The Dallas ISD supports high quality research that address 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 to- 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 seven-member team, comprised of a coordinator and six evaluation researchers (including the chair) who review proposals submitted to the district.

During the 2016-17 school year, board members made several changes to refine the RRB website, application forms, and proposal submission and review procedures which further improved the quality of submitted proposals and the speed with which researchers are informed about the board’s decision. Board members also implemented new research application and data request fees to align with other large district’s fees and fee schedules. In addition, board members were able to collaborate with the Dallas ISD IT department to establish a procedure for requesting and creating secured FTP sites for fulfilling internal and external data request. Furthermore, board members have cooperated with multiple internal Dallas ISD departments as well as RAND Corporation to assist in the successful completion of the Wallace Foundation Social Emotional Learning (SEL) grant.

**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.

Research studies that require secondary data must complete a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) after the research proposal is approved by the Dallas ISD RRB. School or district staff cannot provide data to external researchers. Researchers need to request a DSA template after the RRB has approved their research proposal.

**Proposal Review**

For studies taking place during the 2016-17 school year, 47 proposals were submitted between May 2016 and April 2017 (Table 1).

Out of the 47 proposals submitted, the RRB approved (includes proposals approved with condition) 39 or 83.0% of proposed studies while rejecting 6.4% or 3 proposals. Researchers for the remaining 5 (10.6%) proposals withdrew their submission for various
reasons. Out of the 39 approved proposals, 17 or 43.6% submitted Data Sharing Agreements requesting secondary data.

Table 1: Proposals Submitted for SY 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed*</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Researchers withdrew their proposals

There are several reasons why proposals were rejected. Reasons listed below are some of the most common reasons.
- No clear and direct educational value to the district
- Did not comply with state and federal laws (e.g., FERPA and 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 (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 include graduate research projects, including those of current district employees. Examples of approved research projects are listed below, including the research organization conducting the study.

**District-sponsored studies**

*Enhanced SEL Initiative* (RAND Corp)

*Evaluating DISD’s Personalized Learning Initiative* (Southern Methodist University)

*An Evaluation of CS Curriculum Implementation* (Texas Tech University)

**External studies**

*Study of Title I Schoolwide and Targeted Assistance Programs* (American Institutes of Research)

*Impact of a Social Emotional Health Curriculum on Middle School Students* (Momentous Institute)

*Middle School Social Emotional Health* (Momentous Institute)

*National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), 2017-18* (US Dept of Education (NCES))


*Study of Title I Schoolwide and Targeted Assistance Programs* (Rice University)

*National Study of English Learners and Digital Learning Resources (NSELD)* (Westat)

**Graduate research projects**

*The Experiences of At-Risk African American Males in an Online Credit Recovery Program* (Concordia University Portland)

*ESL Achievement and online reading programs: The impact of system 44 on secondary TELPAS scores* (Dallas Baptist University)

*Case Study: Student Culture-Identity and Student Learning Experiences among First Generation Hispanics* (NorthCentral University)

**RRB Expectations for 2017-18**

The Dallas ISD RRB will continue to refine its processes and procedures during the 2017-18 school year. The RRB will also be investigating the use of automated, online research application submissions to improve the overall submission process.

For more information, please contact Research Review Board at research@dallisd.org.

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