



Guidelines and Procedures for Conducting Research Affiliated with Beaufort County Schools

This document is intended to provide an overview regarding the policies, procedures and approval processes for conducting any type of research within the Beaufort County School District.

The Beaufort County School District is committed to upholding the highest standards in educational research, including full compliance with ethical and legal codes of conduct involving human subjects. The following guidelines and approval process applies to all teachers, staff, students, other personnel, or researchers outside of the Beaufort County School District interested in conducting any type of research either within the District or in any Beaufort County school.

Ethical Responsibility

Any person, group or organization engaged in research within the Beaufort County School District or in any one of the District's schools, are expected to meet the highest standards of integrity, accuracy, objectivity and intellectual honesty. This includes appropriate regard for human subjects, and full compliance with local, state and federal laws.

Researchers are expected to be knowledgeable of, and comply with, the appropriate ethical codes that govern education research. These include the code of ethics outlined by the *American Educational Research Association (AERA)* and those by the Society for Research in Child Development. Both of which provide guidance to those conducting educational research.

Confidentiality/Privacy and Access

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. The Beaufort County School District is the custodian of confidential, proprietary and private information. Individuals who have access to such information are expected to be familiar and to comply with applicable laws, District policies, directives and agreements pertaining to access, use, protection and disclosure of such information. Please see the resource section listed below for complete information on FERPA policies.

Beaufort County School District Employees

Student/School Based Research to Improve Instructional Practices

Teachers may gather and analyze data at any time if the data are being used solely for the improvement of their own professional practice and if the collection of such data would be part of ordinary instructional procedures for their own students. Research of this nature should have the approval of the school Principal, but does not require District approval.

Research Conducted as part of a College or University Degree Program or Class

Most often, research conducted by District employees is part of a requirement for a class or degree program falls under the category of *action research*. Mills (2003) defined action research as *"any systematic inquiry conducted by teachers, administrators, counselors, or others with a vested interest in the teaching and learning process, for the purpose of gathering data about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how students learn"* (p. 5).

It is the responsibility of the individual conducting the research to work closely with their professor to determine if the proposed research project 1) involves a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or to contribute to generalizable knowledge, or 2) is necessary to fulfill requirements for a master's thesis, doctoral dissertation, or other research requirements of the University. If so, the research will likely require approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Anything beyond action research that involves human subjects, will require approval from the University's IRB. A human subject is defined as: *A living individual about whom an*

investigator conducting research obtains 1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual or 2) identifiable private information.

The Beaufort County School District expects college and university faculty members to work with their students to develop, review, edit and obtain institutional approval of proposals **before** they are submitted to the district for review. Individuals who are submitting proposals to meet requirements for a degree program at a college or university must submit documentation that their proposals have been reviewed by the institutional review board (IRB) of the college or university and either approved or granted exempt status by the IRB. The granting of exempt status by an institutional review board *does not* relieve the researcher of the ethical responsibility to obtain informed consent from participants.

Researchers Outside of the Beaufort County School District

The Beaufort County School District will work to accommodate researchers from outside the district if their proposals meet district criteria. The district requires that educational research projects conform to ethical standards. Therefore, the district requires researchers, including its own employees, to obtain written parent and/or student permission when using student data and/or work samples in class presentations, academic papers, conference presentations, publications and similar activities. The District will review research proposals that **meet the following approval criteria**:

- The research does not interfere with the educational programs of the district.
- The research respects the privacy, informed consent and due process rights of students and employees.
- The researcher agrees to provide the district with a copy of the completed research.
- These procedures and criteria are in place to protect students and employees of the district. While the district welcomes research studies, it is important to note that failure to adhere to district policy and procedures will result in denial of the proposal.

Researchers outside of the Beaufort County School District must also undergo a mandatory criminal background check required by District policy. Researchers must complete the volunteer application. This application may be found on the BCSD website, under "volunteers".

Procedures to Submit a Research Project for Review

After reviewing this document and the critical resource information listed below, a researcher may complete Form # IS-42 E(1) : **Application Request for Research Project** and submit it to Instructional Services for review via fax at (843) 322-5444 or email to ada.mcdonald@beaufort.k12.sc.us After the application is reviewed for approval , you will be notified via email at the address listed on the application.

Critical Resources and Information for all those conducting research in Beaufort County Schools

- AERA Code of Ethics
[http://www.aera.net/Portals/38/docs/About_AERA/CodeOfEthics\(1\).pdf](http://www.aera.net/Portals/38/docs/About_AERA/CodeOfEthics(1).pdf)
- IRB Guidelines
http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/archive/irb/irb_introduction.htm
- Online Research Ethics Course:
http://ori.dhhs.gov/education/products/montana_round1/research_ethics.html
- NIH online training course Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research
<http://researchethics.od.nih.gov/>
- Society for Research in Child Development
http://www.srcd.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=68
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html>



Application Request for Research Project

NAME:	DATE OF PROPOSAL:								
School/Location:	Principal/Supervisor								
Email address:	University Professor:								
SCHOOL(S), CLASSROOM or LOCATION IN WHICH PROJECT IS BEING CONDUCTED:									
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">APPROVAL RECEIVED FROM PRINCIPAL OR IMMEDIATE</td> <td style="width: 10%;">YES</td> <td style="width: 10%;">NO</td> <td style="width: 50%;">RESEARCH START DATE:</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:</td> </tr> </table>		APPROVAL RECEIVED FROM PRINCIPAL OR IMMEDIATE	YES	NO	RESEARCH START DATE:				ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:
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			ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:						

Research Project Description

1. Title of Research Project:
2. Describe the <u>primary purpose</u> of the research as well as the measurable objectives of the project. Examples: "The aim of this study is to _____ (Determine/Measure/Gather information on/ Investigate the consequences/Test the theory/Analyze the impact/Develop deeper understanding of _____).
3. Provide a <u>brief description</u> of the research and how it will address improvement of educational policy, programs or practices:
4. How does the Research Project align with the strategic mission and vision of the BCSD, a specific school or classroom? If a section is not applicable to your Research Project, indicate N/A. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> District/School strategic plan and educational goals to improve student achievement: <input type="checkbox"/> Research-based strategies related to improving districts, schools, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and improving learning for all students: <input type="checkbox"/> Improvement of learning for all students in the targeted student population(s): <input type="checkbox"/> Standards-based instruction and assessment, (SC State Standards, College-Career Ready etc.)

- Professional development and support for instructional or support staff:
- Supervision and evaluation of instructional staff (and non-instructional staff, if applicable):
- Diverse learning needs of students:
- Use of technologies designed to enhance teaching and learning,
- Creating a safe, nurturing and orderly school environment that is conducive to learning for all students
- Engaging Parents, Community or Business partners

Data Requests: Please describe in detail any data or information that you are requesting from the District. This would include requests to administer surveys, conduct observations etc. Please be as specific as possible.

Other Relevant Comments:

My signature below certifies that:

- I have received a copy of the *Guidelines and Procedures for Conducting Research Affiliated with Beaufort County Schools* and that I will comply fully with the policies and procedures outlined as part of my research
- I have reviewed all relevant policies and procedures as outlined in that document related to responsible conduct in research including those related to ethical conduct and confidentiality.
- I understand that while working as a researcher under the supervision of a Beaufort County School District employee, I may have access to records and files that contain confidential information and that it is the employer's obligation to protect the rights of these files and/or individuals and that
- I will follow the operating practices and procedures required while handling these records and will not inappropriately access or disclose this information.
- I acknowledge that if I misrepresent or omit any information as requested on this application I have jeopardized my continued association with Beaufort County School District and is cause for forfeiture of consideration

Researcher Name: _____
Print or Type name

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Reviewed by:

Signature: _____ Date: _____
 Principal (if applicable)

Signature: _____ Date: _____
 Chief Instructional Services Officer

Disposition: APPROVED DENIED