

PROCEDURES TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM (WCPSS)

*These procedures are administered by the Data and Accountability Department (D&A),
5625 Dillard Drive, Crossroads 1, Cary, NC 27518*

- **BE SURE TO READ THE COMPLETE SET OF PROCEDURES**
- **THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF RECORDS MUST BE OBSERVED AT ALL TIMES.**

What are the purposes of these procedures?

These procedures are established to govern and coordinate research conducted in WCPSS. While we want to support quality research that will potentially improve educational efforts, WCPSS has more applications than are possible to approve without impacting the quality of instruction for our students. The primary purpose of these procedures is to protect staff and students' time from unauthorized or excessive data collection and thereby protect instructional time. A second purpose is to review the request in light of current laws covering privacy and research. A final purpose is to ensure that the research is of high quality and will improve educational practices.

How is research defined?

Research is defined as any data collection from or about WCPSS students or staff. Research also includes analyses of existing data unless the data are public information documents.

The following activities are not considered research:

- Observations, class visitations by university classes or by individuals in such classes where no data collection is involved. Contacts regarding these visits should be made with the school principal.
- Piloting of WCPSS materials or techniques where no data collection for external purposes occurs. Contacts should be made with the office of the Assistant Superintendent for Academics at (919) 431-7638.

With whom does initial contact occur?

Submitting the application to the Data and Accountability Department should be the first contact with school system staff, rather than directly with school staff, principals, or individual staff members. If you have questions about the process, feel free to contact us by email at: wcpss-data-accountability@wcpss.net or call (919) 431-7193.

What are the steps in creating a research application packet?

- Review the list of topics of interest to WCPSS before deciding on a topic for a thesis or dissertation see:
http://www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research/external_research
- Selecting a topic of interest to WCPSS will be considered in the approval process. Contact Data and Accountability (D&A) prior to full development of a proposal to more closely coordinate district needs with the research effort. Depending on the topic, D&A staff may refer researchers to appropriate administrative or supervisory staff for such discussion.

- Complete the electronic application form. If you are part of a class that will all be doing a project (primarily at Meredith or ECU), see your professor for special directions for a possible group submission.
- If you are a student, print a paper copy, read the signature page and sign it, and have it read and signed by a qualified sponsor. A sponsor may be a college or university faculty member, an agency staff member, or a WCPSS staff member. Have the sponsor read about their responsibilities before signing the form.
- If you are a faculty member or independent researcher or organization, you do not need a sponsor for their research. However, if the research is funded by another organization, please secure the signature of a contact from the funding agency.
- Attach a copy of your IRB/OMB approval letter. IRB/OMB approval *must* precede submission of the application.
- Attach copies of all questionnaires, tests, or data collection instruments to be used, if any. These *must* be supplied or approval will not be given.
- Attach *active* parental consent form if data will be collected about or from individual students. The final parent consent form must include the following:
 - ▶ Place for signature and date of approval by the parent;
 - ▶ Description of the data collection process and specific student data needed;
 - ▶ Reason for the data collection or release; and
 - ▶ Information specifying the persons and institution to which the information will be released.
- Attach student assent form if the students are old enough to understand the nature of the research (grades 3 and up).

Submit **one copy** of the completed application packet electronically to the Data and Accountability Department's email address at: wcpss-data-accountability@wcpss.net and Fax the signature page to (919) 431-7215.

Who reviews applications?

A Senior Director within Data and Accountability facilitates the work of the Research Review Committee. Professional staff members within the department serve on the committee; all are knowledgeable about the research process. Professional staff outside Data and Accountability are consulted as necessary based on the topic of the proposal.

What is the basis for decisions?

The following are necessary but not always sufficient conditions for approval of applications.

- A complete application must be submitted. The lack of appropriate signatures, forms, and IRB approval will lead to the proposal not being approved.
- The study results should have high value to the particular school or to the school system as a whole. Studies benefiting education in general, rather than WCPSS or its schools specifically, will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but are given a much lower priority.
- The study should be compatible with WCPSS policy and sound educational practices.
- The relative costs in time and resources to conduct the research should be less than the benefit to the school system.
- The design and instrumentation of the project should be sound and acceptable to the school system.
- The originator of the request should have the status and qualifications necessary for working in the school system as an educational researcher.

What projects are not approved?

Regardless of whether the proposal meets the criteria above, the following projects will **not** be approved:

- Projects which require data collection between April 15 and July 30. Please plan your research accordingly.
- Data collection as part of an individual college or university student's class project, unless this data collection is solely through observations or archival records (no surveys), or unless one is a WCPSS staff member/teacher.
- Data collection that includes requests for personal information about students or their families. For example, projects dealing with self-esteem, family problems, personal values, sexual behavior or orientation, illegal alcohol and/or drug use on the part of students or their parents, whether students have engaged in or witnessed other illegal activities are typically not approved.
- Research involving physical and/or physiological measurements of students.
- Applications indicating passive rather than active consent by parents (or students as applicable).

Regardless of whether the proposal meets the criteria above, the following projects will **usually not** be approved:

- Research that would require a large amount of teacher time or involves large numbers of students to complete a test, questionnaire, or other type of instrument.
- Data collection which involves a large loss of instructional time for students (over 2 hours total).
- Action research projects unless for WCPSS staff working in graduate programs requiring such a project (notably Meredith and East Carolina University). In these cases, additional information about how each of the concerns related to action research will be addressed are required.

Who makes the decision?

The Research Review Committee will determine whether the application should be accepted, rejected, or accepted with stipulations/revisions.

- If the application is approved or denied, the committee will notify the applicant in writing.
- If it appears that the project could be approved with minimal changes, the applicant may be advised to reapply.
- Occasionally, the Research Review Committee may approve an appeal and solicit additional input from Transformation Services staff or other department staff in the case of a legitimate appeal—appeals are not automatic.

What happens after research committee approval?

- If the study is administratively approved, the researcher is notified and must provide a copy of the approval letter to the school principals or departments involved.
- Administrative approval does not necessarily constitute approval for the study to be conducted in any specific school. Researchers must obtain the approval from principals and others involved prior to conducting research in specific schools.
- Meetings, interviews, and the administration of instruments, etc., must be scheduled far enough in advance to allow for adequate planning at the schools involved.
- The researcher will provide schools with sufficient copies of the parental consent form if it is required. At least two copies of the form per student should be maintained as records. The principal or her/his designee will be responsible for disseminating forms to the students and obtaining parental consent; one form will be placed in the student's file and another one maintained by the researcher.

What are the requirements while the project is being conducted?

- *Confidentiality of student records must be observed, and the privacy and rights of the individuals and schools must be respected. Data with student names or identities must be destroyed when they are no longer needed.*
- Researchers who intend to carry out research at a school site must register and submit to the volunteer screening process. In planning a research timeline please allow for the completion of this process at: <http://www.wcpss.net/volunteer/index.html>
- While conducting research studies in the schools, individuals should abide by WCPSS standards of professional conduct and dress. Failure to do so will be sufficient cause for termination of the research study.
- Researchers should be as flexible as possible with scheduling interviews and other data collection to meet school needs.
- Any violation of procedures noted by teachers or other participants in the study should be reported to the school principal. The principal should then, if indicated, discuss such infractions to the Research Review Committee coordinator.

What other obligations does the researcher have to the school system in return for its cooperation?

Researchers must:

- Provide an abstract and 1-3 page summary of the results to WCPSS upon completion of the study, including reference information for the full study. An electronic copy of the full report is also appreciated but is not required.
- Submit a short summary of status by August of each school year for any study extending beyond a given school year.
- Agree to release of this report for use or publication by WCPSS without remuneration.
- Acknowledge or reference the data received from WCPSS appropriately if the study is later reported in a more complete form (e.g. book, dissertation, journal article, etc.). The researcher must also provide WCPSS with an electronic copy and/or a hard copy of the completed work product.

Please submit annual or final summaries by email to wcpss-data-accountability@wcpss.net .

Researchers are encouraged to:

- Provide personal feedback to the principals and teachers involved in a study.
- Assist the school or district by sharing results or training related to their study on an unpaid basis. Specific details should be worked out on a case-by-case basis with the schools or departments involved.

These procedures shall in no way be interpreted as in conflict with open records requirements. Public information requests involving no school research should be directed to the WCPSS Communications Office.