



Information and Instructions
for
Conducting Research

Doctoral Degree Studies

Department of Research, Data, and Evaluation

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General Information

DeKalb County School District Information and Instructions for Conducting Research

Please read carefully prior to requesting to conduct research.

The DeKalb County School District reserves the right to approve or deny at any time any research conducted in the district.

The **Purpose** of this process is to govern and coordinate research conducted in the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) for the following reasons:

- To protect the rights and privacy of students, parents/guardians, and staff;
- To protect instructional time;
- To promote continuous improvement in student achievement;
- To benefit the DCSD and support the mission, goals, and strategic plan;
- To ensure that the research will inform educational practice.

The DeKalb County School District’s **Board of Education** has adopted regulation KIB-R Special Interest Material Distribution, Research, Surveys, and Questionnaires. This regulation states that before any survey, questionnaire, or other data collecting instruments are administered, the Department of Research, Data, and Evaluation shall first approve it in writing. This regulation shall apply to requests made by employees of the DeKalb County School District and/or external requests to conduct research within the district. Approval will be based on consistent procedures in keeping with established policies. Any study that involves data collection through observation, interview, survey, tests, and other data collection devices is defined as “research” and is subject to these policies and procedures.

Submission Calendar

Research Proposal Review Calendar for the School Year 2023-24

Submission Deadline (Midnight)	Reviewed	Decision Letter Sent (approximate date)
August 18, 2023	September 2023	October 2023
December 15, 2023	January 2024	February 2024
April 12, 2024	May 2024	June 2024

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2024

**IS THE LAST DAY TO COLLECT DATA IN THE SCHOOLS
FOR THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR**

Website

**DeKalb County School District's
Research webpage**

<https://www.dekalbschoolsga.org/research-data-evaluation/>

Contact Information

Questions about the research application or review process?

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DeKalb County School District (DCSD)

Research Review Board Information

Research requiring Research Review Board approval is research initiated by DCSD employees for the purpose of a doctorate degree (dissertation or Capstone project) requirement consisting of data collection at multiple school sites. **Requests to conduct research for doctoral dissertations that comprise data collection at only one school site are generally not accepted due to their limited benefit to the school district.** Research needing RRB approval also includes studies initiated by central office employee, a non-DCSD employee, e.g., a university faculty member, professional research organization, a government agency, or research for the purposes of a grant.

- Applications must be submitted electronically via the survey link by midnight of the submission deadline listed on the Research Proposal Review Calendar for 2022-2023.
- Answer all questions in the application and provide all supporting information/documents requested.
- Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
- Proposal applications that are not representative of scholarly work or are not professionally prepared will not be reviewed and will be automatically denied.
- Proposals that require district or school staff other than the researcher to collect data and/or provide reports for study purposes will be denied.
- Proposals to conduct studies that are not logically feasible in the district will be denied.
- Applications to conduct research within the DeKalb County School District are reviewed three times a year (September, January, and May).
- The DCSD Research Review Board (RRB), which includes Research, Data, and Evaluation staff, district leaders, content experts, and school leaders, evaluates all research applications based on the DCSD Research Standards and determines which studies will be approved.
- Researchers will receive a decision letter via e-mail regarding the status of their applications between the last week of the review month and the first week of the month after the review.

Researchers who receive DeKalb RRB approval will be provided a signed approval letter and a DCSD Research identification number from the Department of Research, Data, and Evaluation. To secure approval from the principal(s), provide the principal(s) a copy of your approval letter, application form, copies of all data collection instruments, and Letters of Informed Consent. Once the researcher has received permission from the principal(s), the researcher may contact staff, parents, and/or students. Principals **may decline participation** in any research study at their own discretion. **School staff, parents, and students may elect not to participate** in a research study even if it is approved by the DCSD Research Review Board (RRB) and the principal.

*All research proposals are approved for one calendar year as submitted. Changes or extensions must be requested in writing to the Department of Research, Data, and Evaluation. Researchers who receive a denial to conduct research in the DeKalb County School District may submit a new application for later review.

All interested researchers/applicants must:

1. Have the following five/six documents saved electronically in **ONE** file document. The application will ask you to upload this file.
 - a. Chapters 1-3 (introduction, review of literature, and methodology)
 - b. Complete list of references from the study formatted correctly
 - c. All data collection instruments and protocols (ex: survey or interview questions)
 - d. Permission letter to use published survey (if using a published instrument)
 - e. Letter(s) of Informed Consent
 - f. Researcher's resume
2. Go to the link below
3. Complete the application. The save and continue feature is active on the online application. This allows you to start the application and finish it at another time (if necessary). When using the same computer, previously entered information will be saved.
4. Once the application has been submitted, a copy will automatically be sent to three places:
 - a. The researcher submitting the form.
 - b. The researcher's university/college representative stated in the application.
 - c. The Research, Data, and Evaluation department.
5. The university/college representative will then complete an online approval form, including the Letter of Institutional Endorsement that will be sent to Research, Data, and Evaluation to complete the researcher's application.
6. Someone in Research, Data, and Evaluation will contact you and the university/college once the application packet is complete with next steps.

Research Review Board Research Application Link:

<https://survey.sogosurvey.com/r/rKXVjQ>

Employee Compensation to Participate in Research Studies

For information on DeKalb County School District's Board Policy concerning gifts to employees, please click on the link below:

<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/ViewPolicy.aspx?S=4054&revid=8YvdQplusaOKBtUBaXTWQUvp&PG=6&st=gifts&mt=Exact>

DeKalb County School District
Department of Research, Data, and Evaluation

Research Process Flow Chart

Local School Research	Research Review Board
Researcher submits online application w/attachments to the Research, Data, and Evaluation.	Researcher submits online application to Research, Data, and Evaluation. Applications may also be submitted by government agencies or research institutes.
Principal submits online approval form to the Research, Data, and Evaluation.	Researcher's university/college also submits online approval application to Research, Data, and Evaluation.
Research, Data, and Evaluation receives both the application and the principal approval form.	RDE staff reviews the application packet (1st screening).
Research, Data, and Evaluation files the information for tracking purposes	Research proposal is accepted or denied for RRB review.
Researcher conducts local research study.	RRB review proposals 3x a year (2 nd screening). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September, January, and May
Researcher forwards a copy of completed research project to the RDE department.	RRB sends a letter of approval or denial to the researcher.
	If approved, researcher secures permission from the principal(s) to conduct the research at the school site. If denied, researcher may resubmit proposal (at a later date).
	Once study is completed, researcher submits a copy of the completed study to RDE.

Denial may be based on one or more of the following criteria.

- Failure to protect the rights and privacy of students, parents/guardians, and staff
- Failure to protect instructional time
- Failure to promote continuous improvement in student achievement
- Lack of benefit for DCSD and support of the mission, goals, and strategic plan
- Failure to ensure that the research will inform educational practice

- Failure to provide a complete application w/attachments
- Failure to submit a professionally prepared proposal
- Failure to submit a proposal that exemplifies scholarly work
- Failure to submit a research proposal that is logistically feasible in the school district

If your Research Proposal is denied:

You may submit a revised version of your Proposal for a later review month. A revised Proposal may still be denied by the Research Review Board (RRB) on the grounds of concerns listed in the original denial letter or on new grounds. The RRB will not accept a Proposal that has been denied twice.

The research proposal reviewers invest much time into reviewing and providing feedback on each research proposal. **When a proposal is denied, it generally requires substantive changes to the research proposal.** We, therefore, ask that should your proposal be denied, you first meet with your dissertation chairperson to discuss the concerns outlined in your denial letter. Once you have met with your chairperson, carefully and thoroughly address the concerns in your revised proposal. After you have made the revisions to your prospectus, your dissertation chairperson will need to sign next to each bulleted item (areas of concern/questions) in the denial letter, confirming that they have met with you and are satisfied that all areas of concern have been addressed. Please do not resubmit your proposal until you have met with your chairperson and spent time together addressing each of the issues raised by the Research Review Board.

Doctoral Dissertation Submission Tips

Please read over the following items before submitting your research study.

1. The study **WILL NOT** interfere with students or staff’s instructional day.
2. The research study aligns with one or more of the six DCSD Strategic Plan Goal Areas.

<http://www.dekalbschoolsga.org/documents/strategic-plan/goals/vision-mission-beliefs.pdf>

3. The researcher(s) will be collecting the data for the study, **NOT** DCSD staff.
4. The study will involve more than one school site. The Research Review Board (RRB) is cautious about approving studies at one school due to the limited benefits to the district. Information and Instructions to Conduct Research (page 3).
5. To maximize the study’s benefit to the district, the Research Review Board strongly encourages researchers to use at least 3 sources of data (triangulation) when appropriate to the research study design.

DCSD Strategic Plan

Goal Areas and Performance Objectives

Goal Area I: Student Success with Equity and Access

- Increase the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement experiences
- Provide academically rigorous courses and/or pathways
- Increase graduation rate for all students

Goal Area II: Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

- Increase the effectiveness of stakeholder experiences
- Improve opportunities for innovative stakeholder collaboration
- Improve and ensure effective district internal and external communication

Goal Area III: Staff Effectiveness

- Recruit highly qualified staff
- Develop high performing staff
- Retain highly effective staff

Goal Area IV: Culture and Climate

- Create and maintain a safe, orderly, positive learning environment for
- Establish and maintain clear and high expectations for excellence for all stakeholders
- Cultivate culturally responsive learning environments for all
- Provide support for social and emotional learning for

Goal Area V: Organizational Excellence

- Ensure excellent financial management
- Ensure efficient use of resources

Goal Area VI: Facilities

- Improve and maintain facility conditions
- Ensure that educational facilities meet programmatic needs
- Develop and increase sustainable funding for facilities

Letter of Informed Consent Checklist

- ___ 1. The approximate date that the letter will be distributed.
- ___ 2. The title of the proposed research study.
- ___ 3. A brief explanation of the research objectives.
- ___ 4. The research methods to be used (survey, focus group, interview, analysis of test scores etc.) If audio taping, videotaping, or photographing is involved, it must be explicitly stated.
- ___ 5. The expected duration of the subject's participation.
- ___ 6. Identification of any procedures that are experimental.
- ___ 7. A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject— if none, this must be stated.
- ___ 8. A description of any benefits to the subject that may reasonably be expected from the research - if none, this must be stated.
- ___ 9. A statement explaining how confidentiality of data identifying the subject will be maintained.
- ___ 10. A privacy notice that personally identifiable information and the specific name of the school or site will not be included in the final report.
- ___ 11. A statement describing what access to student records is needed—if none, this must be stated.
- ___ 12. Contact information for the researcher (name, telephone number, and email address) Do not use DCSD telephone numbers and/or DCSD first class email addresses.
- ___ 13. Contact information (name, telephone number, and email address) for an institutional contact Person is also required in case someone has a question or concern about the research and/or the right also of subjects.
- ___ 14. A statement that participation is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.
- ___ 15. A statement that the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.
- ___ 16. A statement that participants and parents/guardians of students have the right to inspect, upon request, any instrument or materials related to the proposal within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.
- ___ 17. Directions for how to return the letter.
- ___ 18. A line on which the participant or parent/guardian should sign.
- ___ 19. A line on which the signer's name should be printed legibly.
- ___ 20. A line on which the participant's name should be printed legibly (if he/she was not the signer).
- ___ 21. A line on which to write the date the document was signed.
- ___ 22. Make sure that the letter of informed consent has been proofread for clarity, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and mechanics.

Sample Letter of Informed Consent

(Date)

Dear (parent/guardian, student, colleague, other),

I am currently enrolled as a graduate student at (name of institution). As a requirement for my (class, certification program, degree), I will be conducting a research project entitled (title of project). The purpose of this research is to (give a brief description of the purpose of the research). I am requesting your permission to include (you, your child) as a participant in this project.

This project will begin on (beginning date) and end on (ending date). The project will involve (give a brief explanation of the procedures to be followed including experimental procedures). As a part of this research, I (will/will not) need to look at (your, your child's) (grades, test scores, etc.—give the name of the test or any other personal records that you plan to examine).

Possible benefits for the participants of this project are (give a brief explanation of the possible benefits for subjects). There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts for participants in this project. (If there are foreseeable risks or discomforts for subjects, you must describe them.) (Your, Your child's) name and all other personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. The name of (your, your child's) school or the school district will not be included in the final report.

(Your, Your child's) participation in this project is voluntary. (You, Your child) will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which (you, your child) are otherwise entitled if you decide that (you, he/she) will not participate in this research project. If (you, your child) decide(s) to participate in this project, (you, he/she) may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You have the right to inspect any instrument or materials related to the proposal. Your request will be honored within a reasonable period after the request is received.

(Researcher's name) _____

(Researcher's school) _____

(Researcher's phone number) _____ (researcher's email address) _____

(Institutional contact's name [major professor, advisor, dissertation chair,]) _____

(Institutional contact's affiliation [college, university, etc.] _____

(Institutional contact's phone number) _____

(Institutional contact's email address) _____

If you agree to (allow your child to) participate in this research, please complete the information below:

Participant's Name (please print) Participant's Signature Date

Parent/Guardian's Name (please print) Parent/Guardian's Signature Date
(For student participant) (For student participant)

Return to _____ by _____ (date)

DeKalb County School District **Requirements for the Letter of Institutional Endorsement**

Any individual requesting approval for research to be conducted in the DeKalb County School District must request their university/college to submit a *Letter of Institutional Endorsement* written and signed by the researcher's advisor, major professor, instructor, dissertation committee chair, or appropriate college or university official.

RRB applicants: This letter will be submitted by a representative from the college/university when they submit their approval for the applying researcher.

Local Research applicants: This letter will be written by the university but submitted by the researcher during the application process.

The *Letter of Institutional Endorsement* must include:

- be on letterhead stationery from the college or university;
- include a recent date (within the past 3 months);
- state that the researcher is a current student and that the research project is part of an approved course of study;
- specifically state the title of the project;
- state that the research is proposed for the DeKalb County School District;
- University's IRB approval date (doctoral dissertation studies);
- be signed by the advisor, major professor, dissertation committee chair, or other appropriate college or university official.

Research Review Board’s Rubric

DCSD Department of Research, Data, and Evaluation RRB Proposal Rubric

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| 1. The rights and privacy of students, parents/guardians, and staff are protected. | ___ yes | ___ no |
| 2. Instructional time is protected. | ___ yes | ___ no |
| 3. Continuous improvement in student achievement is promoted. | ___ yes | ___ no |
| 4. The research will benefit the DCSD and support the mission, goals, and strategic plan. | ___ yes | ___ no |
| 5. The research findings will inform educational practice. | ___ yes | ___ no |

The DCSD RRB shall not grant approval of the research proposal if any of the above requirements are not met.

<i>The DCSD Research RRB shall rate each of the following indicators.</i>	3 Points Excellence	2 Points Good	1 Point Margin	0 Points Poor
1. The research study aligns to the goals of the district’s Strategic Plan.				
2. The research will benefit educational practices.				
3. The purpose, significance, and relevance of the study are clearly articulated.				
4. The research questions (hypotheses) are appropriate for the purpose and design of the study.				
5. The methodology logically flows from the purpose of the study and the research questions (hypotheses).				
6. All data collection (surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.) involving students and/or staff does not interrupt instructional time , assemblies, meetings, or professional learning sessions.				
7. The data collection methods and instruments are detailed and appropriate to the research questions and design of the study.				
8. The data analysis is thoroughly explained and will yield results directly related to the research questions (hypotheses).				
9. All research is scheduled in congruence with the DeKalb County School Calendar , avoiding the first and last week of classes and district-wide standardized testing dates. (mid-August – March 31)				
10. The timeline of conducting the study is feasible.				
11. The amount of time required of the participants (students or staff) is within reason.				
12. The application/proposal is professionally prepared and formatted . It exemplifies scholarly writing . (standard English –grammar and mechanics)				

DCSD Research Review Board Standards

1. Research Proposals conform to customary principles of scholarly educational research and scientific inquiry.

1.1 The purpose, significance, and relevance of the study are clearly articulated demonstrating a substantial need and value for the research.

1.2 The research aligns to the DeKalb County School District mission, goals, strategic plan, and instructional initiatives.

1.3 The review of literature provides an exhaustive summary of prior, relevant research and identifies a gap that the researcher's proposed study will fill.

1.4 The study is designed to answer a concise set of research questions and/or confirm or reject a clear set of research hypotheses.

1.5 The methodology logically aligns with the purpose of the study and the research questions/hypotheses.

1.6 Data collection instruments and protocols are detailed and are appropriate to the design of the study and aligned to the research questions/hypotheses.

1.7 The data analysis is thoroughly explained and will yield results directly related to the research questions/hypotheses.

1.8 Quantitative studies will include reliability and validity information for each data collection instrument.

1.9 Qualitative studies will include verification (trustworthiness) discussed in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability and how their data collection methods and analysis will insure that the study is trustworthy.

1.10 Mixed methods studies will address reliability and validity for the quantitative portion and verification for the qualitative portion. They must explain how the quantitative and qualitative portions relate or inform each other.

2. Instructional time and focus is protected.

2.1 Data may not be collected during instructional time if it interferes with learning. Data may not be collected during assemblies, meetings, or professional learning sessions.

2.2 Data may not be collected during the first week of classes, immediately preceding or following school holidays, or during standardized testing. Data may not be collected in the schools after March 30th.

2.3 The timeline of study must be feasible considering the school calendar and the data collection required.

3. All research proposal data collection must comply with FERPA guidelines protecting personal information of DCSD stakeholders.

3.1 The names of school stakeholders, school names, or the school district name may not be used.

3.2 All data collection instruments and protocols must adhere to FERPA guidelines.

Additionally, questions must be age appropriate and demonstrate cultural sensitivity for diverse groups of stakeholders.

3.3 Data collection instruments and questions must be reviewed by the Department of Research, Assessments and Grants prior to distribution.

4. All references must be appropriately cited.

4.1 A complete reference list must be correctly formatted and included.

4.2 If data collection instruments/protocols have authors and/or publishers other than the researcher, letters documenting permission for the researcher to use the instrument/protocol must be attached.

5. All proposal applications must be professionally prepared and formatted.

5.1 Preparation and submission must adhere to DCSD guidelines.

5.2 The use of Standard English conventions and APA style is expected.