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| Book | District Procedure |
| Section | I - Instructional Program |
| Title | Educational Research |
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The Office of Accountability will be responsible for reviewing and deciding whether to approve all proposed research projects, except those in which only one school is involved and the research will be conducted entirely by school system employees who work at that school. In those cases, review and approval of the research proposal will be the responsibility of the local school principal. If the principal is conducting the research, he/she shall request approval from the Office of Accountability.

I. Project Application and Review

Research proposals shall be submitted electronically using the Application for Conducting Research in the Fulton County School District, available on the District website. Persons, including School System employees, and/or groups, including school support organizations desiring to conduct research activities in the School System must apply for permission through the Office of Accountability. Included with the application must be a copy of any document, printed material, surveys or tests to be utilized during the project. The completed application is to be submitted to the Office of Accountability.

Local school principals approving research requests to be conducted at their school by one of their employees per circumstances outlined in this policy must provide a copy of all application materials completed by the researcher making the request and a letter of permission to conduct research in their school to the Office of Accountability before research may begin.

Approval will be granted only to those projects that will provide a substantial benefit to a particular school or the School System as a whole. Studies that would benefit education in general, rather than the Fulton County School System specifically will be denied.

No research activity may be conducted in schools during the administration of standardized tests or at other times specified by the Office of Accountability or the school principal.

The Office of Accountability may terminate research being conducted within the District at any time for any reason deemed appropriate.

Additional considerations for approving research proposals include:

- Appropriate to a public school setting;
- Consistent with the needs and priorities of the School System;
- Compatible with the vision and mission of the School System;
- Compliant with confidentiality requirements;
- Minimal amount of intrusiveness or disruption;
- Appropriate time and effort required by staff and/or students;
- Sound research design and methods;
- Qualified lead researcher.

The approval of the Office of Accountability does not obligate a particular school to participate in the research project. The Office of Accountability will seek approval of the project from the appropriate

Division(s) and principal(s) of school(s) involved. Work on the research project may not begin until the Office of Accountability receives written approval from the relevant principals/administrators. The principal may consult with the local school council before deciding whether to participate in the research project.

The participation of students, parents, and staff members in any research project is completely voluntary. Researchers must obtain written permission from the student participant's parents/guardians and/or eligible student participant using the Parent/Guardian Permission Form provided by the Office of Accountability, in conjunction with any additional permission forms pertinent to the study before including any participant in the study.

II. Confidentiality and Informed Consent

Individual participant(s) shall not be identifiable in any research activity without appropriate written consent from the eligible student participant and/or participant's parent/guardian.

The School System and school(s) shall not be identifiable in any research activity without permission of the Office of Accountability or Superintendent or designee.

All research activity will comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, (including all applicable regulations, such as 34 C.F.R. 99.31), and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232h (See A below).

A. Student Privacy and Parental/Guardian Involvement

1. Protected Information Survey:

a. Except as provided in Section (c), below, written parental/guardian consent or consent from the eligible student will be obtained before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas ("protected information survey"):

- (1) Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent/guardian;
- (2) Mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family;
- (3) Sex behavior or attitudes;
- (4) Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- (5) Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
- (6) Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
- (7) Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents/guardians; or
- (8) Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.

b. When parental/guardian/eligible student consent for a protected information survey is solicited, the consent form will contain instructions to allow a parent/guardian to inspect the survey prior to administration, as well as contact information for questions or concerns.

c. Consent for a protected information survey is not required if:

- (1) it is not funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education

AND one of the two factors are present:

- (1) It is a survey provided by the State Department of Education where survey participation rates impact ratings or accountability factors for a school or the School System; OR
- (2) The administration of the survey is approved by the Office of Accountability and Superintendent.

However, even if consent is not required for a protected information survey, the School System will directly notify, such as through U.S. Mail or email, parents of students who are scheduled to participate in protected information surveys and will provide an opportunity for the parent to opt his or her child out of participation of the survey.

2. Non-Invasive Screenings and Marketing Materials:

Parents/guardians will receive direct notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of:

- a. Any non-emergency, non-invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and
- b. Except as provided for in the PPRA, activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to

others. Upon request, parents/guardians will also have the opportunity to inspect materials for this purpose prior to use or administration. Such requests for inspection should be directed to the School Principal and will be granted in a reasonable amount of time after the request is made. All activities regarding marketing will comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g.

3. Other Surveys: Parental/guardian/eligible student consent shall be obtained in writing unless:

- a. The Office of Accountability approves an exception to this requirement; or
- b. The survey is required by the State of Georgia or United States Government and provides for a different form of parental/guardian consent.

4. Inspection:

Parents/guardians may conduct a reasonable inspection, upon request and before administration or use of instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum, including third party surveys. Inspection will be permitted within a reasonable amount of time of such request. Instructional materials mean instructional content that is provided to a student, including printed/representational materials, audio-visual materials, and materials in electronic or digital formats. This term does not necessarily include academic tests or academic assignments. Parents/guardians should contact their students' Principal or designee with such requests.

The rights afforded to parents under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232h transfer to students at age 18 or at emancipation by law.

III. Notification and Reporting

A final report setting out the findings and conclusions of the study must be provided to the Office of Accountability, Superintendent and the Board of Education within six months of completing the research project.

The Office of Accountability will notify the Board of research studies that have been approved. A summary report of all system-wide research studies will be provided to the Board on an annual basis.

Cross References: [Policy-ICC-Educational Research](#)

Scope Notes:

Reference: