



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

4131.34

Procedure No.

December 7, 1994

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide procedures for obtaining authorization to conduct a research study in the Prince George's County Public Schools.
- II. **POLICY: INFORMED CONSENT/STUDENT DATA GATHERING**
- A. The Board of Education believes that no student enrolled in the public schools of Prince George's County should be the unwilling or unknowing subject of any research study or student records access unless such activities are approved in advance by the parents of each child involved.
- B. Furthermore, the Board of Education forbids the following: a) the practice of "passive consent" in the administration of any external (third party) research study; b) the administration of any external (third party) research study without written authorization from the Superintendent of Schools or the Office of Research and Evaluation; and c) any research study, instructional program, or course which includes questionnaires or surveys that ask students questions, the nature of which might reveal potentially criminal or immoral activity.
- C. No research study or similar type of activity shall be conducted in the school system by either an employee or the Board of Education or anyone else unless the following three approvals have been obtained:
1. The written authorization determination of the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE);
 2. The written permission of the principal(s) of the participating school(s); and
 3. The written and informed consent of the parent(s) or legal guardian, when personally identifiable data are reviewed, or students participate in the data collection process.
- III. **BACKGROUND:** Prince George's County Public Schools represents a diverse cross-section of educators, students, and parents who are part of a multicultural suburban community. The proximity of the School System to many graduate schools of education has resulted in a large number of requests for permission to conduct research studies in the County schools. These procedures provide a consistent method for submitting research applications and for monitoring the conduct of research in the School System.

These research procedures do not apply to activities conducted by persons who are assigned to a school system employee for purposes of student teaching, interning



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

4131.34

Procedure No.

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Date

as a counselor or psychologist or similar experiential practices. The School System employee whom such persons are assigned is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of student records and the integrity of the School System.

IV. **DEFINITIONS:**

- A. **Research Study:** Any activity conducted to identify and/or ameliorate an educational issue or problem. Research studies include experimental studies, philosophical research, survey studies, case studies, student record reviews, study grant programs or evaluation components of grant-funded programs (federal, state, local, foundations, universities, or private) and other data-gathering activities.
- B. **“Informed Consent”:** Nothing can be construed as “informal consent” unless it conforms to the requirements delineated in the Family Rights and Education Act (1974) which shall include all of the following:
1. A description of the data to be collected, maintained, or released.
 2. The names and positions of those by whom the data may be collected, maintained, and to whom it may be released.
 3. The purpose for the collection, maintenance, or release of the data.
 4. The signature of the parent/guardian or eligible student, if 18 years of age or older.
- C. **“Passive Consent”:** The Board of Education does not recognize the concept of “passive consent.”
- D. **“External (Third Party) Consent”** Any employee of the Prince George’s County Public Schools who does not have an educational “need-to-know” status as defined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974) (FERPA), or who seeks to conduct a research study for reasons of personal gain, interest or benefit; Any government, institution, agency, or other persons who seek to conduct a research study, or those who seek personally identifiable data who are not provided access to such as delineated in (FERPA).

V. **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH APPLICATIONS:**



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

4131.34

Procedure No.

December 7, 1994

Date

- A. All research activities including, but not limited to, those generated within PGCPs by staff, students, parents, community members, task forces, advisory groups, parent/teacher organizations committees, etc., and by external individuals and groups including, but not limited to, external researchers, doctoral candidates, for profit and not-for-profit research organizations, and approved by the Office of Research and Evaluation prior to implementation.
- B. No member of the PGCPs professional or supporting services staff may authorize, support, or participate in a research activity, as defined in Section IV above, unless the Office of Research and Evaluation has formally approved the activity under the provisions of these Administrative Procedures.
- C. PGCPs employee-initiated research for personal advantage shall not be conducted during regular school hours unless it can be accomplished without the loss of school system time.
- D. The School System's "pony" mail delivery system cannot be utilized for any phase of external research.
- E. The following factors are considered by reviewers in evaluating proposed research activity:
1. Burden on PGCPs human resources or data management facilities.
 2. The technical soundness of the proposed research design.
 3. The appropriateness of the research topic for support in the public school setting.
 4. The availability of research sites and subjects of the kinds requested.
 5. The nature and amount of interruption required to participate in the proposed research.
 6. The kinds of background data on subjects required for the proposed study and the kinds of information of a personal nature to be secured from the subjects themselves.
 7. The kind and number of data-gathering procedures or instruments to be used in the study.



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

4131.34

Procedure No.

December 7, 1994

Date

8. The need for the schools to safeguard the personal and legal rights of students, parents, and staff.
9. The benefit of the proposed research to PGCPs.

VI. **STUDIES WHICH ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SCREENING AND REVIEW PROCESS:**

- A. Proposals for research activities originating within PGCPs offices, departments, and other units transmitted through their area offices and central office administrative channels.
- B. Unsolicited research proposals submitted by external third parties.
- C. Proposals for master's theses and dissertation research from PGCPs employees.
- D. Proposals for dissertation research originating from persons other than PGCPs employees.

VII. **STUDIES WHICH WILL NOT BE SUPPORTED OR APPROVED:**

- A. Studies below the doctorate level by persons who are not PGCPs employees.
- B. Studies whose research designs and/or methodologies do not meet the standards or requirements described in these procedures.

VIII. **PROCEDURES:**

- A. Applicant's Responsibilities
 1. Applicant obtains a copy of the research application from the Office of Research and Evaluation.
 2. At least thirty (30) days prior to the proposed starting date of the study, the applicant submits a complete research application package comprised of one copy of the research proposal and five sets consisting of:
 - a. the research application;
 - b. a summary of the research proposal;



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

4131.34

Procedure No.

December 7, 1994

Date

- c. all assessment instruments, protocols, etc.; and
 - d. a parental consent letter/form prepared by the applicant, as necessary.
 3. Applicant prepares the application in conformance with the school system policies and procedures. The applicant should ensure that the application package is correct and complete.
 4. Applicants who are preparing a study which is required as partial fulfillment of a college/university degree obtain the signature of the course, thesis, or dissertation advisor. This signature attests that:
 - a. The applicant is a bona fide graduate student of the identified college or university.
 - b. The proposal, in the form presented to the Prince George's County Public Schools, has been reviewed by the college or university advisor for appropriateness of the study's subject, its usefulness and application to the School System, the research methodology, and the clarity and appearance of the materials to be submitted.
 - c. The applicant has demonstrated the expertise necessary to execute an acceptable research project.
 5. Applicants who are employees of the Prince George's County Public Schools must obtain the signature of the school system person to whom they report administratively. This may be a principal, director, assistant superintendent, etc. The signature is an acknowledgement that the applicant's supervisor is aware of the proposed study.
- B. School System Responsibilities
 1. Applications are reviewed by ORE and other school system professional staff who, based on the nature of the proposed research, should be consulted for review. Included among these are principals, directors, specialists, coordinators, supervisors, and site personnel.
 2. The Office of Research and Evaluation notifies the applicant in writing as to the final disposition of the research application.
- C. Researcher's Obligations and Responsibilities



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

4131.34

Procedure No.

December 7, 1994

Date

1. If the research project is authorized, the applicant is responsible for securing the consent of the director(s), supervisor(s), principal(s) of the school(s), etc. on the Research Application Decision form. Copies of the signed forms must be submitted to ORE.
2. The applicant must provide written acknowledgement of the ORE's decision before initiating the research.
3. Upon completion of the research, the researcher is responsible for retaining all signed parental consent forms for three calendar years.
4. The principal/director, etc. may approve or disapprove only those studies authorized by the ORE.
5. No deviation from the approved plan is to be made without approval from the ORE.
6. One copy of the final research report must be forwarded to the ORE within one month of the completion of the research.

IX. **RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND LAWS:**

- A. Testing of Student for Research Projects, Prince George's County Board of Education (July 7, 1994): Policy No. 5124, (revised).
- B. Student Records, Prince George's County Board of Education (January 30, 1975): Policy No. 5125.
- C. Procedure No. 5125, Individual Pupil School-Based Records (May 20, 1975).
- D. Public Law 93-380, Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, cited as the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended.
- E. Code of Bylaws of the Maryland State Board of Education, Bylaw 750, Individual Pupil Records and Bylaw 752 Education and Health Records.

X. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:**

The Office of Research and Evaluation, Office of the Superintendent, is responsible for reviewing and updating these procedures.



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

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- XI. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 4131.34, dated December 7, 1980.
- XII. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** December 7, 1994.

Approved by:
Edward M. Felegy
Superintendent of Schools

Distribution: All Administrative Handbook Holders