

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
To Conduct Research Using Data from the Houston Independent School District

Proposal Due July 22, 2013	Notification August 23, 2013	Project Completion August 23, 2014
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HERC

The Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC) is a partnership between Rice University and the Houston Independent School District (HISD), which aims to produce rigorous research for the purpose of closing the socioeconomic gaps in educational achievement and attainment. HERC is funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. In this announcement, HERC requests proposals for research projects that will make use of a new longitudinal database and which aim to inform policy decisions affecting one of the nation's largest school districts.

HISD

HISD is committed to providing a high-quality education for every child, regardless of where they live or which school they choose to attend. HISD has 279 schools and 204,000 students, making it the largest district in Texas and the seventh largest in the United States. About 62% of the students are Hispanic, 25% are African American, 8% are White, and 3% are Asian American; 80% are economically disadvantaged.

Database

Researchers whose proposals are selected will be granted access to a new longitudinal database. HISD collaborated with Rice University to produce a database containing thousands of variables which track the demographics, socioeconomic background, school zone, attendance, magnet enrollment, and academic performance for over 300,000 HISD students who were enrolled at any point during a period of five years (2007-08 through 2011-12), with additional information about their schools. Identifiers have been removed. For more detailed information about the database, please visit <http://kinder.rice.edu/herc/>.

Research Topics

This request for proposals invites researchers to design a study that addresses one of the following topics selected by the HERC advisory board, which consists of leaders from HISD, Rice University, and the Houston community.

1. **Early Learning** – This topic includes research that supports the improvement of school readiness for prekindergarten children, as well as long-term outcomes of early learning programs.
2. **English Learners** – This topic includes research that supports the improvement of achievement in English language proficiency as well as other academic outcomes for students who are English learners.
3. **School Choice** – This topic includes research on student mobility as well as selection of schools, including school features that attract students. HISD is a school choice district.
4. **Over-age/retained students** – This topic focuses on research that evaluates interventions/programs that aim to help retained and over-age students.

Researcher Qualifications

Researchers must have doctorates or be doctoral candidates working under the supervision of research faculty. Researchers must have a record of publication at peer-reviewed academic journals or publishers and must be affiliated with a research university or other research institution.

Researcher Agreement

Researchers whose proposals are selected will be required to sign a researcher agreement that describes the terms and conditions under which access to the database will be provided. These terms include data security procedures, quality control, the researchers' rights to publish, public release procedures, affiliation with HERC, and the nature of the researchers' relationship with HISD, including the expectation that researchers will report their findings to HERC and HISD prior to public release. The full researcher agreement is available at <http://kinder.rice.edu/herc/>.

Financial Considerations

HERC and HISD incur a number of expenses in developing and maintaining this database and working with affiliates. Database costs include expenses for archiving (cleaning, merging, standardizing, and documenting data), secure online workspace maintenance (including server and Stata statistical software), and administrative oversight (IRB, HISD data agreement, management). Researchers whose proposals are selected will be granted access to the HERC database free of charge but will not receive additional funding from HERC or HISD to conduct the proposed research.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should be no more than 10 pages in length and must include the following elements.

1. **Significance** – Clearly describe your research aims and provide a compelling rationale for the proposed study. State clear research questions, hypotheses, and theoretical rationale. Explain why your study is important and discuss how the results will inform district decision making.
2. **Research Plan** – Clearly describe the data elements and the methodological approach you will use to examine your research questions, as well as a timeline for when the research will be completed, which should be no more than one year. The research plan should use only existing data and should not include new data collection.
3. **Personnel** – Describe your research qualifications.
4. **Resources** – Describe your institutional resources that will facilitate your research.

Send proposals to herc@rice.edu.