

A Handbook for Research Procedures



CMCSS Research Committee Contact:
The Director of Accountability
at assessment@cmcoss.net



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Introduction

This handbook has been developed to guide and support individuals and institutions interested in conducting research within the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS). Our goal is to foster meaningful research by providing a structured environment that utilizes established tools and methodologies, ensuring quality and consistency in research practices across our district.

Researchers will find essential information about the standards and practices expected in our schools within this handbook. It is critical for all researchers to understand that the CMCSS Research Committee plays a key role in protecting the privacy of students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Additionally, we are committed to preserving the integrity of our instructional environment, maintaining classroom stability, and safeguarding valuable instructional time.

Therefore, we invite all interested individuals and institutions to familiarize themselves with this handbook, as it outlines the necessary information, guidelines, and standards for conducting research within the CMCSS. Together, we can ensure the advancement of research while prioritizing the well-being and educational experience of our students and educators.

Thank you,
Director of Accountability, CMCSS

Part I. Procedures and Policies for Conducting Research¹

1. **Initial Contact:** All interested researchers must first contact the CMCSS Director of Accountability at assessment@cmcss.net. Use "Research Request" as the subject line in all emails.
2. **Preparation:** Researchers must thoroughly review the '[Approval of Request to Conduct Research Procedure](#)' (INS-P014) and this [handbook \(INS-P014A\)](#) before submitting a request.
3. **Pre-Approval Contact Restriction:** Researchers or individuals responsible for data collection must not contact any school personnel about the proposed research until they have obtained written permission from the CMCSS Research Committee via the Director of Accountability.
4. **Controlled Contact:** The Director of Accountability will initiate all contacts with the populations the researcher intends to access.
5. **Compliance with District Goals:** The CMCSS Research Committee will not approve research or surveys that conflict with district goals, policies, or disrupt the regular school schedule.
6. **Data Collection Standards:** Data collection approval will not be granted for any data unrelated to the study's research questions or that contravenes state or federal laws.
7. **Principal Authority:** Principals retain the right to accept or deny research, surveys, or projects in their school even if approved by the CMCSS Research Committee.
8. **Research Value Requirement:** All proposals must demonstrate potential to contribute meaningful insights into the teaching-learning process.
9. **Redundant Data:** Requests to collect data that is already publicly accessible will be denied. Researchers are encouraged to review existing data sources, such as the [Tennessee Educator Survey](#), the [Tennessee State Report Card](#), and [TDOE Data Downloads](#), prior to submitting a request.

10. **Research and Survey Restrictions:**
 - a. Student involvement should be minimized to reduce classroom disruptions.
 - b. No school may participate in more than one research project per year that involves educator and/or student involvement.
11. **External Surveys:** Surveys conducted on behalf of external agencies, organizations, or individuals require CMCSS Research Committee approval regarding content and purpose.
12. **Parental Review Rights:** In accordance with 20 U.S.C. §1232h(c), T.C.A. §49-2-211, and related regulations, parents have the right to review all “surveys, analysis, or evaluations” conducted in their child’s classroom.
13. **Parental Consent Requirement:** A clear explanation of any student-involved research must be provided to parents or guardians, along with a signed consent document.
 - a. Copies of all consent and assent forms must be submitted to the CMCSS Research Committee at assessment@cmcss.net.
14. **Organizational Approval:** Researchers must provide a letter of approval from their organization’s ethics committee, confirming that measures are in place to safeguard the rights and welfare of human subjects involved.
15. **Required Documentation for Approval:** To facilitate review, researchers must provide the following information (but not limited to):
 - a. Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the researcher’s institution.
 - b. Description of the study’s target population, including age, sex, grade level, proposed schools, and estimated numbers of participants.
 - c. Statement of the study’s purpose.
 - d. Procedures for informing and obtaining consent/assent from participants, including copies of consent/assent forms.
 - e. Copies of all research instruments to be used.
 - f. List of district- or school-maintained data being requested, including relevant dates.
 - g. Details on how the research results will be used, shared, and potential long-term implications.
 - h. Digital copies of all signed consent forms prior to data collection.

Part II. Special Requirements

Researchers must provide copies of all project results and/or data derived from their research to the school system.

If a researcher or institution seeks grant funding (federal, state, private, or local) for research within CMCSS, they must obtain written approval from the CMCSS research Committee before securing funding. Please note that receiving funding does not equate to permission to conduct research within CMCSS.

Part III. Parents and Students' Rights Under State and Federal Research Acts

To ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, CMCSS routinely reviews and, as necessary, updates its procedures regarding research in schools. CMCSS is committed to upholding and protecting the rights of students and parents. These rights are safeguarded under state and federal laws, including T.C.A. §49-2-211; 20 U.S.C. §1232h(c) (Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment), as well as associated regulations.

Part IV Surveys

The CMCSS Researcher Committee allows surveys for research purposes under the following conditions:

- The survey contributes to a deeper understanding of the teaching-learning process.
- The project aligns with school system goals and policies without violating them.
- Disruption to the regular school program is kept to a minimum.
- Students under 18 require parental written consent to participate in any survey, analysis, or evaluation.
- Students aged 18 and older must provide their own written consent.

Surveys conducted on behalf of external agencies, organizations, or individuals must have a recommendation from the CMCSS Research Committee. The committee also requires approval for the survey's content and purpose. Parents maintain the right to review all instructional materials intended for use in surveys, analyses, or evaluations.

Part V. Controversial Topics

The CMCSS Research Committee will not approve research requests involving divisive or controversial topics. These topics, which may include but are not limited to the following, are deemed sensitive or diversive:

1. Political affiliations
2. Standardized testing
3. Psychological problems that may be distressing or embarrassing
4. Sexual behavior or attitudes
5. Anti-social and demeaning behavior
6. Sex education and Family Life curriculum content
7. Critical evaluations of family members
8. Cultural and ethnic representation in curriculum
9. Medical trauma or traumatic loss
10. Teacher evaluation and performance metrics
11. School choice
12. School funding
13. Income

Part VI. Data Collection Timeline

Approval to conduct research within CMCSS is valid only for data collection during the specified school year noted in the approval letter. Should a researcher require data collection access beyond the approved school year, they must submit a new research request for the additional time.

To minimize disruption during critical instructional and assessment periods, live data collection is strictly prohibited between April 1 and June 1. Researchers must plan their activities accordingly to ensure compliance with this policy.

The term research is used in this document to mean any work proposed and/or carried out with students by any person or persons to accomplish the following: To search, to inquire, to examine, to investigate, to seek newly discovered facts by methods of discovery (surveys and polls included).