

Conducting Research in the Natomas Unified School District

NUSD receives a range of requests to conduct research. Given the limitations of staff and student time, only some of these studies can be approved. Studies with the highest probability of approval are those that contribute to research in the area of student learning or achievement and can be used by the district to address an area of district need or interest.

Required Forms

Any organization, agency, or individual wishing to conduct research within the Natomas Unified School District must submit a Research Request Packet, which contains the Request to Conduct Research form, Data Sharing Agreement, and, if relevant, the Publications Use form. These forms can be obtained from the Research and Data Department (R&D).

District staff members who wish to conduct action research or cycles of inquiry within their own classroom(s) or school are not required to submit a Research Request Packet unless their research could be characterized as having any one of the following characteristics:

- Substantial changes to their instructional practices as a direct result of the research (i.e., new/different curriculum, re-allocation of large amounts of instructional time, etc.)
- The research is intended to be published or shared with outside entities
- The research would necessitate the collection and dissemination of student data to outside entities.

If the research meets any of the above criteria, district staff members must submit a completed Research Request Packet and await approval before initiating any research activities.

Researchers do not need to complete the Request for Publication Use form in the research request packet if they do not intend to identify the school district, any of the district's schools, or any individual affiliated with the school district in a publication. If the researcher has completed work on a publication ready manuscript and wishes to identify either the district, any of the district's schools, or individuals affiliated with the school district they would then submit the Request for Publication Use form with a copy of the final manuscript for review prior to publication. No findings from approved studies may be published that identify the district, a school, or an individual affiliated with the district until the researcher has received explicit approval from the school district to do so. Even if the district is not explicitly named, if the researcher provides sufficient context that the district could be reasonably identified in an implicit manner (e.g., "a mid-size, suburban school district in northern California with the following demographic breakdown...") then the researcher shall submit a request for publication use.

Review Process

Once R&D receives the completed Research Request Packet, it is reviewed for quality and completion. R&D will evaluate proposals on all of the following criteria:

1. Proposal includes well-formed research questions that address a district need or interest
2. Results will be directly useful to the district/schools
3. Research represents a novel contribution to the areas of student learning and achievement, or shows potential for improving district programs and strategies
4. Minimizes interruption of instruction with low demands on student and staff time
5. Sound researcher credential
6. Sound research methodology

If R&D determines that the research proposal is complete and sufficiently meets all criteria, the proposal will be forwarded to the relevant department(s) for further review and final consideration. As the primary function of R&D is to support district and school efforts, exceptions to this timeline cannot be made. Requests to expedite the review of research proposals will not be granted.

Notification

The researcher will be notified by e-mail of the district's decision regarding the research request. If a research proposal is not approved, the researcher should not expect the district to provide them with an explanation or advice on how to improve their proposals. District approval must be received before the researcher contacts individuals or schools to request their agreement to participate.

Please note that even if the district does approve the request, school, staff, student, and/or parent participation is voluntary. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to contact identified study participants to inform them of the study, gain their agreement, and make the necessary arrangements for the research study.

Research must be conducted according to the parameters of the research proposal as submitted and approved. ***Alterations constitute new, unapproved research.*** Alterations to study design, methods, or instruments would require that the researcher first notify R&D, cease all research activities within the district and return or destroy data/artifacts in accordance with direction from the district. The altered study would necessitate submission of a new Research Request Packet and approval for the entirety of the new, distinct study.

Data and Student Privacy

Some researchers request student-level data extracts from the district's student information system in their proposal. As such data extracts can be both labor intensive for district staff members and concern student privacy, researchers should understand that such requests will be weighed against their potential benefit to the district and students. Research requests that require data extraction services may be subject to a fee appropriate to the time and effort required to process the request.

Student level data extracts, if approved, will be delivered utilizing unique, anonymized IDs to protect student privacy. In rare cases where research activities provide a direct and substantial benefit to individual students that could not be obtained through other means, the district may consider partnering with the researcher and a third party service for identifiable data matching that ultimately results in an anonymized data file for use by researchers. In such cases, memorandums of understanding, signed by all relevant parties, would be required to ensure student privacy and the appropriate use of data.

Study Completion

The researcher is asked to provide the district and participants with a summary of research findings as soon as the study is completed. Research findings that identify, by name, the district, any of its schools, or individuals, cannot be issued or published without the required approvals as specified in the Publication Use form.

Request to Conduct Research Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question: Who must submit the Request to Conduct Research form?

Answer: Any organization, agency, or individual wishing to conduct a research study within the Natomas Unified School District must submit a Request to Conduct Research packet and receive district approval prior to implementing the study. NUSD employees must follow the same protocol as external researchers. Teachers who are conducting action research in their own classrooms with the sole purpose of improving their own instructional practice are not required to submit a research request. The district's internal criteria for action research are as follows:

1. Action research shall not render substantial changes to instructional practices (new/different curriculum, re-allocation of large amounts of instructional time, etc.)
2. Results/findings of action research are not primarily intended to be published or shared with outside entities.
3. Action research would not necessitate the collection and dissemination of student data to outside entities.

Question: What should be submitted with the Request to Conduct Research form?

Answer: The Request to Conduct Research packet should be accompanied by three (3) printed copies each of the research project abstract, timeline, and instruments of any tests, surveys, questionnaires, communications, etc. to be used in the study. The project abstract should include information pertaining to:

1. the research hypotheses or questions to be addressed by the study,
2. the nature and size of all student, staff, parent samples selected for the study,
3. the research methodology to be employed by the study,
4. statistical methods to be used in aggregating and analyzing study data, and
5. methods to be used to disseminate study results including the audience(s) to which study results will be provided.

Question: Should I submit a Request for Publication Use with my initial Request to Conduct Research form?

Answer: No, it should not be submitted with the initial packet because there would be no manuscript to review. If a researcher does not intend to identify the school district, any of the district's schools, or any individual affiliated with the school district in a publication, they do not need to complete the Request for Publication Use. If the researcher has completed work on a publication-ready manuscript and wishes to identify either the district, any of the district's schools, or individuals affiliated with the school district they would then submit the Request for Publication Use form with a copy of the final manuscript for review prior to publication. No findings from approved studies may be published that identify the district, a school, or an individual affiliated with the district until the researcher has received explicit approval from the school district to do so. Even if the district is not explicitly named, if the researcher provides sufficient context that the district could be reasonably identified in an implicit manner (e.g., "a mid-size suburban school district in northern California with the following demographic breakdown...") then the researcher shall submit a request for publication use.

Question: I didn't anticipate that the timeline for review of research proposals can be as long as 2 months. Can you expedite processing of my request?

Answer: No, unfortunately the review process can't be expedited. The Research and Evaluation Department's primary function is to support district and school efforts; as such, review of research proposals is a lower priority

function. Additionally, the review process often incorporates input and decisions from a variety of other departments with their own competing priorities and timelines.

Question: If my research proposal is not approved, will the district provide an explanation for the rejection?

Answer: No. Researchers should not expect the district to provide an explanation for why a proposal was not approved, nor should they expect the district to provide them with advice on how to improve their proposal.

Question: If my research proposal is not approved, may I resubmit it?

Answer: Yes, researchers may resubmit research proposals that were previously rejected. Researchers are strongly encouraged to examine the evaluation criteria and make changes to better fit the criteria before resubmitting.

Question: What assistance can the district provide in conducting a research study?

Answer: After a study is approved, the Research and Data Department will notify identified study participants of the study approval. However, please note that school or individual participant participation is voluntary. It is the responsibility of the researcher to contact identified study participants to inform them of the voluntary nature of the study and to make the necessary arrangements for the research study if they choose to participate.

Question: What is required after the study is completed?

Answer: The researcher will be asked to provide the district and study participants with a summary of research findings as soon as the study is completed. Please note: research findings cannot be issued or published that identify, by name, the district, any of its schools, or individuals without the required approvals as specified in the Request for Publication Use form.

Question: Who do I contact if I have any questions?

Answer: Please contact the Research and Data department at RD@natomasunified.org

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

In Natomas Unified School District (NUSD)

Study Title: _____

Researcher(s): _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Phone: () _____

Agency/Org: _____

Contact/Advisor: _____ Advisor's Phone: () _____

☐ I am a current employee of the Natomas Unified School District

Checklist for Review of Research Project: ☐ Packet includes Request to Conduct Research form (3 copies) ☐ Packet includes Signed Non-Disclosure Agreement (3 copies) ☐ Packet includes Research Study Abstract and Timeline (3 copies) ☐ Packet includes copies of all instruments, forms, and communications (3 copies) ☐ Abstract (pages _____) describes the research question(s) addressed by the study. ☐ Abstract (pages _____) describes the research methodology to be used. ☐ Abstract (pages _____) describes the extent of student/staff participation. ☐ Abstract (pages _____) describes the uses to which study results will be put. ☐ Abstract (pages _____) describes the study's benefits to the district and others.	Research Start Date: _____ Estimated Research Activities End Date: _____ Expected Date of Findings to NUSD: _____
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ASSURANCES (Please initial)

_____ 1. No changes will be made in the scope and/or structure of the study.

_____ 2. A copy of the final study will be submitted to NUSD and to each school site participating in the study.

_____ 3. No study findings will be published or released that identify by name, the district, its schools, students, or staff without the completion and approval of the Request for Publication Use Form.

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____
 (If applicable)

FOR DISTRICT USE ONLY			
Research & Data	Reviewer: _____	Date Reviewed: _____	Recommended: Yes / No
Relevant Dept.	Reviewer: _____	Date Reviewed: _____	Recommended: Yes / No
Cabinet Member	Reviewer: _____	Date Reviewed: _____	Recommended: Yes / No

REQUEST FOR PUBLICATION USE

Natomas Unified School District (NUSD)

Study Title: _____

Study Author(s): _____

Publication Venue: _____

Expected Date of Publication: _____ Research and Approval Date Requested by: _____

Please identify below the individual(s), school(s), or district requested to appear in publication (attach additional sheet if needed).

	Name/Title	Department or School
☐ Person(s)		
☐ School(s)		
☐ District		

Please ensure:

- ☐ This form has been completed and the assurance below has been signed.
- ☐ A publication-ready copy of the study is included.

Assurance

My signature below acknowledges that no study findings will be published or released which identify, by name, the district or any of its schools or individuals without the required approval of the district Superintendent or Designee.

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

FOR DISTRICT USE ONLY			
Research & Data	Reviewer:	Date Reviewed:	Recommended: Yes / No
Relevant Dept.	Reviewer:	Date Reviewed:	Recommended: Yes / No
CAO or designee	Reviewer:	Date Reviewed:	Recommended: Yes / No

NUSD Superintendent or Designee

Use of district, school, or individual identification, as presented in the publication-ready copy submitted, has been:

- ☐ Granted
 - ☐ Not Granted
- Name _____ Date _____ Signature _____