



Conducting Research in Atlanta Public Schools (APS) Frequently Asked Questions

I plan to distribute a survey or interview a small sample of APS staff. Do I need to complete an APS Research Request Application?

Yes. All research, requiring either primary or administrative secondary data, conducted within an APS school or with APS staff must be approved by the APS Research Review Committee regardless of the sample size and whether the project has received an exemption from the researcher's institutional review board. The APS Research Review Committee does not provide exemptions.

My college or university requires a letter of commitment from the school district prior to Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Can I complete the APS Research Application without IRB approval?

Yes. The APS Research Review Committee recognizes that many colleges and universities will not grant IRB approval prior to the school districts approval to conduct research. In this case, researchers may submit their APS Research Application with a letter of support from their dissertation committee chair on official university stationery. The research review committee will review your application and provide a response within eight weeks of the submission date. All approvals to conduct research will be conditional pending IRB approval. Once IRB approval is granted, the research must submit a copy of the IRB approval letter to research_screening@atlanta.k12.ga.us for full approval to conduct research in APS.

What do you mean by "direct benefit to the district"?

External research proposals must demonstrate clear and direct educational value to the district. The potential direct benefit to APS must outweigh demands on district resources, particularly on staff and student time. APS strongly encourages and gives priority to external research studies that contribute to or complement the district's research agenda and strategic plan.

The website states the research screening process may take up to eight weeks from the date of submission. Does APS offer an expedited process for reviewing applications?

No. The APS Research Review Committee accepts research applications on a rolling basis throughout the calendar year. Due to the large number of requests for research, we cannot offer an expedited process for reviewing applications. The eight week timeline provide the research review committee time to thoroughly review each proposal and supporting documents and provide a decision.

May I contact APS central office department level leaders to inquire about their support to sponsor proposed research studies?

Yes. The Office of Research and Evaluation supports the use of research as a way to drive decision-making in APS. Hence, we encourage researchers to align studies with APS priorities so district leaders can sue the results of research to further the individual goals of the department. Please not that having an APS sponsor does not guarantee approval of the research application.

May I recruit APS staff, students, and/or families for participation in my research study while my application is undergoing review?

No. Researchers may not solicit participation from schools, students, or their families without having a formal letter of approval from the APS Research Review Committee. However, in advance of conducting research a researcher may contact an APS central office department level leader to ensure the research study is aligned with APS priorities.

How long are approvals for research granted?

Approval to conduct research in APS is valid for one calendar year from the date of approval, unless the time period specified by the research is shorter. Researchers whose studies will extend beyond one year must apply for an extension of research at least six weeks before the approval will expire. At the end of one year from the date of approval, research activities must cease unless researchers request and are granted an extension.

Does approval by the APS Research Review Committee guarantee the researcher will be able to access APS schools?

No. Approval by the APS Research Review Committee to conduct research in APS does not guarantee access to any particular school, group, individual, or data source. A principal may choose for their school not to participate in the research and may withdraw the school from participation at any time. It is the researcher's responsibility to reach out to principal to gain their approval prior to initiating research activities. The researcher must provide the principal with the APS Research Review Committee approval letter when recruiting schools to participate in research.

Can APS staff assist the researcher with recruiting research study participants?

No. When recruiting school-based staff to participate in research (i.e., Assistant Principals, Counselors, Teachers, etc.), researchers may not ask principals to assist them in identifying and recruiting school staff to participate in their study. At the principal's discretion, researchers may post flyers in the staff lounge, distribute flyers in staff mailboxes, or email staff for recruitment purposes. Generally, school staff email addresses are located on the school website. School staff may choose not to participate in a research study, even though the study has been approved by the principal. When recruiting students to participate in research, researchers may not ask administrators, teachers, or other school staff to assist them in identifying and recruiting students to participate in their study. At the principal's discretion, researchers may post flyers in appropriate locations in the school or meet with parent groups to recruit students. Please note that parent/guardian consent does not require a student to participate in a research study. Active assent from the student is also required; however, students who want to participate in a study may not do so without parent/guardian written consent.

Do researchers need to pass a criminal background check to conduct research in APS schools?

Yes. Researchers that are collecting primary data on APS schools (e.g., student interviews, classroom observations, etc.) must be fingerprinted and clear criminal background check through the Office of Safety and Security – Atlanta Public Schools Police Department prior to beginning research activities. In accordance with [Board Policy GAK \(1\)](#), the fee for the criminal background check is the responsibility of the researcher. More information about criminal background checks can be found on the [Office of Safety & Security website](#). Researchers should not contact the Office of Safety and Security to arrange an appointment for fingerprinting prior to obtaining written approval from the APS Research Review Committee to conduct research in APS.

What is the appeal process for denied research applications?

The APS Research Review Committee does not have a formal appeal process for denied research applications. Applications that are denied by the research review committee are deemed by the committee as having serious issues that likely cannot be addressed with a resubmitted application. Researchers whose applications are rejected are not encouraged to resubmit an application. Should a researcher believe their study can be revised to address the issues outlined by the committee in the decision letter, the resubmission should only occur after every point in the decision letter is addressed.