have utilized a District program or services. Finally, sponsors may have access to data necessary for a research study.

Responsibility of Researcher: Communication must be clear between a researcher and a potential sponsor. You must be prepared to answer questions about your research and what you

may require from a sponsor. Be open and clear about your needs. If you require assistance in recruiting participants or assistance in emailing participants to contact you, it is important to discuss what you require to communicate to potential participants. If you require data, you must discuss your needs with the sponsor if they are able/willing to fulfill your request.

Renewing Sponsorship(s): When it is time to renew an application, you will need to secure an updated sponsorship form signed and dated by your sponsor. If the sponsor has left the district, plans on leaving the district soon, or moves to a non-eligible position, you will need to secure a new sponsor. Additionally, projects with significant modifications may need to secure a new sponsorship.

Human Subjects Certification

Human subjects certification is required for ALL individuals or research team members conducting research within the district. Certifications demonstrate the completion of a course or training program covering the ethics and best practices for human subjects research. As part of our approval process, we will look to ensure that your training includes topics such as: research ethics, federal regulations, consent/assent procedures, research with children, research with other vulnerable populations, privacy, data protections, etc.

Several organizations and institutes provide this training. Common options include: the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program and the National Institute of Health (NIH). If you are a student, your academic institution may offer access to these courses for free or at a significantly reduced cost (if such a certificate is not already mandatory as part of your program).

These certificates need to be current at the time of approval. If a human subjects certificate does not have a printed expiration date, then a certificate is current if the certificate has been provided in the last five (5) years. If the completion date on the human subjects certificate is greater than five (5) years old at time of application submission, then the certificate is considered expired and the team member must provide an updated certificate. Additionally, if a certificate is set to expire shortly after the anticipated approval date, the Research Department may ask for a renewed certificate prior to approval. When applications are modified or when they are due for renewal, researchers will need to ensure that updated certificates are provided if any have expired or if they have added team members.

IRB Approval/Exemption Letters

All applicants need to provide a decision letter from a registered Institutional Review Board (IRB) regarding their project. Decision letters may be 1) an IRB approval letter upon review or 2) an IRB exemption letter. Decision letters must be current for acceptance. Any updated or modified IRB letters should also be provided to the research department as soon as possible.

Applications due for renewal will require an updated and current IRB letter if they have expired. Expired IRB approvals or IRB approvals passed their check-in date will not be accepted for renewal. Additionally, projects that have been significantly modified may need to provide an updated IRB letter approving the modifications.

Registered IRBs may be searched through the Office for Human Research Protections (https://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search).

➽FAQ**:** My IRB requires that CCSD approve my research before I can get IRB approval. What should I do?

In cases like this, we are able to issue a "conditional approval". A conditional approval allows the Research Department to provide documentation for your IRB stating that the research project does pass our approval process but that final CCSD approval is contingent on final IRB approval. In most cases, this is sufficient to circumvent a deadlock. If conditional approval is needed, we recommend that you start the application review process early and that you contact the Research Department informing them of your need for conditional approval.

Requirements Depending on Research Design

Instruments: Surveys, Questionnaires, Interviews, Forms, etc.

All projects that utilize instruments for their research need to provide copies of their instruments with their application. Some projects may not utilize instruments, making this requirement non-applicable. Instruments may include, but are not limited to: surveys, assessments, questionnaires, interview questions, focus group questions, homework assignments as part of research, etc. We do not require you to provide copies of instruments filled out by your respondents or participants. We simply require blank copies of these documents. When providing your instruments, we ask that each of them be saved and named separately.

When your application is up for renewal, you will not need to provide new copies of your instruments unless you have modified or updated them since the time of your approval. Modified projects will be expected to be provided updated copies of their instruments.

Informed Consent and Child Assent

Any research project that involves human subjects will require informed consent. We understand that academic institutions may have their own requirements for consent/assent. We consider our requirements as independent and distinct from those imposed by your academic institution, advisor, or programs. The requirements set forth here relate to CCSD approval.

There are many things we look for when reviewing consent/assent forms. In general, you want to ensure that your forms both *inform* and obtain *active consent* from participants.

Informing Participants: Your forms need to ensure that participants receive all relevant and necessary information in order to consent to their involvement. You must provide an overview of the research and scope of your work. You will need to provide information on the details of your research design such as the instruments used, any potential audio/visual recording of sessions, in-person observations, etc. If pertinent information about your research design is left out of your consent forms, you will be asked to update them accordingly.

Active Consent: Consent/assent forms also need to be able to demonstrate active consent/assent. Having respondents simply respond “yes” to an email or a note stating that continuing onto a survey is tacit consent and does not suffice. You need to secure at least a signature and date for paper forms or typed-in name for digital forms. We will only accept forms which can demonstrate that an individual has explicitly consented to the research at hand.

Child Assent: Assent forms are similar to consent forms in that they describe the project in detail and seek the approval of participants. However, assent forms are intended for participants that are under the age of consent. For each child assenting to a project, you will also need to secure parental consent. Note: you need to make sure that your form describes your project in a manner suited to your target audience. For example, an assent form intended for 3rd graders will not utilize the same language or descriptions as the adult informed consent form.

Staff/Administrators: If your research will involve CCSD staff or administrators, your consent form will not differ much from a traditional consent form. You need to include verbiage explaining that participation must occur outside of contracted work hours (unless, by design, your work must occur during work hours). This is especially important for projects that offer any form of reimbursement or gifts-in-kind.

Note: Digital Consent Forms and “Skip Logic”

Digital consent forms are increasingly common for research projects. There are two important factors to consider in using digital consent forms: ensuring active consent and using “skip logic”.

Active Consent: As with paper consent forms, the District requires active consent for digital forms as well. There are several ways this may be achieved and researchers may choose the method best suited for their study.

Active Consent in this context may include providing a text box for participants to type in their

name or initials to consent before proceeding. Another approach is to provide radio (circular) buttons that a participant may click to consent or deny consent

Requesting participants to read the consent form and simply click “next” to proceed, or similar, is NOT considered active consent. There must be some from of additional step taken by a participant to signal their consent and acknowledgment of the consent form.

Skip Logic: It is common to have digital consent forms precede a research instrument. For example, it is beneficial to have participants consent to a survey and then continue directly to said survey upon providing consent. If you intend this structure of your own forms, it is imperative that researchers ensure the application of *“skip logic”*.

The terminology may differ depending on the platform but “skip logic” refers to built-in rules for your digital instrument that ensure only consenting individuals may continue onto your instrument. If a participant actively denotes their consent, they are able to continue onto the rest of the instrument. If they do not consent, the participant is exited away from the instrument.

Ensuring the presence of skip logic ensures that you are not collecting data from non-consenting participants.

External Approval(s): District Sponsorship and Facility Acknowledgement Letters

All external research projects require a District sponsorship. Depending on the research design, some projects may require facility acknowledgement letters to demonstrate the approval of school site-based administrators. The Research Department will provide guidance on whether or not your project will require facility acknowledgement letters.

Facility Acknowledgement Letters: These are official letters signed by the principal of an individual school site. You will be provided with the template to use for this letter. Letters must be signed and dated by the principal. For most facility letters, principals will simply sign off in support of the research, but some projects may require more assistance from the principal. This is a discussion you will need to have with the principal(s) relevant to your study. As with sponsorships, the Research Department will remain neutral as you secure these letters.

Research projects may add additional research sites as their work progresses. In this event, you may submit additional letters to the Research Department and we will update your approval accordingly.

When it is time to renew an application, you will need to secure updated facility acknowledgment letters for each school and signed by the current principal(s).

When it is time to renew an application, you will need to secure an updated letter signed and dated by the principal(s). If a principal has left the district or no longer acts as administrator of the school site, you will need to secure a letter from the new principal or an acting principal.

Release of Student Information (ROSI) Requests

Request

To fill out a ROSI request, you must first have an approved and current research protocol. You will then have the option to fill out a ROSI form in reference to your current protocol. It is possible to have more than one ROSI attached to a research protocol. The request itself allows you to describe the data you need from the district. The following sections do help guide how you answer this question. **Be as detailed as possible**. Between the Research Department and other departments, multiple people may be working on your data request. We are going to follow your description as closely as possible. We will ask questions for clarity and to ensure we understand your request.

Note: Once we have provided a time estimate and charged a fee, any additional requests related to a ROSI may be subject to additional fees.

Section 1: Who is in the Study

This section prompts you with questions to describe your research sample. Under “special instructions”, you may provide additional information that will help us understand the sample of interest.

Section 2: What Data you are Requesting

This section is where researchers provide a bulk of their description for the data needed. Please be as specific as possible. We will ask questions if we feel we need clarification. However, failing to be thorough here might mean critical data is left out once your request is processed. For example, if you request only ACT composite scores, asking for ACT Math scores might require an additional data request.

Section 3: How do you want your data

This section is where researchers may detail any very specific business rules or specific ways in which we are to capture the data. When we ask for clarification, it is often in reference to this section. There are many business rules that affect district data. We understand that not everybody will know the relevant business rule regarding their data, especially if they do not work for the district. Feel free to reach out and ask questions if you need to.

Again, the entire point of the ROSI form is to be as clear as possible about what data you need.

Fees

ROSI fees are based on the estimated time needed to pull and process the requested data. Often, we need to consult with other departments in order to get an accurate time estimate. Once we have a final estimate, we will be the ones who will fill in this estimate. We will then apply a student discount (if applicable).

Fee structure: $125/hour for data processing ($62.50/hour for current students)

Releasing Data and Follow Up

Once we have finished processing the data and the fee has been paid, we will upload the data. After this point, you are able to log onto the application portal and download the data directly. Please let us know if there is another way you would like us to transmit the data such as a secure site.

Once we have provided the data, you will have thirty (30) days to let us know if you find any issues with the data. If there is an error on our part, we will fix the data and get it back to you as soon as we can. If you need more additional data, we will likely have you submit another ROSI (hence why you must be thorough in your data request description). If you reach out to us after the thirty day window, you may be subject to additional fees.