

6Gx53-4.009 TESTING AND EVALUATION:

I. Testing: The purpose of the Polk County school District testing program, an integral part of the instructional process, is to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' learning and to assess the attainment of educational goals of the school district and the State of Florida. The information gained from the testing results will be used to provide better learning opportunities for students.

A. State Assessment: The District shall comply with state assessment/testing programs and procedures as mandated in Florida Statutes 1008.22 and 1008.24, A+ Legislation, related Florida Administrative Code, and their periodic updates. District testing programs and procedures shall be established and implemented to complement state mandated assessments.

B. Administration: The District testing program shall be administered in a consistent manner throughout the District with every effort made to ensure proper use of objective, valid, reliable measures, and appropriate reporting/interpretation of all test data. Staff in the office of planning, accountability, and evaluation shall be accountable for carrying out the provisions of this policy, Florida Statutes, and Florida Administrative Code in relation to District and State assessment and testing programs.

C. Unethical Use: Unethical use or administration of test materials may constitute violation of Florida Statute 1008.24, Test Security, and may result in fines, imprisonment, dismissal of involved personnel, and/or referral to Professional Practices Commission for action.

D. Test Administration Guidelines: The District shall develop and disseminate to all personnel involved in administering District and State assessments guidelines outlining procedures and shall periodically update the same.

E. Charter Schools: Consistent with Florida Statutes 1002.33, 1001.41, 1001.32, 1001.42 and 1001.43, staff in the District's office of planning, accountability, and evaluation will provide coordination and oversight of state accountability assessments/testing for charter schools in the District.

F. Home Education: Pursuant to Florida Statute 1002.41, which defines the evaluation options for parents home schooling their children, parents may use state assessments for this purpose and shall be given access to these assessments in accordance with state and district established rules and procedures. The District's

staff in the office of planning, accountability, and evaluation shall supervise and coordinate all aspects of such assessments when specified in the home education evaluation and in accordance with rules and procedures prescribed by the state.

II. Program Evaluation: The purpose of program evaluation in the Polk County School District is to systematically determine the value and effectiveness of programs and services according to predetermined criteria.

A. Administration: Evaluation shall be administered in accordance with procedures designed to insure proper selection and/or development of valid and reliable assessment procedures, activities, and interpretation of the findings. Evaluations shall be conducted by appropriately qualified persons.

B. Use of Evaluation Results: The intended use of evaluation data is to provide information that will assist personnel in making appropriate decisions about the program or service being evaluated.

C. Reporting Evaluation Results: Reports for programs or services being evaluated will be forwarded at least annually to program administrators. These reports will include, but not be limited to, a statement of the evaluation questions, methods, instruments, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

III. Educational Research:

The Polk County School District recognizes the vital relationship between education and research. The District promotes research that builds a foundation for improving the educational process and student learning, as well as contributes to the field of education in the areas of theory and practice. While research requests are welcomed, such requests are always balanced against the District's objectives.

"Research" is defined as data collection, observation and/or data analysis activities beyond the normal functions of a regular school/classroom. All such activities, regardless of whether they originate internally or externally, are construed as research. All research to be conducted in the Polk County School District and/or using the District's data must have prior approval from the Office of Assessment, Accountability & Evaluation. This includes proposed research by any employee with the intention to publish or disseminate outside the Polk County School District, or for completion of a masters thesis or doctoral dissertation, or for any other purpose outside of normal District/school/classroom use.

A. Use of Scientific Procedures: Research shall be administered through the use of scientific procedures. This includes systematically defining problems, developing hypotheses or research questions, collecting data, testing hypotheses or evaluating research questions, analyzing data and reporting results. The research may be historical, experimental, correlational or descriptive.

B. Criteria for Approval to Conduct Research:

1. Eligibility

To be eligible to conduct research in the Polk County School District, the researcher should be working at the graduate level OR closely supervised by a mentor with high academic qualifications (terminal degree in their field) and research experience.

- a) The purpose of the study must be education related and linked to the mission of the District.
- b) The study should be of value to the District.
- c) A commitment to communicate findings with the District before the study is published or presented must be established.

2. Request for Research Application Material

Researchers who seek to conduct research must make a formal application to the Office of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation.

- a) Researchers must submit ALL required material for the proposed research to be considered
- b) The following information must be included in the application request and be assembled into three identical packets

- 1) The completed "Request for Research" form (Appendix A)
- 2) A brief abstract of the proposed study addressing the research problem, the rationale, the design, the participants, sampling procedures, analysis of the data, type of results, major hypothesis, and utility of results. This abstract should not exceed 200 words.
- 3) A detailed research proposal--see *"Contents of the Research Proposal" for guidelines*
- 4) A proposed letter to parents/guardians requesting permission for student participation (where appropriate)—see *"Content of Consent Forms" for guidelines*
- 5) A signed letter from principal (s) / teacher (s) granting permission to conduct research in their school/classroom (where appropriate)
- 6) Evidence of recent human subjects research training (within five years); College and university affiliated researchers must obtain approval of their proposed research by their Institutional Review Board or similar committee. Evidence of approval must be submitted before any data is collected.

3. Content of the Research Proposal

- a) Purpose of the research or the problem to be investigated
- b) A justification of how the research is of worth to the field of education and more specifically to the District
- c) An explanation of the methodology and procedures to be utilized

- d) Copies of ALL proposed instruments of the study, (e.g., surveys, tests, observation forms, data recording sheets, etc.)
- e) Target population of the proposed study identified
- f) Estimation of the time involved (e.g., amount of time involved in interviews/observations, length of time necessary to fill out surveys or complete tests, etc.) and discussion of any and all possible interference with normal school activities
- g) A provisional timeline for the collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the data; Data collection in the course of the regular school year will generally not be approved to commence during district/state-mandated assessments.
- h) Rationale for any special requests for student record information or test scores including any special analyses, reports or computer files

4. Content of Consent Forms

Consent forms must include:

- a) The purpose of the study
- b) The precise nature of the student's involvement in the study
- c) The sort of data to be gathered from the student (the form must clearly state in boldface print if access to student records will be required)
- d) Identification of person (s) collecting the data

e) A description of the proposed measures to ensure anonymity of the participants

f) Where and in what form the original data will be maintained after the research is completed or how it will be destroyed; NOTE: No data containing personally identifiable information, whether it be student, parent, teacher or school data, will be provided to the researcher.

5. Review of Research Requests

The Research Review Board (see section IX below) shall review all requests. Possible decisions by the board may include approval, approval contingent upon modification and/or special conditions, or denial. Proposed research must meet criteria established by the District's Office of Assessment, Accountability & Evaluation for approval. The board will consider the extent to which:

a) The participation of all research participants is completely voluntary

b) The proposed use of instructional time is not excessive

c) The study will not adversely affect students' curriculum

d) Confidentiality of responses is maintained

e) The study is not a replication of concurrent research/evaluation

f) The proposal is well developed with adequacy of design and instrumentation

g) The research is a benefit to the District and/or to the field of education

h) The researcher has sufficient qualifications

i) The research in its entirety is consistent with ethical guidelines. More specifically,

1) No conflict of interest is apparent

2) No researcher bias is visible

3) No leading, suggestive, and/or intrusive questions/comments are utilized

6. Examination and Approval of Request for Research

Requests for research will be examined, and decisions rendered, by the Research Review Board throughout the school year.

a) Each research request is individually examined

b) All researchers shall comply with the Jessica Lunsford Act, as codified in Florida Statute 1012.465, and successfully pass a Level 2 screening prior to being permitted access on school grounds when students are present or being permitted direct contact with students.

c) The decision of the Research Review Board, whether it is approval, denial, or approval pending modification and/or with special conditions, shall be communicated to the research applicant by the Chairperson via letter or email within 30 days following submission of all requested material

d) The decision of the Research Review Board is subject to written consent from the principal (s) whose students, teacher, staff, or facilities would be involved in the proposed study. Each principal is ultimately responsible for decisions involving students, teachers, staff or facilities under his or her direction. The researcher must submit written consent from the principal (s) of the school (s) involved in the research to the Office of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation with the request for research materials.

7. Implementation of Research Project

When a request to conduct research has been approved, the principal researcher must ensure District regulations are strictly followed.

a) Prior to beginning a research project in the school (s), the researcher must have obtained written consent of the parents/guardians of student (s) (or the student if he or she is 18 years of age or older). The Research Review Board must approve the form and content of the parental consent in advance. Before initiating the study, the researcher must present the signed parental consent forms to the principal (s) of the school (s).

b) Access to confidential information requires the notification and prior written approval of the parents/guardians (or the student if he or she is 18 years of age or older) and in no case shall the researcher have access to student records unless and until such written notification and consent is obtained and supplied to the principal (s).

Furthermore, the principal or his or her appointee must supervise the viewing of such records and no collection of

personally identifiable data will be permitted.

c) The privacy of students who are “captive” subjects of research is protected. Questions that may be considered as invasion of privacy, e.g., questions concerning race, religion, parental income, family relationships, education level, occupation, etc. are restricted. In order to gather information vital to the implementation of a research design, such questions are sometimes permitted. In such cases, directions both oral and written must state that the participant is permitted to skip any question that he or she does not desire to answer.

d) The researcher is responsible for minimizing any disruption of normal school activities. Any violation or unacceptable behavior on the part of the researcher (s), either directly or indirectly, should be reported immediately to the principal (s) of the school (s) involved and to the Senior Director of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation.

e) The researcher must consult the principal (s) for final considerations in conducting the research project.

f) Any substantive changes to the methodology or design of the research project must be reviewed and approved by Research Review Board.

8. Responsibilities of School Administration

Principals must make certain that ethical standards are upheld when granting consent to conduct research at his or her school.

- a) All subjects involved must know that their participation is totally voluntary
- b) Addresses and/or telephone numbers of parents, teachers and students must not be provided to the researcher by the school
- c) Written parental consent must be obtained on approved forms supplied by the researcher, and copies maintained by the school for record keeping

9. Research Review Board

Research requests are evaluated “referee style” by a committee of reviewers. These selected reviewers comprise the “Research Review Board”. The board shall consist of a minimum of three (3) reviewers that must include:

- a) One or more reviewers with expertise in the area (s) involved in the study
- b) One of more reviewers with expertise in data collection procedures, instrument design and research procedures
- c) One or more reviewers from the Office of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation

The Senior Director of the Office of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation will appoint the Chairperson of the Research Review Board. A consensus of at least two-thirds of the Board is required for a decision. The Board may render decisions of denial, approval, or approval pending modification and/or with special conditions.

C. Use of Research Results: The intended use of research data is to provide information that will assist personnel in finding solutions to the problem (s) being researched. The knowledge gained may result in models, relationships or descriptions.

D. Reporting Research Results:

The School Board of Polk County, Florida
Policy 4.009

Following the conclusion of the study, one (1) copy of the final report must be sent to the Senior Director of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation within thirty (30) days. The Senior Director of Assessment, Accountability and Evaluation shall also be made aware of any and all planned presentations and/or publications of the research results. The final report and any subsequent presentations and/or publications of the research or its findings must not contain any District or school identifying information.

Statutory Authority: Florida Statutes 1001.32, 1001.41, 1001.42, and 1001.43

Laws Implemented: Florida Statutes 1008.22 and 1008.34

Adopted: July 26, 1972

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