

INSTRUCTION

Program Evaluation and Research Activities: Research/Surveys/Evaluations

I. Definitions

In developing or administering research activities, the following definitions shall be used:

A. Externally Generated Research: Agency

This is any experimental or quasi-experimental project developed by the professional staff to meet criteria established by a regional, state, or federal agency. Most externally funded projects have a component which requires research, experimental, or needs assessment activities. Surveys which may be a part of the development of a project proposal shall be considered to be a research activity.

B. Externally Generated Research: Individual

This is any experimental or quasi-experimental project developed by an individual in pursuit of professional growth, for the purpose of gaining useful information of benefit generally to the education profession. The individual conducting such research shall be sponsored by a faculty member of an institution of higher education. Preliminary survey results relative to determining needs shall be considered to be a research activity.

II. This regulation shall apply to all research activities involving staff members, students, parents, or community members whether they are elementary or secondary-related and whether they are school or community-related.

III. Request for Approval

A. Approval for conducting external research shall require the conformity to all requirements of this regulation. The burden of presenting proof of such conformity rests with the agency or individual conducting the research activity. The initiating agency or individual shall also be responsible for submitting statements and information concerning Section IIIB.

- B. Internally generated program evaluation activities, undertaken for the purpose of improving programs and services, shall not be subject to external research approval procedures. School division personnel who undertake program evaluation and research projects shall be responsible for complying with all appropriate local, state, and federal guidelines involving protection of participants (confidentiality, parent permission, and access to student information).
- C. School principals shall be responsible for all program evaluation and research activities conducted by their schools. This includes those activities conducted by student organizations, parent organizations, etc. Principals shall review and approve all internally and externally generated projects prior to their start. Submitting in-house research activities to the Office of Program Evaluation shall not be required.
- D. Criteria for evaluating research activity requests.
 - 1. Design of the research activity, including purpose of the study, data collection instruments, audience for the information, and a description of what shall be included in the summary.
 - 2. Amount of intrusion upon instructional time.
 - 3. Amount of staff time required for participation or coordination of research activities, including time needed to obtain parental permission and allow inspection of third-party created survey forms.
 - 4. Compliance with federal, state, and school division requirements for students' right to privacy.
 - 5. Time line.
 - 6. Amount of Prince William County Public Schools supplies and equipment required.
 - 7. Potential benefit of the study to school and community.

IV. General

The following practices and procedures shall be followed when considering or conducting research activities:

- A. All external research activities (instructional and non-instructional) involving student and staff time are to be submitted to the Office of Program Evaluation for review and approval.
- B. When research activities involve schools, consent shall be secured from building principals and appropriate area associate superintendents.

- C. When research activities involve central departments, consent shall be secured from department heads and the appropriate associate superintendent.
 - D. Where parental permission is necessary, evidence of approval shall be secured prior to a student's participation in the study.
 - E. Under no circumstances shall Prince William County Public Schools participate in studies (internal or external) that require students to provide information in any of the categories listed below, without prior parental/guardian written consent. Parents/guardians shall be notified 30 days prior to administration of the study and shall have the right to inspect surveys requiring students to provide information in any of the following categories.
 - 1. Political affiliations of the student or the student's parents.
 - 2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family.
 - 3. Sex behavior or attitudes.
 - 4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior.
 - 5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships.
 - 6. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
 - 7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent.
 - 8. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).
 - F. Parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student may inspect *any* survey created by a third party for external research purposes before the survey is administered. Schools shall notify parents at least thirty days prior to administration of the survey and shall honor requests to inspect the survey as soon as practicable.
- V. Procedure
- The steps outlined below shall be followed when a research activity is submitted:
- A. All research activities shall be reviewed first by the Office of Program Evaluation. The researcher shall be informed if additional information needs to be secured before the activity is reviewed.

- B. Once the request is reviewed, a letter from the Office of Program Evaluation shall be sent informing the researcher of the status of the request.

The Director of Planning and Assessment is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.