



**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE**

CATEGORY: **Instruction, Miscellaneous**

SUBJECT: **District Research Conducted by Candidates  
for Advanced Degrees and by Professional  
Researchers**

**A. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

1. To outline administrative procedures governing district research projects conducted by students seeking *advanced* degrees or by student teachers conducting classroom “action” research.
2. To outline administrative procedures governing district research conducted by external institutions, agencies, or professional researchers.
3. **Related Procedures:**

Materials for Instructional Use in Schools, General .....	4500
Questionnaires/surveys.....	4934
Release of directory-type student information .....	6525
Access to, release of, and confidentiality of nondirectory-type student information .....	6527

**B. LEGAL AND POLICY BASIS**

1. **Reference:** Board policy: F-1500, F-9400, H-8900; Education Code Sections 49074, 51513; Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 USC 1232g, 1232h; 34 CFR Part 98).
2. **Protection of Privacy**
  - a. **Education Code Section 51513 states:** “No test, questionnaire, survey, or examination containing any questions about the pupil’s personal beliefs or practices in sex, family life, morality and religion, or any questions about the pupil’s parents’ or guardians’ beliefs and practices in sex, family life, morality and religion, shall be administered to any pupil in kindergarten or grades 1 to 12, inclusive, unless the parent or guardian of the pupil is notified in writing that this test, questionnaire, survey, or examination is to be administered and the parent or guardian of the pupil gives written permission for the pupil to take this test, questionnaire, survey, or examination.”
  - b. **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)** to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) further requires parental consent before students may participate in research programs involving one or more of the following areas:

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- (1) Political affiliations;
  - (2) Mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or his or her family;
  - (3) Sex behavior and attitudes;
  - (4) Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, and demeaning behavior;
  - (5) Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom the student has close family relationships;
  - (6) Legally recognized privileged and analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
  - (7) Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; *or*
  - (8) Income, other than that recognized by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under a program.
3. **Release of Student Information.** FERPA outlines requirements and limitations governing release of student information by school districts. Parents or guardians, under FERPA, have the right to some control over the disclosure of information from education records. No personal information concerning any minor student shall be released, except that the governing board may, in its discretion, provide information to the staff of a college, university, or educational research and development organization or laboratory. This will be permitted only if such information is necessary to a research project or study conducted, sponsored, or approved by the college, university, or educational research and development organization or laboratory. A student must not be identified by name in information submitted for research; also, a student must not be identified in the completed report or in any public report of the research project or study. (See Procedures 6525 and 6527 for other provisions.)
4. **Parents' Right to Inspect Materials Used for Research and Experimentation** (General Education Provisions Act of 1974, Section 439; 20 USC 1232h). Upon request, all instructional material, including teachers' manuals, films, tapes, digital or electronic media, or other supplementary material that will be used in connection with any research or experimentation program or project, shall be available for inspection by parents or guardians of students engaged in such a program or project (Procedure 4500).

5. **District Guidelines**

- a. The study of characteristics, performance, behavior, preferences, or status within or among students and staff along racial, ethnic, and/or socioeconomic dimensions will be carefully considered by district officials and approved only if determined to be in the best interest of students and/or their education.
- b. The educational environment must not be jeopardized by a research effort.
- c. The study must be consistent with, and must not complicate, the district's responsibility for evaluation of district practices and programs.
- d. Research for personal advantage shall not be done by an employee during school or office hours unless the employee's supervisor approves.
- e. The value of the research should outweigh the burden placed on district staff and students by the research.
- f. To the degree possible, researchers should minimize any impact on schools, particularly on instructional time.

**C. GENERAL**

1. **Originating Office.** Suggestions or questions concerning this procedure should be directed to the Research and Reporting Department, Office of Accountability.
2. **Definitions**
  - a. **Research Proposal Review Panel (RPRP):** A panel of district staff members that reviews proposals to conduct research in the district. Members include representatives from the Office of Accountability and other departments and divisions necessary to address specific research topics.
  - b. **Sponsor:** A central office manager whose area of responsibility includes the subject area of the proposed research and who agrees to endorse the proposal and fulfill the responsibility of sponsorship (see C.6.b).
  - c. **Action Research:** A reflective process of progressive problem solving in an organization through a team approach that uses "a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action." For the purposes of this procedure, this research is directly related to the ongoing instructional practice in a single classroom, potentially adding to its quality or effectiveness.

3. **District Rights.** The district reserves the right to make use of research conducted by candidates for advanced degrees and by professional researchers in whatever manner it deems advantageous to inform and support the district's educational program.
4. **Limiting Impact on Schools.** The purpose of the schools is to educate students; all other objectives, however worthy, are secondary to this goal. The district's efforts to minimize distractions of students from their regular academic pursuits and to allow staff the opportunity to provide high-quality instruction and related services necessitate keeping to a minimum the number of research projects in which the district will participate.
5. **Approval of Research Studies.** District personnel contacted for participation in a study should not *assume* that district clearance/approval has been secured. Written approval from the Research and Reporting Department is given to each approved researcher; for verification refer to [http://www.sandi.net/cms/lib/CA01001235/Centricity/Domain/121/RPRP/Research\\_Projects\\_New.asp](http://www.sandi.net/cms/lib/CA01001235/Centricity/Domain/121/RPRP/Research_Projects_New.asp).
  - a. **Single-school research.** The site principal is ultimately authorized to approve any research study which is confined to that *one* school after discussing the proposed research with the chairperson of the RPRP (see D.1).

**Exception:** "Action research" done by student teachers in a classroom with a supervising teacher who has completed district training, under the auspices of a university-run teacher preparation or education program with current student teaching partnership agreements between the district and local universities. In such cases, the student teacher should first discuss a possible action research plan with the trained supervising teacher; after agreeing on the action research plan, the student teacher and supervising teacher should present the plan to the principal or the principal's designee for consideration or approval.
  - b. **Multi-school research.** Any research involving *two or more* schools *must* receive district-level review and approval by the RPRP (see D.2). After district-level approval, the final decision on whether a project is implemented at a school rests with the principal in most cases. Requirements mandating participation in a given research study will be posted at <http://www.sandi.net/page/1586>.
6. **Approval Criteria.** In addition to complying with the guidelines outlined in Section B.5, research studies must meet the following criteria in order to receive district-level, multi-school approval:

- a. Applicants/researchers must be either university-level students or professional researchers.
- b. A district central office manager appropriately associated with the topical area of research must carefully review the study in proposal form to ensure its completeness, viability, and value, agree to sponsor the proposed study, and provide written endorsement of the proposed study, certifying that:
  - (1) The study provides information the division/department needs and actively seeks or provides worthwhile and beneficial information in general;
  - (2) In the sponsor's opinion, the applicant possesses the requisite research skills and other resources to ensure successful completion of the study;  
*and*
  - (3) The sponsor will attend the RPRP meeting to review the proposal; will assist in completing the required Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the district and the researcher; will provide logistical support; and will ensure that the research actually conducted does not deviate from the proposed research.
- c. The methodology of the proposed study keeps extra demands on students and/or staff to a minimum.
- d. The researcher shall comply with FERPA and PPRA requirements.

## 7. **Responsibilities**

- a. **The applicant**
  - (1) Is responsible for complying with all provisions of this procedure.
  - (2) Is responsible for paying for the cost of providing district data requested for research purposes and will pay all other costs associated with the implementation of research activities.
- b. **The Research Proposal Review Panel (RPRP)**
  - (1) Ensures compliance with criteria and guidelines in Sections B and C during review.
  - (2) Reviews projects for proper research topics, practices, and methods.
  - (3) Coordinates the district review and decision-making process.

- (4) Ensures all MOAs are established.
- (5) Reviews products generated from studies, prior to publication/distribution.
- (6) Maintains an inventory of approved research projects.
- (7) Requires that researcher complies with all federal and district requirements related to confidentiality of data.
- (8) Requires that researcher obtains appropriate informed consent for participation, as specified in the MOA.

c. **The study's sponsor**

- (1) Reviews the proposed study carefully.
- (2) Writes a letter of endorsement.
- (3) Attends the meeting of the RPRP at which the proposal is reviewed.
- (4) Ensures the completion of the MOA between the district and the researcher.
- (5) Provides necessary help and guidance to the researcher following approval of the research project.
- (6) Monitors conduct of the research project, ensuring the research is conducted as proposed.

## D. IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. Single-School Research

#### a. Regular (not "action") research

- (1) **Applicant** discusses proposed study with principal of potential participating school.
- (2) **Site principal**
  - (a) Considers study's benefits, impact on school, and compliance with Section B.

- (b) If interested in participating, discusses the proposed study with chairperson of RPRP and forwards any protocol, survey, or questionnaire to chairperson for review.
  - (3) **Chairperson of RPRP** reviews submitted materials and notifies principal of any concerns regarding proposed research that could be contrary to district's policies and legal mandates.
  - (4) **Site principal**
    - (a) Makes final decision of whether or not to participate.
    - (b) If study is approved,
      - i. Notifies RPRP chairperson of approval.
      - ii. Assumes responsibility for researcher's compliance with district guidelines and monitors conduct of research.
  - (5) **Applicant**, upon completion of project, submits electronic copy of completed research report to chairperson of RPRP for posting and dissemination on district web site.
- b. **Action Research**
- (1) **Applicant**
    - (a) Must be a student teacher in a classroom with a supervising teacher who has completed district training, under auspices of a university-run teacher preparation or education program with current student teaching partnership agreements between the district and local universities. (A current list of university partnership agreements and district-approved supervising teachers is available on the website of the Teacher Preparation and Induction Department at <http://www.sandi.net/cms/lib/CA01001235/Centricity/Domain/166/list-university-contracts-student-teachers.pdf>. The same department may be contacted to determine if the supervising teacher has completed appropriate district training.)
    - (b) Discusses possible action research plan with trained supervising teacher, a plan directly related to ongoing instructional practice in classroom, not taking appreciable time from classroom instruction or devoted to unrelated or tangentially related issues.

(c) After agreeing on action research plan, together with supervising teacher, presents plan to principal or principal's designee for consideration or approval.

(2) **Site principal or designee**

(a) Makes final decision of whether or not to approve action research.

(b) If study is approved, together with supervising teacher, assumes responsibility for student teacher's compliance with district and action research guidelines and monitors conduct of research.

2. **Multi-School Research**

a. **Applicant**

(1) Obtains application form (E.1 or E.2); "Guidelines for Research Project Applicants" (E.3); "Thesis or Dissertation Chairperson's Affidavit" (E.4 – if for advanced degrees); and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment compliance form (E.5).

(2) Prepares proposal, taking into account district guidelines and limitations governing research studies, as well as specified elements of a research proposal (E.1, E.2).

(3) Discusses proposed study with potential sponsor and provides potential sponsor with copy of proposal for review; obtains written endorsement as provided in C.6.b.

(4) If candidate for an advanced degree, obtains approval signature on "Thesis or Dissertation Chairperson's Affidavit" (E.4) of the university thesis or dissertation (or equivalent) adviser, which attests that:

(a) Applicant is a bona fide graduate student of identified college or university and is satisfying the major research requirement commonly known as a thesis or dissertation.

(b) The proposal has been reviewed by the university adviser, and the quality of this proposal meets the standards for this university. (Adviser should consider appropriateness of study's topic, its usefulness and application to San Diego Unified School District, soundness of research methodology, and clarity, completeness, and appearance of research proposal materials to be submitted.)

- (c) Applicant has demonstrated expertise necessary to execute an acceptable research project.
  - (5) Submits multiple copies of research proposal to chairperson of RPRP two weeks prior to designated meeting date, accompanied by affidavit signed by thesis or dissertation chairperson (E.4), completed application form (E.1 or E.2), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment compliance form (E.5), and endorsement from appropriate district management employee (C.6.b).
- b. **Chairperson of RPRP** reviews materials submitted and may schedule applicant to meet with RPRP (C.5) *if*:
  - (1) Applicant is eligible to conduct research in school district;
  - (2) Written proposal is complete;
  - (3) Proposed study complies with district guidelines and limitations outlined in this procedure; *and*
  - (4) Nature and scope of study are of sufficient consequence to warrant joint review by RPRP.
- c. **Applicant** appears at scheduled RPRP meeting to present proposed research, answer questions, and clarify specific issues.
- d. **Research Proposal Review Panel** makes final decision on proposal.
- e. **Chairperson of RPRP** notifies applicant of final disposition of project application.
- f. **Sponsor**
  - (1) Ensures MOA is completed and submitted to chairperson of RPRP. No research activities may begin until MOA is completed and signed by all parties.
  - (2) Assists in initial implementation of project.
  - (3) Supervises conduct of research. (Once final authorization is given, no deviation from approved plan shall be made without consent of sponsoring manager and approval of chairperson of RPRP.)

- g. **Applicant** is responsible for compliance with all provisions of this procedure while conducting research, including the following:
- (1) No changes shall be made in district-approved research plan without consent of sponsoring manager and *specific and prior clearance* from chairperson of RPRP.
  - (2) Names of students or staff personnel shall not be used in any reports; school(s) may be identified only with *prior* consent of sponsor and approval of chairperson of RPRP.
  - (3) Official records shall not be removed from any school, but copies of those materials available to researchers or electronic data sets may be obtained subject to payment of duplicating or data production expenses by researcher.
  - (4) Confidentiality of all records shall be maintained at all times.
  - (5) Research in any school shall be done only with *prior knowledge and consent* of principal.
  - (6) Any student whose parents/guardians object to their child's participation in a research study shall be excused from participating.
  - (7) Any item in a data-collection instrument or interview schedule may be omitted if a student objects.
- h. **Applicant**, upon completion of project, submits electronic copy of completed research report to chairperson of RPRP for posting and dissemination on district web site.

**E. FORMS AND AUXILIARY REFERENCES** (E.1.–5. available on the Internet at: <http://www.sandi.net/page/1586> in *Application Packet, Students for Advanced Degrees — Multiple Schools*, *Application Packet, Students for Advanced Degrees — Single School*, *Application Packet, Nondistrict Agencies and Professional Researcher — Multiple Schools*, or *Application Packet, Nondistrict Agencies and Professional Researcher — Single School*, as appropriate.)

1. Request for Approval to Conduct Research (Candidates for Advanced Degrees).
2. Request for Approval to Conduct Research (Professional Researchers).
3. Guidelines for Research Project Applicants.

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4. Thesis or Dissertation Chairperson's Affidavit.
5. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Protection of Pupil Rights compliance form.
6. University Contracts — Student Teacher Agreements list  
(<http://www.sandi.net/cms/lib/CA01001235/Centricity/Domain/166/list-university-contracts-student-teachers.pdf>)

#### **F. REPORTS AND RECORDS**

1. An electronic copy of the completed research report shall be provided to the chairperson of the RPRP.
2. Completed projects' research reports are posted to the district web site and are available at  
[http://www.sandi.net/cms/lib/CA01001235/Centricity/Domain/121//RPRP/ResearchProjects\\_Results.asp](http://www.sandi.net/cms/lib/CA01001235/Centricity/Domain/121//RPRP/ResearchProjects_Results.asp).

#### **G. APPROVED BY**



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General Counsel, Legal Services  
As to form and legality

#### **H. ISSUED BY**



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Chief of Staff