



# Austin Independent School District

## Department of Program Evaluation

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## EXTERNAL RESEARCH SUMMARY REPORT: 2007–2008

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) has a formal application and review process that facilitates research and evaluation conducted by external parties and allows external research coordinators (ERC) to monitor these projects. The process was developed to (a) protect students and staff from unnecessary or overly burdensome data collection; (b) ensure compliance with privacy laws (e.g., the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 [FERPA], Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPPA], and Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment [PPRA]) and ethical guidelines concerning research with human participants; and (c) contribute to the quality of research conducted in AISD.

Proposals are received and reviewed for methodological soundness, including a review of all measures and consent forms to be used. After measures and forms have been received and deemed appropriate, the ERC convenes a committee of three administrative reviewers. In general, the review committee includes (a) one reviewer from the Department of Program Evaluation (DPE), who provides an extensive review of the proposed measures and research methods; (b) one administrator with expertise in the proposed subject area (e.g., the administrative supervisor for music curriculum, if the proposed project focuses on music education); and (c) an administrator who has sufficient perspective regarding the current depth and breadth of campus responsibilities to make an informed recommendation regarding which campuses might be able to accommodate the project (e.g., the associate superintendent for high schools).

If the approved proposal requires

## **EXTERNAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION**

The following sections will present information covering various aspects of external research including: the external research proposal approval rate in 2007-2008, participant categories or types, time required of the research projects, topic areas and grade levels, data-sharing agreements, and a summary of successes and recommendations.

### **EXTERNAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL APPROVAL RATE**

Between September 2007 and April 2008, AISD received 117 applications to conduct  
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entity must complete the application and review process to ensure adherence to ethical and legal standards and the use of appropriate methodology.

**PARTICIPANTS TYPES AND TIME REQUIREMENTS**

Of the 88 proposals that were approved in 2007–2008, 58% involved only students, only teachers, or both groups (Table 2). This rate is lower than that reported in 2006–2007, when 62% of approved projects involved only students and teachers. It is important to note that although many projects have large samples of students and teachers, the participant burden often is minimized through the use observational methodologies, which require a minimum of staff time to facilitate, or through the use of existing data. When existing district records are used, either students’ parents/guardians provide active consent or an ERC creates and maintains a data-sharing agreement and the records are shared in accordance with FERPA.

**Table 2. Approved Projects, by Participant Group, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008**

<b>Participant group</b>	<b>2006–2007 (n = 85)</b>	<b>2007–2008 (n = 88)</b>
<b>Students only</b>	38%	11%
<b>Teachers only</b>	23%	22%

### TOPIC AREAS AND GRADE LEVELS

Upon entry into the external research database, projects are categorized into one or two broad research topics. As in 2006–2007, the most common topic areas in 2007–2008 were student social or emotional development, academic achievement, and teacher professional practices (Table 4). It is important to note that topic area counts are not directly comparable across years because up to three topic areas could be selected in 2006–2007, whereas only two were recorded in 2007–2008.

**Table 4. Approved Projects, by Research Topic Area, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008**

Topic area	2006–2007	2007–2008
Student social or emotional development	27	26
Curriculum and instruction – core subject areas	27	11
Academic achievement	20	13
	17	







