

2018-19 Dallas ISD Research Review Board

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At-a-Glance

The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) supports high quality research that addresses well-formed research questions of educational importance. At the same time, the district has moral and legal obligations that require oversight of research activities that make use of district resources such as data, facilities, employee time, or access to students.

In order to conduct research in the Dallas ISD, a proposal must be submitted and reviewed by the district's Research Review Board (RRB). The RRB is housed within the Department of Evaluation & Assessment, and draws on the expertise of district researchers and program evaluators, as well as the professional knowledge of staff from the departments of Teaching and Learning, Student Services, School Leadership, and Legal Services, among others.

External research proposals must demonstrate clear and direct educational value to the district, be minimally disruptive to the educational process, manifest a sound research methodology, and comply with current privacy laws. The potential direct benefit to Dallas ISD must outweigh demands on district resources, particularly staff and student time.

Review Board Responsibilities

The Research Review Board was reorganized in December 2010. In addition to continuing to review the methodology of submitted proposals, the RRB took on a larger role in protecting the privacy of students and staff and ensuring compliance with state and federal law, coordinating external research with internal research and evaluation, avoiding unnecessary or redundant data collection, and monitoring the progress of approved research projects.

The Department of Legal Services assisted with development of guidelines to ensure compliance with state and federal student privacy laws, and with the design of templates, e.g., parent consent forms for student participation in research activities, that have improved the quality of submitted proposals and consistency of compliance with district policy.

Current RRB responsibilities are handled by a six-member team, comprised of a coordinator and five evaluation researchers (including the chair) who review proposals submitted to the district.

During the 2018-19 school year, board members made several changes to refine the RRB website, published an updated *Guidelines for Conducting Research within*

the Dallas Independent School District, and developed and launched a new online submission system for research applications and research modification requests. In addition, board members were able to collaborate with the Dallas ISD Legal department, Procurement department, and Volunteer and Partnership Services department to streamline the review of third-party Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and partnership agreements that request access to student-level data. Furthermore, board members have cooperated with multiple internal Dallas ISD departments and external partners such as RAND Corp., Westat, Inc., and Southern Methodist University (SMU) to assist in the successful completion of the Wallace Foundation Social Emotional Learning grant, BARR Scale-Up grant, and the Dallas ISD STEM school project.

Proposal Submission

Application materials must be submitted electronically. Research guidelines and application materials are available on the district's website at <http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/868>. Applications or questions about the application process are submitted to research@dallasisd.org.

Researchers must submit an application:

- If the research project involves collecting individual level data from or about Dallas ISD students, staff, or parents (e.g., surveys, tests, interviews, observations, focus groups, or other direct primary data-gathering methodologies), or
- If the research project involves requesting an extract of individual-level data maintained by Dallas ISD on district databases, including demographic, achievement, attendance, personnel, or other district records.

Proposal Review

For studies taking place during the 2018-19 school year, 55 proposals were submitted between June 2018 and May 2019 (Table 1). During the 2017-18, there were 46 proposals submitted.

Out of the 55 proposals submitted, the RRB approved (including proposals approved with conditions) 39 or 70.9 percent of proposed studies while rejecting 20.0 percent or 11 proposals. Researchers for the remaining five (9.1%) proposals withdrew their submission for various reasons. Out of the 39 approved proposals, six or 15.4 percent submitted Data Sharing Agreements requesting secondary data.

Table 1: 2018-19 Proposals Submissions

Status	N	%
Approved	39	70.9
Closed*	5	9.1
Rejected	11	20.0
Total	55	100.0

Source: District Research Review Board database (June 2019).

Note: *Researchers withdrew their proposals.

There are several reasons why proposals were rejected. The list below includes some of the most common reasons.

- No clear and direct educational value to the district
- Lack of compliance with state and federal laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)
- Conflict between the study timeline and district testing window
- Too disruptive to campuses or central office
- Too costly in terms of campus resources (e.g., time, personnel, supplies)
- Poor research design or lack of sufficient information about the study (e.g., program, population, research methods, etc.)
- No district sponsor (applicable to some proposals)

Approved proposals can be grouped under three broad categories. The *first* category consists of district sponsored research projects which have the support of a department in the district because the department believes the findings from these studies will inform the work of the department. The *second* category includes external studies that are not sponsored by a district department and include major state and national research projects and studies conducted by university researchers. The *third* category includes graduate research projects, including those of current district employees.

A list of current research studies taking place within Dallas ISD can be found on the RRB website (<https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/37481>).

Data Request

Research studies that require secondary data must have a completed Data Sharing Agreement (DSA). Researchers need to request a DSA template after the RRB has approved their research proposal. Schools or district staff cannot provide data to external researchers.

During 2018-19, six new data sharing agreements were submitted by researchers with approved research studies and approved by the Dallas ISD Legal department. In addition, 12 data sharing agreements

were submitted for renewal by researchers with approved, ongoing research studies and approved by Dallas ISD Legal Department. Data fulfillment associated with all active data sharing agreements increased from 205 hours of staff time in 2017-18 to 247 hours of staff time.

RRB Expectations for 2019-20

The Dallas ISD RRB will continue to refine its processes and procedures during the 2019-20 school year. The RRB will also collaborate with the Volunteer and Partnership Services department and Dallas ISD Legal department to investigate the use of an automated, online system for providing access to data for external researchers and partners.

Reference

Featherston, L. (2018). *2017-18 Dallas ISD Research Review Board At-a-Glance*. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

An electronic version of this report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Research Review Board at research@dallasisd.org.

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