

# POLICY

SOMERSET COUNTY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION

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<b>Subject:</b> Authorization for Research Studies, <b>Questionnaires and Surveys</b>	<b>Date Revised:</b> May 16, 2006 <b>Date Approved:</b> November 19, 2002 June 20, 2006 <b>Effective Date:</b> November 19, 2002 June 20, 2006

## 1. PURPOSE

The Board of Education recognizes that responsible research is necessary to evaluate and improve school programs. The Board further expects that outside agencies may approach the Board of Education for permission to conduct research projects and surveys. The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to protect the privacy of students, parents and employees and to balance and protect the rights of individuals to privacy and the obligation to conduct research for the benefit of all children.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

- A. Research Study – Research is considered to be a formal, intensive, and systematic structure of investigation. Sound research employs the scientific or problem-solving attitude and method.
- B. Questionnaire – A list of planned, written questions related to a particular topic, with space provided for indicating the response to each question, intended for submission to a number of persons for reply; commonly used in normative-survey studies in the measurement of attitudes and opinions.
- C. Survey – An investigation of a field to discover current practices, trends, and/or norms; may or not include recommendations based on the data gathered.

## 3. POLICY

- A. The Board of Education believes that no student enrolled in Somerset County Public schools should be the unwilling or unknowing subject of any research study unless all activities are approved in advance.
- B. **Informed Consent** - No research project involving students that requires home and family information or identifies individual students by name or code shall be approved without informed parental consent. Informed parental consent includes furnishing the parent the following:
  - (1) A description of the data to be collected, maintained or released.
  - (2) The names and positions of those by whom the data may be collected, maintained and to whom it may be released.

(3) The purpose for the collection, maintenance or release of the data.

(4) An opportunity to preview questionnaires and surveys if desired.

**C. Research Study Permission** –Any research study or similar type of activity conducted in the school system by anyone must have the following three approvals:

(1) The written authorization of the Superintendent of Schools;

(2) The written authorization of the principal(s) of the participating school(s); and

(3) The written and informed consent of the parent(s) or legal guardian or eligible student if 18 years of age or older.

The Board of Education forbids any research study, instructional program, or courses which include questionnaires or surveys that ask student questions, which might reveal potentially criminal or immoral activity.

**D. General Requirements** – The following factors are to be considered by the Superintendent and principal (s) prior to authorization of the research:

(1) Burden on human resources and facilities.

(2) The technical soundness of the research design in that it follows the American Psychological Association (APA) format.

(3) The appropriateness of the research topic for support in the public school setting.

(4) The availability of research sites and subjects of the kind requested.

(5) The nature and amount of interruption requires to participate.

(6) The kinds of background data on subjects required for the proposed study and the kinds of information of a personal nature to be secured from the subjects themselves.

(7) The kind and number of data-gathering procedures or instruments to be used in the study.

(8) The need for the schools to safeguard procedures or instruments to be used in the study.

(9) The benefit of the proposed research to Somerset County Public Schools.

**E. Eligibility for Consideration** – The following studies will be considered for approval.

(1) Proposals for research activities originating within the school system.

(2) Unsolicited research proposals submitted by external third parties which are of particular educational interest and value to Somerset County Public Schools.

- (3) Proposals for master's thesis and dissertation research originating from Somerset County Public Schools professional staff studies.
- (4) Proposals for dissertation research originating from persons other than Somerset County Public Schools' employees.

**F. Studies Which Will Not Be Approved** – The following studies will not be considered for approval:

- (1) Studies below the doctorate level by persons who are not Somerset County Public Schools' employees.
- (2) Studies whose research designs and or methodologies do not meet the standards or requirements listed in section C.
- (3) Independent studies not associated with an institution of higher learning or an institution/agency/service with whom Somerset County Public Schools partners.

**G. When Informed Consent is Not Required** – Informed consent is not required when the Board of Education acting as a whole through the Superintendent of Schools, or the Superintendent of Schools, requires information or evaluation of system programs, materials, activities or issues which necessitate a staff-conducted research study for the purpose of school or program improvement.