

Research Proposal Guidelines

Independent School District 625 (Saint Paul Public Schools) recognizes the value of educational research as we pursue our core mission – to provide a premier education for all. The first responsibility of the district is the teaching and learning that occur in the classroom, so research projects must be undertaken with that obligation in mind. These procedures are designed to protect that responsibility and give reasonable access to individuals and institutions to conduct approved research projects in district schools. Protection of private records and proper data handling are also key concerns.

Please read this entire document before submitting your proposal. If you have additional questions, refer to the FAQ section on the [REA website](http://rea.spps.org), or contact Kara Arzamendia at 651-744-1708 or kara.arzamendia@spps.org.

Selection Criteria

- Potential **contribution to SPPS** or the education profession;
- Pedagogically **sound and feasible** in terms of demands on student time, teacher time, and expense to district;
- Reasonable assurance **no child will suffer** educationally;
- **Sound study design** with potential for successful completion; and
- Complies with **ethical standards** and **state/federal law** (esp. privacy).

Approval Needed

Before beginning research involving district staff, facilities or functions in:

- **Data collection** from students, parents, teachers, admins or other staff;
- **Observation, focus groups** or **interviews** with any of the above;
- Release of **private data** from district records; and/or
- **Recruitment** of subjects for research.

District Employees: All research studies resulting in publication, or to fulfill requirements for thesis, dissertation or capstone, require approval.

Without Approval

Studies conducted by employees as part of their **normal job duties** are exempt from the review process.

Studies conducted by **outside agencies under contract** with the district are exempt from the review process, as the contracting process will include an equivalent review. Such studies are generally the property of the district and cannot be made public without district approval.

Data Privacy

Release of personally identifiable information from district files is subject to the requirements of **federal and state law**. Check our [Data Center](#) first for publicly available data. Any research project requesting access to private data from district files will require a **Data Agreement**, including details on:

- **Specific variables** to be released to the researcher;
- Assurances on **security measures** to be taken by the researcher;
- **Remuneration** for District resources used in recovering the data.

As part of your application, we require you to declare all data you require for your research and how that data will be obtained. Use [this form](#) to do this.

Parental consent (or student consent where permitted by law) is required for release of all personally identifiable private data. The release must explicitly state which private information is to be released. Even with consent, the District reserves the right to conceal student identity on sensitive data.

For more, reference *Student Records and Your Rights*, [here](#).

Consent Forms

All research studies requiring the use or collection of student data will require the use of parent consent and/or student assent forms. A draft consent form must be included with your proposal, and the final form will be developed in concert with REA. Please note that researchers are responsible for translations to Spanish, Hmong, Somali and Karen as necessary.

Review Process

The Research Review Committee will evaluate each proposal based on:

- Relevance to the District **Strategic Plan** ([click to view](#));
- Potential to **improve** instruction or **contribute** to the profession;
- **Quality** of study design, including analysis and research questions;
- Lack of impact on **core instruction time** for students and staff;
- Measures to **protect privacy** of individually identifiable data.

After initial review, proposals may be referred to additional district leaders as needed. Once this is complete, REA will inform the applicant:

- **Approved:** Researcher can begin study as agreed upon.
- **Approved Pending Modifications:** Researcher must make changes before beginning study.
- **Denied:** Researcher will not be allowed to conduct study.

Approval does **not guarantee** that a study can or will be conducted. School principals have the final decision regarding participation.

Timelines

The review process will take four to six weeks. Please plan accordingly

After Approval

If the study is **approved**, REA will notify school principals and/or program administrators. The **researcher may begin** the study at a time agreed upon with those personnel.

If the study is **approved pending modifications**, the researcher must **submit the requested changes** and receive an unconditional letter of approval from REA before beginning the study.

Final Report

The researcher must file a report of results no more than **three months after** study completion. For studies longer than a year, an interim report is due no more than two/three months after the end of each year.

Maximum length of reports is **five pages**.

SPPS Employees

The district strongly encourages employees to seek higher degrees. To this end, employees may contact the REA department (651-744-1708) for advice during the planning stages of any degree research.