



## **MEMORANDUM**

**From:** Sarah Dickson, Director of External Research, Department of School Quality Measurement and Research

**Re:** SY21 COVID-19 Research Guidance

**Date:** October 8, 2020

### **Overview**

The City of Chicago and CPS continue to monitor and take steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19. CPS remains committed to learning from rigorous external research, especially in these uncertain times. In an effort to both support impactful research and to maintain the health and safety of our communities, we are releasing the following information for currently approved and incoming research projects for SY21 with the assumption that social distancing guidelines will remain in place throughout the upcoming school year.

Due to [ISBE and IDPH reopening schools guidance](#) recommending limiting visitors as well as the additional demands that remote learning places on students, teachers, and families and consistent with the [Board's Research policy](#) to establish guidelines, we must exclusively prioritize research that is aligned to current district strategies and initiatives. Consideration for projects not explicitly aligned to the district's priorities will be temporarily suspended until further notice. For approved projects, careful consideration will be given to permissible research activities - particularly for primary data collection. Capacity to participate in research activities will remain limited even if students and staff return to campus locations at a future date. Concerns include safety as well as atypical contexts affecting data collection and research validity. This temporary suspension will allow schools to maintain a safe educational environment for students and time to return to normal working conditions.

Research projects approved for SY21 should adhere to the following guiding principles:

- Equity guides all research at all stages.
- Projects produce knowledge that will inform district leaders as they make decisions about how to best support students amidst the crisis.
- Impactful research projects are developed in partnership and collaboration with CPS stakeholders, practitioners, and content experts.
- Project timelines are succinct and respect the urgency of potential high-impact decisions that need to be made.

**There will be no in-person research activities during SY21.** Primary data collection will be limited to online, virtual, and remote methods and tools subject to approval.

### **(Remote) Primary Data Collection Guidance for SY21**

The [Research Policy](#) and the [current RRB Guidelines](#) are **still in place and applicable**; however, we offer this **additional** guidance for potential researchers in the upcoming school year.

- Primary Data Collection: Students

- Active consent continues to be required in order to collect primary data from students, as per the CPS Policy; remote consent can be obtained so long as the information is securely stored.
    - CPS may conduct an audit of electronic consents forms for any reason and at any time in order to validate the collected information.
  - Remote one-to-one research activities involving students (i.e., interviews) are prohibited, per the [Student Acceptable Use Policy](#).
  - The researcher must secure a CPS staff volunteer for any virtual focus group involving students. The selected CPS staff member (identified by the CPS Central Office project lead) must (1) host the virtual meeting and (2) remain in attendance for the full duration of the focus group.
  - Background checks will be required as per usual; researchers will need Level 1 background checks. Returning researchers may not need to reapply, but new researchers will need to go through the background check process.
  - If approved, all virtual focus groups or interviews with students must be conducted through the CPS-verified conferencing platform, Google Meets.
- Primary Data Collection: Staff
    - Principals must agree that the research is of value in their community, and that their staff has capacity to participate in the research.
    - The burden on schools of recruiting research participants must be minimal.
    - We recommend, but do not require, that researchers utilize Google Meets for primary data collection from CPS staff.
    - Active consent continues to be required; consent can be obtained remotely.
  - Primary Data Collection: Parents/Families
    - Principals must agree that the research is of value in their community, and that their families have capacity to participate in the research.
    - The burden on schools of recruiting research participants must be minimal.
    - Active consent continues to be required; consent can be obtained remotely.