

8650 RESEARCH PROJECTS AND PROPOSALS

I. PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

The District encourages and supports research projects relating to the various functions of the District. The District recognizes that current research data are required in the development of improved operational and instructional programs. The District encourages and supports high-quality research projects that contribute to the improvement of educational programs, operational practices, and student outcomes. The District recognizes that current and relevant research is essential for developing effective instructional strategies and operational systems.

II. POLICY

District administrators shall actively support and promote appropriate research by identifying and encouraging projects concerning operational and instructional programs. In recognition of the need to coordinate such research efforts, the administrators will work with the Director of Assessment, School Improvement, and Research to review, accept, and coordinate requests for research projects.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. "Research Sponsor" the entity sponsoring the research project.
- B. "Researcher" means the individual or entity conducting the research.
- C. "Research Project" means any systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge, including surveys, interviews, observational studies, data analyses, theses, and dissertations conducted within the District.
- D. "Sensitive Topics" means any topic and/or survey identified in Utah Code §53G-9-203(1).

IV. RESEARCH REVIEW AND PROPOSAL PROCESS

- A. The Director of Assessment, School Improvement, and Research (Director) will review all proposals for research projects submitted to the District or schools within the district. Proposals may come from any of the following:
 - 1. Institutions of higher education
 - 2. Individuals working on an advanced degree (both employees and non-employee of the District)
 - 3. Individuals completing a college class assignment
 - 4. Any other agency or organization not listed above
- B. Proposal Submission
 - 1. Applicants must submit a completed [Research Project Application](#) along with a written proposal. Proposals must clearly outline:
 - i. Purpose and objectives of the research

- ii. Methodology and research design
- iii. Instruments or tools to be used (e.g., surveys, interview protocols)
- iv. Anticipated benefits to the District and its students
- v. Plans for compliance with FERPA, PPRA, and other applicable laws

C. Review and Approval

1. The Director shall review all research proposals to determine their educational value and to evaluate the research design.
2. The Director, in consultation with other directors as appropriate, will then approve or disapprove each research project based on the following criteria:
 - i. Benefit to the District
 - ii. The amount of time required for WSD employees and/or students to participate in the research project
 - iii. Relevance of the research project to education, generally
 - iv. Whether the Researcher is an employee of the District.
3. Any survey, either standalone or incorporated into a research project, must be reviewed in its entirety by the Director before being administered to students to ensure it does not include any sensitive topics.
4. All outside Research Sponsors or Researchers that collect personally identifiable student data must sign a Data Privacy Agreement.

D. Coordination of Approved Research. Administrators at the schools where the research project will be conducted and District department directors are responsible for coordinating approved projects within their respective areas or departments with the Researcher.

E. Final Reporting

1. Upon completion of a research project, the Researcher shall provide the District with a copy of the final report, thesis, dissertation, or publication.
2. The Director shall ensure findings are shared with the appropriate staff members, and, when applicable, the Board of Education.

F. Internal Surveys

1. Internal surveys are not considered research projects under this policy.
2. Teacher Surveys

- i. Teachers surveying students in their classroom for purposes of improving teaching practices (“Teacher Improvement Surveys”¹) may not include sensitive topics.
 - ii. Teacher Improvement Surveys must remain anonymous.
 - iii. Teachers surveying students for any other purpose than Teacher Improvement Surveys may not include sensitive topics.
 - iv. Teachers surveys must receive approval from their school principal prior to administering the survey.
3. School Surveys. Schoolwide surveys initiated by students, employees, or administrators require district approval, regardless of who the survey is administered to.
- i. Student surveys administered school-wide must first receive approval from the administrator, then the Director. If the student is administering a survey for a class assignment, the survey must be approved by the teacher before it is submitted to the administrator and the Director.
 - ii. Employee surveys must receive approval from the administrator, then the Director.
 - iii. Administrator surveys must receive approval from their direct supervisor, then the Director.
4. District Surveys. All district department surveys must be reviewed and approved by their department director.
- G. All research projects and internal surveys must be submitted for approval by the Director four weeks in advance of beginning the research project or administering the survey.

V. PARENT CONSENT

- A. Parent consent is not required for research projects involving the collection of de-identified student data (not including data collected from direct student surveys), no matter who the Researcher is.
- B. Parent consent **is** required for research projects involving personally identifiable information (not including data collected from direct student surveys).
- C. Anonymous surveys require parental consent if the survey includes sensitive topics **or** if the Researcher intends to share the research outside the school. All data externally shared must maintain anonymity of students and an n-size of 10 or greater is required in order to protect student and family privacy.
- D. Internal surveys do not require parental consent, unless the survey includes sensitive topics.

¹ A Teacher Improvement Survey may have questions such as “Which approach do you prefer..., Was it helpful when I...,)