

Conducting Research in Jefferson County Public Schools

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) has a long history of promoting research within the district as a tool to promote student success. Both internal and external research activities are conducted continuously throughout the district to help students, teachers, support staff, and administrators **make evidence-based decisions**.

The Research Department not only conducts its own research activities, but acts as a **clearinghouse for external research initiatives**. The research requests from universities and other third parties has continued to increase each year without additional staff and resources in our office. While we value and will support external entities conducting research that aligns with district priorities and needs, our primary goal remains to produce high quality strategic data that can be used in-house. The Research Department and JCPS IRB Committee will screen all research requests six times a year (January, March, June, July, September, and November). Note: JCPS IRB Committee may make modifications to the IRB meeting schedule if needed by the Committee Members.

The priority of the request approval will be based on:

1. Alignment with our JCPS Strategic Plan/Research Agenda
2. Direct benefit to JCPS students, staff, and/or community
3. Appropriateness for public school settings
4. Concern for confidentiality of individuals, students, families, schools, and work units
5. Amount of intrusiveness of the research activities
6. Time and effort required of staff and district resources
7. Reporting back in a useful and timely manner to assist in our district's decision-making

Individuals wishing to conduct research within the district are invited to enter a Research Request using the **Data Request Management System (DRMS)**. The Data Request Management Systems can be found at our website: <https://assessment.jefferson.kyschools.us/drms/>. This system was created to log all pertinent documents and communications which occur between individuals, organizations and universities and the JCPS Research Department. To access the DRMS, an individual must create an account that allows initial access to the system and begin the research application process. Once an account is created, an individual can view the status of an application, make changes, add components, and communicate with JCPS staff assigned to the data request. Requested data can be also downloaded from this secure site.

The request approval does not guarantee that a school or any individuals will agree to participate—it simply means that all human subject protection aspects of the research process are in place. It will be the responsibility of the researcher to demonstrate why participation in the research has more value than a burden to schools. Although the JCPS Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves research requests, student, parents, teachers, principals, and school councils have final authority to participate or not to participate in any external research. ALL external research (including surveys) MUST have the permission from the JCPS Research Department BEFORE our schools are approached by a researcher, university, or organization.

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JCPS has established an IRB committee to review each research proposal. Committee members have a wide range of experiences and represent multiple departments to assist in making an informed decision. Some items that will assist the committee in making a timely decision are:

- Approved IRB from the researcher's institution (must have prior to JCPS IRB Review).
- A copy of all consent forms. If working with a special population, the consent forms need to be written where participants clearly understand their participation is voluntary and the purpose of the research. For example, all consent forms should be written in a students' home language if the language is not English.
- If your proposal qualifies for using "opt-out" parental consent, there should be at least two methods of parental notification (typically a school-wide such as through a school newsletter or website and a letter taken home by every potential participant explaining the "opt-out" process.)
- A clear description of how the participants' data will be kept confidential, secure, and destroyed upon completion of study. If you will be asking for a student level data file, we will remove all primary identifiers prior to sharing the file.
- A copy of all survey items or question protocols (if being used). Ideally, the researcher should review the survey data already available (for example - JCPS Comprehensive School Survey or KY TELL Survey) prior to asking to do their own survey.
- Please note that surveys will not be approved to be administered (except in extremely rare circumstances) during the KDE/JCPS Testing window (typically the middle/end of May) and the two weeks prior.
- All efforts should be made to minimize disruptions and the time being requested of JCPS personnel. Studies that involve Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools will be more heavily scrutinized under these criteria.
- If the researcher will be doing observations or working directly with students, they will need to have a volunteer background check completed.
(<https://apps.jefferson.kyschools.us/Volunteer/Documents/SchoolVolRecCheckForm-rev.pdf>)
- For JCPS employees: If at all possible, you should choose participants that do not work at the same site as the researcher, especially if you are in an evaluative role. Although sometimes this is unavoidable, potential conflicts of interests need to be minimized.

Please note that if your research is approved, then the approval is valid for one year from the date of the approval. If you are doing a multi-year study, please plan ahead to keep your IRB current.

If you have questions, feel free to contact Joe Prather, (502)485-7073,
joseph.prather@jefferson.kyschools.us