



Process for Conducting Research in the Grand Erie District School Board - External Projects

The Grand Erie District School Board encourages research that contributes to educational knowledge, especially that which is of practical benefit to the school system. The Research Advisory Committee ensures that research is in keeping with ethical standards as well as the mission, belief and values of the Board.

Who May Apply?

- Masters candidates
- Doctoral candidates
- Individuals
- Institutions
- Agencies

How to Apply

- Obtain approval from Ethics Review Board of sponsoring institution or agency
- Compile a package consisting of:
 - Completed Application for External Research form
 - a copy of your ethics application with letter of approval (if applicable)
 - copies of all supporting documents such as consent letters to parents, survey/interview questions, recruitment materials, etc.
 - Curriculum Vitae of researchers on-site, in contact with students

Applications to be submitted electronically to researchassessment@granderie.ca

The Grand Erie District School Board Research Advisory Committee is comprised of one person familiar with privacy legislation, one person familiar with methods and ethics, as well as one elementary and one secondary representative both familiar with research issues. The committee conducts its reviews remotely, from September to June, as research requests are submitted and when other commitments do not take priority.

Reviews will be proportionate to the invasiveness of the method - research involving minimal participation and posing minimal risk can be expedited. An example of a request that may be expedited is a request by a university professor to conduct an anonymous survey of school principals on their preferred methods of communication. Expedited research requests go before Executive Council for final approval.

1. The Research Advisory Committee will review the project with respect to ethical and methodological consideration and submit a report with a recommendation to Executive Council. Requests to conduct research are either approved, approved with revisions, or denied by Executive Council. (See Appendix A: Ethical Considerations)
2. The Research Advisory Committee will contact the researcher to inform him/her of the results of the Executive Council meeting.
3. If the research is to be conducted in schools, the Research Advisory Committee will inform Principals that the research project has been approved and will provide the contact information of the researcher in case a Principal wishes to make contact. Otherwise, it is the researcher's responsibility to contact Principals on his/her own to obtain permission to research on site.
4. Approval does not guarantee the participation of schools in the research study. Principals, in conjunction with their teachers and, possibly, school council have the final say. Participation by school personnel is strictly voluntary. Researchers refused access are not permitted to appeal that decision.
5. Researchers are not permitted to offer payment or gifts as incentives to schools and/or staff for their participation.
6. The researcher informs the System Research Leader of the placement details and a research agreement in accordance with MFIPPA may be executed.
7. Depending on the invasiveness of the method, researchers may be required to provide a police criminal background check prior to commencing their research.
8. Researchers conducting research within the Grand Erie District School Board must guarantee anonymity of individual students, staff, and schools unless express written permission is obtained from parents of students under 18, from students 18 and over who are participants in the research, from principals of schools involved, from other staff involved and from the Research Advisory Committee.
9. If students are to be involved in the research, the researcher is required to obtain informed consent from parents of students under 18 and of students 18 years and older. These must be distributed via classroom teachers. (See Appendix B for required components of the consent letter)
10. If students to be involved are age 18 or older, a similar information letter as above should be provided for their parents as a courtesy.
11. Upon completion of the project, the researcher is encouraged to submit a 1-page summary or presentation of findings to parents of participating children, students 18 and over, and staff involved.
12. The researcher agrees to provide a copy of the final report for the Board's research library.
13. The Research Advisory Committee will report on the status of research projects to Executive Council.

No research is permitted in schools during times of increased activity: January for secondary schools, May for elementary schools, as well as June and September.

Appendix A

Ethical Considerations

Applications are reviewed with respect to the following key considerations:

- Relevance to education - the research is important to education and will benefit the Grand Erie learning community. Projects with demonstrable benefits to participants and direct relevance to education will be given priority.
- Research must not negatively impact learning.
- Research is in keeping with Grand Erie mission, beliefs, values, goals and objectives.
- There is no other way to acquire the sought after knowledge (such as reviewing literature in the field) without involving research participants.
- Projects will be evaluated for extent of demands on staff, participants, and school resources.
- Respect for culture, traditions, and knowledge of ethnic groups.
- The research is conducted in a manner that provides for the bodily, psychological and emotional safety of participants.
- Free and informed written consent.
- Protection of children and other vulnerable populations.
- Measures to ensure confidentiality and privacy.
- Research does not exploit or burden certain populations unfairly, nor neglect or discriminate against populations who could benefit from the research.
- Research minimizes harm; maximizes benefit - consideration is given to the weight of the potential benefit of the research against the possible risks for participants.
- Research is subject-centred - extra care is taken to understand the impact of the research on participants from participants' perspectives.
- MFIPPA is observed

How to Obtain Informed Consent

Participants must be given enough information about the project in order to make a fully informed decision about their participation.

General Points:

- The language in your information letter needs to be clear and free from jargon. Generally, a grade 6-8 literacy level is best to ensure that the information is fully understood.
- A child under 18 years of age *should* be given the opportunity to provide his/her assent to participate and may refuse to participate even if the parent has provided their consent.
- Provide a copy of the consent form to the participant so that they have a record of what they signed as well as your contact information.

Components of a consent letter:

Introductory Information:

- Title of Research Project
- Research organization and principal researcher. Include team members' names if they will have contact with participants.
- Who is funding the research, i.e., if it's a grant or an external agency such as the Ministry or ETFO or the Health Unit. This tells participants something about the nature of the research.
- The purpose of the research – Describe the project briefly and why you are doing it.
- Why you are inviting the person/child to participate.
- That participation is completely voluntary and they can withdraw from the project at any time and request that their data be withdrawn as well.
- That there are no repercussions for withdrawing.
- If the research involves a questionnaire, interview, focus group, state that the participant can choose not to answer questions if they don't feel comfortable answering.

What participants will be asked to do:

- A description of how the research will be carried out.
- How much of the participant's time will be required.

- If you are planning to digitally record the participant, state that here.

What will be done with the data you collect:

- State how long the data will be retained and how it will be safeguarded (e.g., survey documents or video files will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office or password protected in a file on the researcher's secure network drive for a period of 2 years and then properly destroyed.)
- How (if) you will let participants know about the research results. A short summary is fine.

Risks / Benefits:

- Typically, participants are informed of benefits or risks of participation. It can be a benefit if they learn something through their involvement. It can be a risk if there are questions that could make them uncomfortable.

Compensation / Expenses

- Sometimes participants are reimbursed for their time/mileage or given an appreciation gift such as a gift card. That needs to be stated here.

Confidentiality / Publication of Results

- Include information about what confidentiality and/or anonymity participants can expect. State how/if you will remove identifiers from materials, who will have access to the original documents/files and the de-identified documents/files.
- State the limits on the confidentiality you will provide, if appropriate. For example, if questions in a survey could trigger a child to disclose abuse or suicidal ideation, the consent letter must state that the researchers are legally obligated to report such disclosures to the appropriate authorities/agencies.
- Participants must be told in advance if you plan to use any of the research data to publish a paper, present at a conference regardless of whether or not the participants are anonymous. If you aren't sure, sometimes it is best to state that the findings might be used to share at conferences or in publications, then you have the choice to publish or share afterward. If you don't include this on the consent form, you cannot use the data to publish or present at conferences/workshops.
- For Focus Groups, you should consider adding a statement informing participants that although you ask for declarations of confidentiality from all participants, you cannot control, ultimately, what others do with the information they hear in a focus group.

Contact Information:

- If you have any questions about this study, please contact: [give full contact information here]

Consent Form "DON'TS"

- Do not guarantee anonymity. No one can guarantee anonymity. You can only do your best to remove identifiers and change small details that, when put together, could lead someone to guess who the participant is.