

# Guidelines for Data Collection in Montgomery County Public Schools

Montgomery County Public Schools

Office of Shared Accountability

## Data Collection in Schools or Offices

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) encourages education research and data collection to inform instructional and administrative decision making. Certain research activities are subject to more detailed procedures described in Regulation AFA-RA, *Research and Other Data Collection Activities in Montgomery County Public Schools*.

### Who Are Internal Data Collectors?

MCPS staff members; MCPS task forces, advisory groups, or committees; and MCCPTA/PTAs/PTSA's

## Guidelines for Internal Data Collectors

### *Who must follow these guidelines?*

MCPS staff members; MCPS task forces, advisory groups, or committees; and MCCPTA/PTAs/PTSA's seeking information from staff are not required to submit a proposal narrative or an experimental design. No data collection may begin until authorization has been received from the deputy superintendent of schools, chief academic officer, and the chief operating officer. Employee associations wishing to conduct data collection activities (surveys) across units must gain approval from the Committee of the Association Leaders/Deputy/Chief Operating Officer (ADC).

### *What is the purpose of these guidelines?*

To limit interruptions to the instructional program, comply with federal privacy statutes, and encourage high quality research practices

### Summary:

1. Keep it short.
2. Avoid black-out dates.
3. Submit MCPS Form 226-21 to the Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) at least two weeks prior to requested start date.
4. Comply with privacy rules.
5. Identify requested respondents by job title.

### *How to proceed?*

1. Keep it short.  
  
Limit the number of questions to five to seven questions. Judicious use of carefully constructed questions can provide the needed information without causing what researchers refer to as "respondent fatigue."
2. Avoid black-out dates for mandated assessments or surveys, or previously scheduled research.  
  
Prospective data collectors must avoid scheduling data collection activities to coincide with previously scheduled research or black-out dates for mandated assessments or surveys. OSA maintains a calendar of approved research and other data collection activities and assessments on the OSA website at: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/calendar/>.
3. Submit MCPS Form 226-21 to OSA at least two weeks prior to requested start date.

Form 226-21, *Request for an Internal Data Collection Activity*, asks for a list of requested respondents and a copy of the data collection instrument. Applicants must also verify that they have read Regulation AFA-RA, *Research and Other Data Collection Activities in Montgomery County Public Schools* and Regulation JFF-RA, *Federal Requirements for*

	<p>4. Comply with privacy rules and consult OSA if privacy is a potential concern</p> <p>Federal statutes prohibit certain types of questions that potentially violate respondent privacy. There may be regulatory implications for any data collection activities that seek information about the following categories of "protected information," consistent with Regulation JFF-RA, <i>Federal Requirements for Use of Protected Student Information</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political affiliations, religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs;</li> <li>• Mental or psychological problems, or sexual behavior or attitudes;</li> <li>• Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;</li> <li>• Critical appraisals of the student's family members;</li> <li>• Privileged or similar relationships recognized by law; or information about income other than that required by law to determine program eligibility.</li> </ul> <p>See also: <a href="http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/jffra.pdf">http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/jffra.pdf</a>.</p> <p>Staff privacy must be respected, and the categories above provide useful guidelines to apply to staff. Further, questions asking staff members to make critical appraisals of other staff, parents, or students are inappropriate.</p> <p>5. Identify prospective respondents by job title</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the data collector, not the local principal or supervisor, to determine who should respond to a survey or other data collection instrument. Address the instrument to respondents by job title, or name, if known (e.g., "pupil personnel worker" or "Ms. Smith"). This reduces the administrative burden upon staff to identify respondents and circulate the materials received. Instruments inadequately addressed (e.g., "to be completed by person responsible for ...") may not be distributed.</p>
<p><b>Who Are External Researchers?</b></p> <p>For-profit and not-for-profit research organizations, local/state/federal agencies, national study groups, and doctoral candidates</p>	<p><b>Procedures for Research Studies</b></p> <p>Including MCPS employees engaged in doctoral dissertations or masters' theses projects</p> <p>OSA is responsible for screening and reviewing requests to conduct research studies in MCPS. External researchers and MCPS employees seeking to conduct research for doctoral dissertations or masters' theses projects must use procedures described in Regulation AFA-RA, <i>Research and Other Data Collection Activities in Montgomery County Public Schools</i>. MCPS does not approve requests for masters' theses research projects from non-MCPS employees.</p> <p>For further information, consult the OSA website:  <a href="http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/">http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/sharedaccountability/</a></p>