

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Office of Research,

Assessment and Evaluation

Policy and Guidelines for Conducting Educational Research in the Boston Public Schools

Overview

The basic purpose of the Boston Public Schools (BPS) is to educate children. All other objectives, however worthy, are only secondary to this goal. It is the policy of the school system, therefore, to authorize only those research projects that could be of benefit to the BPS when a review shows that the subject area being studied is aligned with the goals of improved teaching and learning while not unduly taking away from instructional time and BPS resources. Approval by the researcher's IRB and/or the building administrators of BPS schools does not guarantee approval by RAE.

All research activities must be coordinated through the Office of Research, Assessment and Evaluation (RAE). In some instances approval is not required for the use of data and summary statistics available in public records such as on the BPS public Internet site: (<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org>), in published paper and electronic reports, and hard-copy listings of aggregated student and staff data. In these instances, the researcher may use the data presented in the reports as long as the source is cited and any modifications or analysis done by the researcher is clearly delineated.

Who May Conduct Research

Any academic or professional organization, or any individual doing master's or doctoral work may submit a proposal to conduct research. Doctoral and master's candidates must submit written evidence that their proposed research has been approved by their University's IRB and will be supervised by their advisor(s).

Parent/Guardian Permission Requirements

In addition to approval by RAE and the applicable headmaster/principal, express permission of the parents/guardians (or the student if 18 years of age or older) is required when the following research activities are proposed:

- i) Student interviews, surveys, or assessments. Certain student surveys that are developed or administered through the use of funds received from the U.S. Department of Education may require additional safeguards. *See BPS Supt Circular LGL-15:*
<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/node/190> and/or
- ii) Classroom observation that results in obtaining individually identifiable student or teacher information.

The informed, written parental consent is a requirement of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232h; 34 CFR Part 98) and Massachusetts Record Regulations (603 CMR 23.00).

Classroom observations, or interviews/surveys with teachers/administrators in school that do not result in data that would identify any student do not require parent/guardian permission. However, copies of these instruments must be provided with the application materials.

Note that for parent/guardian approval, RAE requires “active consent” of the parent/guardian. This means that the parent/guardian has received a letter and has completed and returned a written form giving permission for the child to participate. No child may participate in the absence of the signed form.

The permission letter to the parent/guardian must: 1) describe the purposes, procedures and content of the research, including a statement of any possible risks; 2) indicate the types of activities that the student will engage in when participating in the research, the amount of participation time by the student and the start and end dates of the study; 3) describe, if applicable, the data elements that will be collected from each student and indicate how the researcher will keep this information confidential; and 4) identify all individuals responsible for the research, including their institutional affiliation, by providing complete contact information including an address and phone number. Please use the language preferred by the parent/guardian in the request letter with the accompanying English version.

What Needs to Be Submitted

The following materials must be included in the application.

- A. A signed, original, completed *Application to Conduct Research in the Boston Public Schools* (see copy attached).
- B. An executive summary of the proposal – three (3) copies
- C. A full proposal - three (3) copies – with page numbers on the bottom of each page - that sufficiently addresses the following elements:
 - i) *Impetus for Research*. State why this research is being conducted. **If it is the basis for a thesis or dissertation, include a letter of approval and commitment to supervision from faculty advisor(s) along with the college/university Internal Review Board approval notice.** If applicable, indicate the source and amount of funds that support the research.
 - ii) *Statement of Problem*. Describe both your reasons for choosing this research topic and the particular educational problem being addressed by the study.
 - iii) *Review of Literature*. Discuss the results of previous research which has addressed this problem and how the proposed research will contribute to knowledge in this area.
 - iv) *Statement of Hypotheses*. Specifically state the research hypotheses, or indicate (if hypotheses are not appropriate) the research questions and objectives of the project.
 - v) *Research Design and Procedures*. Delineate the methodology which will be used to test the *hypotheses*. This delineation should include: (1) a description and justification of all statistical or other data analysis; (2) copies of all data collection instruments; and (3) a detailed description of the procedures and operations to be used for data collection, including the approximate anticipated amount of time subjects will spending on tasks and when the activities will occur such as homeroom, after school, at home, off-site, etc). Provisions to ensure that all research activities will involve minimal intrusions upon the administrative and instructional processes should be clearly described. **NON-SUBMISSION OF DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND SURVEYS MAY DELAY APPROVAL.**

If the research requests existing student or staff data please be as specific as possible as to what data are being requested (the appropriate box must be checked on the application).

Note: a charge will be levied for creating or accessing data files.

- vi) *Protection of Human Rights*. Delineate the procedures which will be used to ensure that the rights of research participants to confidentiality and freedom from harm are protected. If prior parental approval is required, include a form letter to be used to obtain written consent from parents allowing their children to participate in research activities. All conditions should be clearly specified if the research involves individual children. If the home language is other than English, the researcher is responsible for providing translations. Parental (or student if 18 years of age or older) permission forms, if required, must be returned from every parent and kept on file by the researcher. If the study continues into a subsequent school year, permission forms must be collected again from the parent/guardian. Only under exceptional circumstances may parental permission be sought for multiple years of study. RAE may ask for signed copies of the permission forms for auditing purposes after the commencement of the study

- vii) *Impact of Results*. Explicitly state the impact and expected benefits of the research to education in general, and usefulness in promoting educational excellence in the Boston Public Schools. In particular, the researcher should indicate how this research will benefit the schools and improve teaching and learning.

Other Research Requirements

If reference is made to the Boston Public Schools as the source of the data in the study, then approval must be received from RAE prior to the dissemination of any report. Otherwise, no reference can be made to the participation of the Boston Public Schools in the study.

Note that if the research project extends beyond the completion date indicated in the *Application to Conduct Research*, a written application must be submitted for RAE approval. In addition, it is at the discretion of the principal(s) or headmaster(s) to extend the research project beyond the scheduled completion date. The researcher must submit copies of the signed *Research Proposal Review Form(s)* in the new academic year if the research is conducted past the first academic year of the research.

Review Process

- Step 1.* To initiate the research review process the researcher must submit to RAE the information and documents outlined in the *What Needs to Be Submitted* section of this document.
- Step 2.* Upon receipt of the complete sets of materials, RAE will review the proposal to determine whether or not it satisfies the criteria outlined in this document. RAE reserves the right to require changes in the research design, procedures, or times when it will be conducted by schools prior to its approval. Complete applications received on or before the first of the month will usually have a decision rendered by end of the second month. For example, a complete *Application to Conduct Research* that is submitted on or before October 1 will generally be approved or disapproved by November 30.
- Step 3.* If the proposal passes this review, it is the responsibility of the researcher to submit copies of the research executive summary along with a *Research Proposal Review Form* to the appropriate headmaster(s) or principal(s) of each school where the study is to be conducted for their approval and signature.

All copies of the signed *Research Proposal Review Forms* from the schools must be returned directly to RAE. Only if the principal(s)/headmaster(s) are willing to participate in the study can the research be conducted in a given school. Initial approval by RAE does not ensure that selected schools will be willing or able to participate.

Step 4. After all forms have been submitted and approved, the researcher may begin the study. Once the study is completed, a copy of the final research report must be filed with RAE; it is also customary to provide a copy to participating schools and/or programs. Whenever feasible, the researcher should visit the school(s) to explain the findings to the principal(s) and headmasters(s) and other school staff.

Step 5. If you make substantive changes to a project after it has begun, such as requesting additional data, or a change in participating groups/schools, you must submit:

- Cover letter;
- Application (with the Amendment to study box checked); and
- Amended proposal that highlights what changed, either using a copy of the original proposal with typewritten annotations, or a letter documenting what has changed by making reference to the original page numbers and sections.

Correspondence

Please direct all inquiries and mail or hand deliver required materials to:

Mrs. Regina Senier

Office of Research, Assessment and Evaluation

Boston Public Schools

26 Court Street, 6th Floor

Boston, MA 02108; Tel: 617-635-9450; Email: rc069@boston.k12.ma.us

EMAIL OR FAX COPIES OF APPLICATIONS ARE NOT PERMITTED.

Application to Conduct Research in the Boston Public Schools

Instructions: Please complete and submit this form with three (3) copies of your executive summary and research proposal (including all study instruments and permission forms).

Name of Principal Researcher: _____ Highest Degree: _____

Institutional Affiliation: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-Mail: _____@_____

Title of Study: _____

Topic of Study: _____

Check if applicable:

- Amendment to study approved on ____ / ____ / ____
 Extension of Time request for study approved on ____ / ____ / ____ (if known)

Reason for Study:

- Academic: __ Graduate, __ Doctoral, __ Post Doctoral
 Professional
 Grant Application: Amount of Grant Sought: _____

Name of Grantor: _____

Nature of Study (check all that apply):

- Classroom Observation Staff/Teacher Interviews/Surveys
 Student Interviews/Surveys Student Assessment
 Student Records that are covered under Mass Student Record Regulations
 Other (please specify): _____

Subjects of Study (check all that apply):

- Students Teachers Administrators
Grade Level(s): _____ Other _____

Anticipated Start Date: _____ Anticipated End Date: _____

Certification:

I have read and understand all the Policy and Guidelines for Conducting Educational Research in the Boston Public Schools, including confidentiality of student records and ethical treatment of human subjects. I agree to adhere to and be bound by all requirements outlined in the Policy and Guidelines

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (Print): _____

For RAE use only:

REQUEST NO: _____