

South Washington County Schools Conducting Research

Introduction

Research is understood to include all studies of educational programs in which pupils, teachers, principals, records, buildings, equipment, and other school facilities are used for the purpose of securing new information about educational and related programs.

Persons wishing to conduct research in the South Washington County Schools must make their request in writing. This includes persons employed by the South Washington County Schools. The research must:

- a) Provide direct benefit to the South Washington County Schools system.
- b) Be approved by the principal(s) and teachers of any classroom to be involved.

Research request forms to conduct research in the South Washington County Schools may be obtained from the:

Research, Evaluation and Assessment
Department 7362 E. Point Douglas Road South
Cottage Grove, MN. 55016

Phone: 651-425-6228

Fax: 651-425-6318

Email: bboothe@sowashco.org

The request will be reviewed and a written response will be sent to the principal investigator typically the last week of each month (see page 4).

Requests from Outside the School System

Requests to conduct research by persons outside the South Washington County school system must be co-sponsored by a South Washington County Public Schools administrator. The co-sponsor must:

- a) vouch that the research will contribute to the South Washington County school system
- b) assist with any necessary coordination during the conduct of the study, and
- c) assure that the results of the study are shared with the appropriate school personnel.

Requests from Within the School System

Employees who wish to conduct research must obtain the building principal's approval in writing from all participating schools before submitting the request to the Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department.

Other Conditions

- Persons conducting research in the South Washington County Public Schools must guarantee the anonymity of individual children, schools, and school personnel in reporting the results, unless written approval is obtained from the parents of participating children, from the school principal, or the school personnel involved. (See attached data privacy act.)
- Final approval of any study will not be made until all measurement instruments have been reviewed and approved.
- Publications emanating from studies in the schools should acknowledge the contribution of the South Washington County Public Schools unless requests to the contrary are made, or unless the identification of the system would jeopardize future research efforts or school programs.
- A progress summary should be provided to the Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department approximately half way through the project.
- One copy of the final report must also be sent to the Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department upon completion of the study. Failures to comply with these stipulations place the researcher at risk for approval of future projects.

Administrative Charge

All approved **external** research projects are assessed a \$ 20.00 processing and administration fee to help defray the cost of tracking projects. Additional charges may be incurred if the approved projects require additional Research, Administration, and Evaluation personnel time to provide data (e.g., merging test score files, extracting student demographics, etc. from the mainframe computer system). These data-management tasks will be charged at of rate of \$ 35.00 per hour. Applicants will need to arrange payments before data will be released. All internal staff members do not need pay the \$20.00 processing fee.

All applications to conduct research or to request data must be submitted prior to the South Washington County Public School's spring break to be considered for the current academic year. Requests after that date will be completed as time allows and will be reviewed for the following academic year only.

SOUTH WASHINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Research Approval Process

The Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Department (REA) acts as the designee for approving all proposed research studies, surveys, and internal evaluations within the South Washington County public schools. As a district we welcome the opportunity to collaborate, conduct and implement ongoing research that will benefit the lives of our students and staff. However, as a district it is also important to ensure that our employees and students are not subjected to ancillary requests that do not have a direct or lasting benefit to the South Washington County Public Schools. Therefore, as an REA department, we are establishing a multi-tiered approach to review research request within the South Washington County Public Schools.

South Washington County Public Schools reserves the right to review each research proposal and to consider:

- (a) the rights and welfare of the students and public school employees involved
- (b) the appropriateness of the methods used to secure informed consent
- (c) the balance of risks and potential benefits of the investigation.

Research Defined (taken from Best and Kohn, 1998)

Research is defined as the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles, or theories, resulting in prediction and possibly control of events. Major elements of research include:

- Accuracy of observation
- Generation of a hypothesis that gives focus to the investigation
- Sampling, a deliberate selection of participants or observations
- Measurement procedures that are operationally defined

Research in its basic form attempts to develop theories by the discovery of broad generalizations or principles. Often careful sampling procedures are employed to extend the findings beyond the group or situation studied. Applied research contains many of the fundamental research properties. However, its purpose is to improve a product or process through the testing of theoretical concepts in actual problem situations. Action research places an emphasis on the here and now. Its purpose is to improve school practices and at the same time to improve those who try to improve the practices.

No research may be initiated within the district without formal written approval from the Director of Professional Development & Accountability.

Review Process

All research proposals are subject to a review process. This will occur at two levels, depending on the degree of risk involved. An initial screening is completed within the REA department to determine whether there is potential for high or low risk to students, staff, or the district. A district-wide review board selected by the REA department will review all research proposals that are classified, as high risk. Criteria used to determine whether or not a research investigation is of high risk are listed below:

- District-wide in scope (i.e., includes numerous schools or areas)
- Documentary via film, television, or general periodical (non-peer reviewed)
- Highly sensitive in nature (i.e., controversial or topic area of concern)
- Create a risk or cost to students, staff, or district that goes beyond its mission to teach and protect
- Time or labor intensive likely to interfere with instructional time
- Cost-benefit not directly tied to District Initiative Agenda

These criteria are only examples and are not intended to be an exhaustive list of issues related to determining the level research risk. Thus, additional criteria may be used to evaluate level of review such as, whether or not the research proposal has a South Washington County Public School sponsor (department interest, staff, administration, etc.) or investigators' previous track record in conducting research in the district.

The district-wide review board will meet as needed to review and discuss "high risk projects." Meetings will be held to discuss the merits of the study, benefits to the district, and design and methodological concerns. REA staff will handle all responses to the research proposals.

Low Risk Investigations, if the research request does not meet the above criteria for high risk it will be handled solely by the REA department. The Director of Professional Development & Accountability will make the final recommendations for approval or disapproval. All correspondence letters between REA and lead researchers will be processed during the last week of each month. Research proposals received by the 15th of the month and internally reviewed by the REA department will be completed the same month they are received. Research proposals received after the 15th will be held for the following month.

Research Request

Name _____

Organization _____

Department _____

Address _____
Street City/State Zip

Telephone Number _____

Fax Number _____

Is this study part of your work for a degree? _____ Yes _____ No

If Yes, check the following:

_____ Ph.D. _____ Ed.D. _____ M.A./M.S _____ Undergraduate _____ Other

University or College _____ Date of IRB Approval _____

Advisor's Name _____

Your Signature Date _____

Co-Sponsor Signature Date _____
(required for non-MPS employees)

Principal Signature (**and Print Name/Location**) Date _____
(required for all buildings that participate)

Please submit a concise, yet thorough response to the following questions.

1. Title and purpose of study:
2. How will this study benefit the South Washington County Public Schools?
3. **Research Design Summary.** What do you plan to do? Give specific information on the methods to be used during the course of the study. Please include your research questions, instruments, and proposed sampling, and data collection procedures. In addition, include samples of instruments to be used (e.g., survey questions, observation forms, interview questions) with your application. Finally, describe any task(s) students or staff will be asked to complete.
4. Describe procedures you will use to secure and acknowledge informed consent of all participants. Please attach copies of any letters. Outline how subjects will be identified and criteria used for recruitment, who will make the initial contact with subjects, and whether or not inducements will be used to secure participation.
5. List any known risks of the proposed investigation to students, staff, or the district.
6. What request are you making of the South Washington County Public Schools and REA department? Specify numbers of students and staff to be involved, length of time, and time line for completion of your investigation.
7. List all funding sources and budget for your study.
8. Date and copy of IRB approval letter.

Please attach additional documentation to elaborate or clarify your study.

Send requests with all required information to:

Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department
7362 E. Point Douglas Road South
Cottage Grove, MN. 55016

SOUTH WASHINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Research, Evaluation and Assessment

File No. _____

Researcher's Checklist

Submitted to: Director of Research, Evaluation & Assessment

Submitted by: _____

Researcher's Checklist

Research Proposal: _____

Short Title: _____

Principal Investigator(s): _____

Date: _____

- Statement of how research will benefit South Washington County Public Schools
- District 833 administrator/sponsor and/or principal's signature (if required)
- Assurance of anonymity of District 833 students & staff
- Copy of "Informed consent" letter to parents
- Outline of research design
- Time Line described
- Copies of measurement instruments
- Approval from University Human Subjects Committee
- Funding sources
- Research Request: Approved or denied.