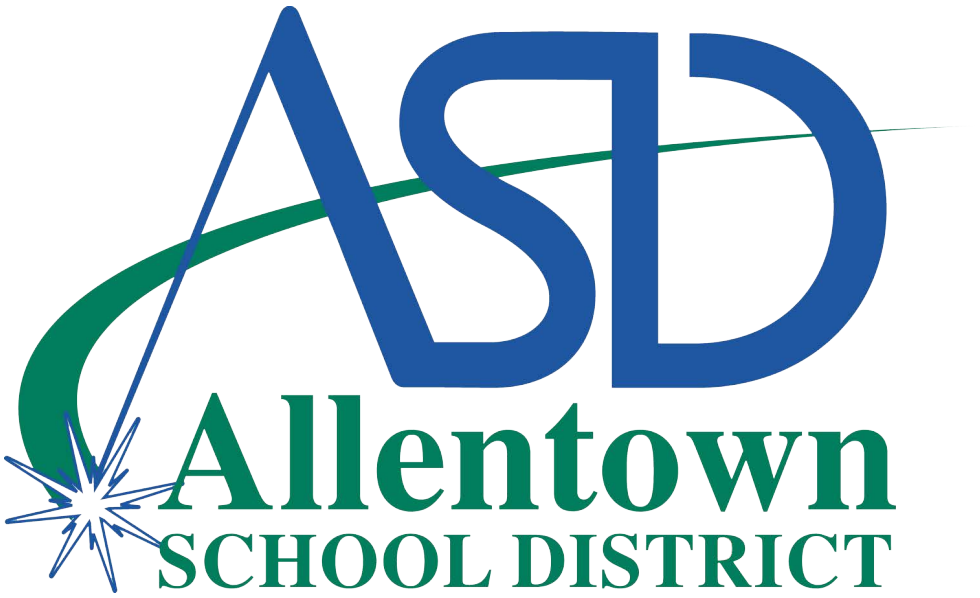


Institutional Review Board

Educational Research Protocol

Office of Accountability, Assessment, and Student Records

Revised May 14, 2025

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Proposal Purpose

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a committee established to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in research activities. The IRB's primary responsibility is to ensure that all research involving human subjects is conducted ethically and in compliance with relevant federal, state, and institutional regulations.

Purpose of an IRB Submission

The fundamental purpose of submitting a research proposal to the IRB is to obtain approval to conduct research involving human subjects. This approval signifies that the proposed research has been reviewed and deemed ethically acceptable, minimizing risks to participants while maximizing potential benefits and adhering to principles of respect, beneficence, and justice.

Specifically, an IRB submission aims to:

Protect Human Subjects: To ensure the safety, well-being, and rights of individuals who will participate in the research. This includes safeguarding their privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy.

Ensure Ethical Conduct: To verify that the research design, procedures, and informed consent process align with established ethical principles and guidelines.

Comply with Regulations: To demonstrate adherence to federal regulations (e.g., the Common Rule, FDA regulations), state laws, and institutional policies governing research involving human subjects.

Promote Responsible Research: To encourage Principal Investigators to carefully consider the ethical implications of their work and to design studies that are scientifically sound and socially valuable.

Provide Oversight and Accountability: To establish a system of independent review and ongoing monitoring of research involving human subjects.

General Research Principles

Research conducted in Allentown School District or with its resources must be justified in terms of the anticipated benefit to the District and not merely to the advancement of knowledge. The Allentown School District encourages research aligned with the Allentown School District Strategic Plan: Lighting the Way: A Blueprint for Innovation and Excellence 2030 Allentown School District Strategic Plan: strategicplan.asd.org

Research should be designed to answer well-formed research questions of educational importance, and it should use methods that are appropriate to the research questions. Elements of the research design, including the theoretical framework, hypotheses, sample selection, instruments, and analysis plan should support the goals of the research, and it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to communicate these things clearly in the proposal.

Even research that imposes no risks may be rejected by the Allentown School District Institutional Review Board if they judge it to be poorly designed, described, justified or incomplete.

While Allentown School District recognizes the value of high-quality research for improving education and serving the needs of future generations of students, the District staff have legal and ethical obligations that require oversight of research activities conducted with District resources (such as data, facilities, employee time, and access to students). These obligations include:

- Protecting students and employees from risk of harm, violations of rights, and losses of privacy,
- Protecting the educational process from unwarranted distractions and interruptions,
- Protecting public resources including data from misappropriation for private or unjustified use

Allentown School District Institutional Review Board approval does not impose any obligation on any person, school, or office to cooperate with Principal Investigators. Principal Investigators bear responsibility to inform potential respondents of the anticipated benefits and burdens in obtaining their consent. Of course, no research may be conducted at a school site without the informed approval of the principal. Please be aware all data collection with staff (outside of observations) must take place outside of paid time and that staff should be apprised of this fact during recruitment. All data collection with students (other than observations) must take place outside of instructional time.

Depending on the research design, substantial time and effort may be required for Allentown School District staff to provide requested data with the appropriate selection and matching of records and concealment of personal identities. Upon approval of the submitted proposal, the researcher will receive an estimate of the time and anticipated costs associated with Allentown School District providing requested data for the study.

All Allentown School District Institutional Review Board applications should be directed to ASDIRB@allentownsd.org with the subject line: “Initial Research Request Application.

Required Clearances

In accordance with PA Department of Human Services guidelines, valid clearances are required to be on file with the Office of Accountability, Assessment, and Student Services for all those persons conducting work within the District. This rule applies to all who apply through the Allentown School District Institutional Review Board whose work requires their presence within a school or schools, including working with students online.

For those submitting proposals, clearances must be valid within one year of the approval date. Valid, updated clearances are required for each submission, even if a researcher is working on other projects.

PA State Criminal Record Check - This form can be accessed from the PA State Police website.

PA Child Abuse Clearance – This form can be accessed from the PA Department of Human Services website.

Federal Criminal History Record (Act 114) Fingerprint Clearance - The registration website is available online 24 hours/day, seven days per week at https://uenroll.identogo.com. Service Code: 1KG6XN
Please register first at the website above before arriving to get fingerprinted.

Please use this information to access the required clearance applications. Once clearances are received, please scan and email the final clearance letters and certificates to ASDIRB@allentownsd.org We cannot verify clearance results with login codes.

Institutional Review Board Requirements and Consideration

Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a committee established to review and approve research involving the use of human subjects. In regard to education research, the committee is designed to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects, such as students, parents, teachers, and staff in schools and districts.

It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to gain approval from their institution's IRB committee prior to submitting an application. If the research proposal does not warrant an IRB review, then the Principal Investigator must demonstrate and explain "proof of exemption."

Please note, even if the principal investigator's IRB committee has approved the proposal, the District has the right to accept or reject it. For this reason, the District strongly urges Principal Investigator to disclose how they plan to protect any data used, collected, or generated from the study, how they plan to de-identify any private information; and how they plan to gain informed consent and debrief subjects/participants (if using a survey instrument, it must be in accordance with Allentown School District Policy 235.1 Surveys).

For this reason, Principal Investigators must to submit a complete application with surveys and IRB documentation attached. Otherwise, approval may be delayed.

Select One (Required)

☐ This research project requires an IRB review; and I am pending its review.

☐ This research project required an IRB review; and I have attached documentation of its approval.

☐ This research project does not require an IRB review; and I have attached documentation explaining "*proof of exemption*."

Date Submitted	**Signature of Primary Principal investigator**

Criteria for Evaluating Request to Conduct Educational Research

When evaluating research protocols, the Allentown School District Institutional Review Board Committee will use the criteria below. (Note - additional weight will be given to protocols/projects that support District goals and initiatives, clearly contribute value to student learning and staff development, and do not place excessive burden on district resources.)

Criteria	Rating or Determination
1. Are there any sections of the request/proposal blank, incomplete, or missing?	☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the data request/proposal align with the district's Strategic Plan?	☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Is the research motivated to advance any special interests or private gains?	☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Does the project provide value-added to students or the District?	☐ Yes ☐ No
5. What is the burden placed on the District?	☐ Extensive ☐ Moderate ☐ None
6. Is there District or school-based support for this initiative? (e.g. copies of communication from teachers, administrators, and/or district leaders)	☐ Yes ☐ No
7. If student level data is required, does the request/proposal adequately describe how the data will be used to comply with state and federal data privacy laws?	☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Has the principal investigator agreed to not disclose school names or any findings without the approval of the Superintendent or designee?	☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Has the principal investigator agreed to issue a complete report and summary of findings to the District before making them public?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Allentown School District Institutional Review Board Notification Receipt and Approval Determination Timeline

You will receive written notice that your application was received by the Allentown School District Institutional Review Board. The Allentown School District Institutional Review Board is responsible for reviewing research involving human subjects within the district to ensure their rights, welfare, and safety are protected for all research subjects.

The Full Allentown School District Institutional Review Board meets the second Tuesday of each month from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm. Protocols requiring Full Board review must be submitted by the last Tuesday of the preceding month to be considered at the next scheduled meeting. Protocols for eligible Expedited Review are reviewed on a rolling basis by designated Institutional Review Board Members. While there isn't a fixed monthly meeting for expediated reviews, these are typically processed three weeks of a completed submission. Protocols that qualify for Exempt status are reviewed administratively on an ongoing basis and are typically processed within one week of complete submission. The meeting schedule is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, such as holidays or quorum availability. Any changes to the schedule will be communicated to the research community via [Specify Communication Method - e.g., email listserv, IRB website]. These submissions should be remit to ASDIRB@allentownsd.org

Once your research has been reviewed and approved by the Allentown School District Institutional Review Board, you will be formally notified through the following process. The Principal Investigator (PI) listed in the proposal will receive an official letter from the Allentown School District Institutional Review Board. This letter will be sent via email to the Principal Investigator's institutional email address. The Approval Letter will typically include the following information: the official approval date, the approved study title and proposal number, the expiration date of the approval. The Approval letter will also include any specific conditions or modifications required by the Allentown School District Institutional Review Board, requirements for continuing review, amendments, and reporting of unanticipated problems or adverse events, and any specific stipulations of clarifications regarding the conduct of the research. We strive to issue the official Approval Letter within five business days following the Allentown School District Institutional Review Board meeting where your proposal was approved (for Full Board reviews or the date of the approval by designated reviewer (for Expedited and Exempt Reviews). Please note that this timeline may vary depending on the volume of submission and the complexity of the reviews.

Sponsorship Form

(Completed by School or District Leader)

Research Proposal Title and Number:

I, , of
understand:

- the above research study and what it requires of staff, students, and/or parents in my school/district;
- that the privacy and confidentiality of any staff or student will be protected;
- that I have the right to allow or reject this research study to take place at my school;
- that I have the right to terminate the study at any time;
- that I have the right to review all consent forms and research documents at any time during the study and up to three years after its completion.

Select One (Required)

☐ I grant permission to the principal investigator to conduct the above-named research project in my school as described in the proposal.

☐ I do not grant permission to the principal investigator to conduct the above-named research in my school as described in the proposal.

Data Release Agreement (Required – If permission to conduct is agreed upon)

☐ I understand that data should be released only by the departments that own them. My staff and I shall not release data to the principal investigator without prior approval from the District's Educational Research Review Board.

Date Submitted **Signature of School/District Sponsor**

Application to Conduct Educational Research

Application Fee - $100 individual, $250 Organization

Principal Investigator(s): (First and Last Name(s)/Organization)
Research Proposal Title:

Checklist Application Requirements

The following forms must be submitted with your application:

- ☐ Assurances (this form)
- ☐ Agreement to Comply w/ State and Federal Privacy Laws
- ☐ Request to Conduct Research Form (all sections)
- ☐ Detailed Research Proposal (all required sections)
- ☐ Itemized List of District Resources to Conduct Research
- ☐ Summary of All Data Gathering Instruments (surveys, questionnaires, etc.) – (*if applicable*)
- ☐ Acknowledge and Copies of IRB approvals – (*if applicable)*
- ☐ School or District Sponsorship Form – (*optional*)

Assurances (Please Initial)

1. Changes will not be made to the scope and/or structure of the study, unless approved in advance by the Allentown School District.
2. Study findings will not be published or released which identify the district, its schools, students, or staff, without written approval of the Superintendent of Schools or designee.
3. A final copy of research findings, including but not limited to a full written report, will be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools or designee and to each entity that participated in the study.

Date Submitted _____ **Signature of Principal Investigator** _____

Agreement to Comply with State and Federal Privacy Laws *(Read and Sign)*

INSERT STATE CHILD PRIVACY LAW

Federal Law – Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Any use of student information must comply with the protection and privacy laws specified under FERPA. To comply with this requirement, principal investigators should preserve the integrity and confidentiality of student records; and therefore, refrain from disclosing any personally identifiable information (PII).

To achieve this requirement, any disclosure of student information must be de-identified, and any communication of statistics and counts by student groups and populations must satisfy the minimum threshold for reporting standards. The State and District permit the publication of summary statistics and population counts for student groups according to suppression standards. The threshold (n-size) for data reporting is restricted to 20 or more. Hence, if principal investigators had information on 19 students and wanted to make public their findings, they would not be able to do so by State and District standards. The minimum threshold for reporting statistics prevents persons from tracing back the data.

Federal Law – Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

The administration of surveys (or other research instruments) to students must comply with the legal requirements of PPRA. For example, in addition to the notification of rights, the District is required to inform students, parents, and legal guardians of any survey instrument that requests the disclosure of personal information as it relates to one or more of the following "eight protected areas":

- political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
- mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
- sex behavior or attitudes;
- illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
- legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent; or
- income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program). [1]

Hence, to meet this requirement, any principal investigator that uses a survey instrument designed to elicit information related to the eight protection areas must obtain District approval before its administration. The principal investigator must provide sufficient notification that includes obtaining parent/guardian consent.

Date Submitted	**Signature of Primary Principal investigator**

Request to Conduct Educational Research

Primary Principal investigator: (First Name and Last Name)	**Organization/Position:**
Phone Number (XXX)-XXX-XXXX	**Email Address:**
List All Other Principal investigator(s) Involved in this Proposal:	

Principal investigator's Relationship to the of Allentown School District

☐ Internal Staff Member (Employee of ASD)

☐ External Principal Investigator (Independent)

☐ External Principal Investigator (University Affiliated)

☐ Other (Please explain -)

Type of Application (Choose one)

☐ New

☐ Updated (minor changes to previous application)

☐ Resubmitted (significant changes to application)

☐ Continuation (of currently approved project)

☐ Other (Please explain -)

Purpose of Research Project (Select all that apply)

☐ Complete Coursework

☐ Complete Certification

☐ Complete Advanced Degree

(Select degree level.)

☐ Pilot/Test Proprietary Software or Resources

☐ Publish Research and Findings

☐ Other (Please explain -)

Brief Overview of Research Project

Does the research proposal support the District's Strategic Plan? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it require the use of time allocated for instruction or independent learning? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it provide a direct benefit to students, staff, or the district? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Will it require a significant amount of district resources (time, commitment, etc.)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it require the collection or use of student level data? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it explicitly state how it will safeguard student, staff, school or district level data? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Desired start date? *End date?*

Date Submitted **Signature of Principal Investigator**

Detailed Research Proposal

This form outlines key sections that should be included when submitting a research proposal for District review. Each section should be succinctly stated (1000 characters or less). Failure to complete any section – unless otherwise noted – may automatically result in an adverse decision by the District. If any section is non-applicable, write "N/A" and explain why.

Motive for Research
State the primary purpose and the intended audience for this research initiative.

Question of Inquiry or Statement of Problem
Briefly state the question of inquiry and/or the statement of the problem.

Literature Review (Optional)
Requests to conduct educational research should be informed by prior research. Please list any research that supports your theory of change or hypotheses. (Bullet points will suffice).

Theory of Change/Hypothesis (optional)
Clearly state your theory of change/hypothesis.

Research Design and Procedure – (may exceed character limit)
Clearly outline your research design and the procedures to conduct your research. Also, include a timeline for implementation as well as time commitments for participants.

Type of Data Provided by the District (if applicable)
Briefly describe the type of data that would need to be provided by the district to facilitate this study. (Note – You may have to submit an additional form at a later time).

Intended Use of Data (may exceed character limit)
Explain the intended use of data collected and generated during the course of the study.

Legal Mandates – Student and Family Data Privacy – (may exceed character limit)
Please explain how you will comply with state and federal laws related to student and family data privacy and confidentiality.

Protecting Staff and School Level Data
Briefly state how you intend to protect the anonymity of staff and school level data and information.

Rationale for District Approval – (may exceed character limit)
Please explain why the Review Committee should approve this research proposal. In your response, you should explicitly answer the following questions: 1) How does this project will support the District's Strategic Plan? 2) How will it directly benefit students, staff, or the district? 3) How does it explicitly advance the quality of teaching and learning in the District?

Itemized List of District Resources Required to Conduct Research
(if applicable to Research Proposal)

If the research requires the use of school and/or district resources (time, staff commitments, facilities, materials, etc.), then principal investigators must provide a detailed list of such items.[1]

	Resource/Item	Unit	Quantity	Reason for Item
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Acknowledgement
By signing below, you agree that the itemized list accurately reflects all resources, services, and materials needed from the District to conduct this research project. If additional resources are required, then it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to submit an updated list.

Failure to provide such a list could void the research agreement.

Date Submitted **Signature of Principal Investigator**

Summary of Data Gathering Instruments
(if applicable)

For each instrument (survey, questionnaire, interview, etc.) used to collect data, the principal investigator is required to provide the name of the instrument, its form, the intended subject, and the intended purpose of its findings.

Name of Instrument	Form (Method)	Intended Subject	Purpose of Instrument	Frequency of Administration
1. *After-School Learning Opportunities for Algebra Students*	*Survey*	*Students and Parents*	*Measure access to mathematic resources at home*	*One-Time Survey*
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

The principal investigator is to attach copies of all surveys, questionnaires, and instruments to be used when submitting an application to conduct research.

Date Submitted **Signature of Principal Investigator**

Request to Modify Approved Project or Proposal

(if applicable)

If an existing project or approved proposal has been modified from the original application, then the principal investigator is required to gain approval before changes are implemented. To initiate this process, you must submit this form to ASDIRB@allentownsd.org with the subject line "Request to Modify – ".

Explain how these changes will impact human subjects included in the study.

Explain how these changes will impact school and/or district resources.

Describe what changes or modifications have been made to your previously, approved project or proposal.

Date Submitted	**Signature of Principal Investigator**

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