

Application to Conduct Research in Manatee County Public Schools

The Manatee County Public Schools recognize the value of scholarly research and support its implementation with the ultimate goal of improving teaching and learning in our schools.

1. Who is required to submit a *Research Proposal Form*?

In order to safeguard the privacy of students and the primacy of instructional time, it is required that individuals or organizations wishing to carry out external research projects in Manatee County Public Schools complete the Research Proposal Form, submit the required supporting documentation, and obtain an approval letter from the Director of Assessment before any research study may proceed. External research studies are those studies initiated by individuals or under the sponsorship of agencies or institutions outside of the jurisdiction of the Manatee County School Board. (Note: this application requirement does not apply to individuals, agencies, or institutions with whom the Manatee County School Board has a contractual agreement to provide research or evaluation services.)

In comparison, internal research studies may be conducted by schools or departments within the school district to gather data for local purposes. Examples of internal research studies include needs assessments for school improvement or departmental planning, data collection for audit or accountability requirements, and data collection for program evaluation or improvement. Internal research studies are typically implemented by employees or staff members within the scope of their job responsibilities. Such internal research studies would require the approval of the supervising administrator, but they do not require the approval of the Director of Assessment. If you are uncertain as to whether or not your research proposal is considered external or internal, please contact the Director of Assessment for consultation.

2. What criteria are used to evaluate research applications?

Applications to conduct research in Manatee County Public Schools are judged according to the following criteria:

- Alignment with the school district's strategic goals
- Contribution to improvement of teaching and learning in Manatee County Public Schools
- Quality of proposed research design
- Protection of confidentiality and privacy of all participants
- No significant interference with classroom teaching and learning and school administration
- No burdensome expenditure of time, effort or money required of schools or the school district
- Appropriateness of content and processes for age level and developmental level of students

3. What components are required to complete an application to conduct research?

The following documents must be submitted in order for a proposed external research study to receive consideration for approval (submit one copy of each):

- Manatee County Public Schools Research Proposal Form
- Research proposal, to include: rationale; statement of research problem; questions/hypotheses to be addressed (including variables); statistical and design methodology; procedures; timelines
- Copies of all research instruments/surveys/questionnaires/letters (one copy of each)
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter/Authorization (required for research activities sponsored by or affiliated with universities and colleges)
- If applicable, a letter to be sent to school principals providing information about the proposed research and requesting their approval (note: even if the Director of Assessment approves the research proposal, school principals reserve the right to approve/disapprove research activities at their schools)

4. How will research applicants be notified if their proposal has been approved?

A letter of approval/disapproval will be sent to the applicant, usually within three weeks of receipt of all required application components.

5. What are additional considerations for conducting research that involves students?

If a researcher is not an employee of Manatee County Public Schools and the research activities will involve contact with students on campus or at a school-sponsored event, the researcher must obtain Level 2 clearance through the Employment Services Department of the Manatee County School Board at the researcher's expense.

In many cases a signed parental permission form is required for every student who will participate in a research study. If needed, versions must be provided in the appropriate home language of the student. The parent permission form must:

- State the purpose of the research study
- Inform individuals of their intended participation
- Identify all data that will be collected from the student
- Indicate the amount of time required of the student
- Include a statement of possible risks, if any
- Identify the person responsible for the research, including name, address, telephone number, email address, and affiliated institution or organization
- State the student's name or provide a line/space for this entry
- Provide parents two signature lines, one giving permission and one refusing permission

There are some cases in which written parental permission is not required. Section 1002.22(3)(d)(5), Florida Statutes, exempts from the right of privacy the following:

Individuals or organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of an institution or a board of education for the purpose of developing, validating, or administering predictive tests, administering student aid programs, or improving instruction, if the studies are conducted in a manner that does not permit the personal identification of students and their parents by persons other than representatives of such organizations and if the information will be destroyed when no longer needed for the purpose of conducting such studies.

If you are uncertain as to whether or not your research project requires parental consent, please contact the Director of Assessment for consultation.

6. What are the school district's expectations for researchers?

Individuals or organizations conducting external research studies in the Manatee County Public Schools are expected to provide a copy of the research results to the Director of Assessment following the completion of the study.

Researchers are expected to conform to their approved research protocol. Should the circumstances of the research project change appreciably or should the project create a disruption to the educational process, the School Board retains the right to terminate the project with appropriate notice.

7. Whom may I contact for additional information?

Assessment & Research Department
Manatee County Public Schools
Professional Support Center
2501 63rd Avenue East
Bradenton, FL 34204

Telephone: (941) 751-6550 extension 43330