

GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS



**KAWARTHA PINE RIDGE
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

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EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS: SUPPORTING GUIDELINES

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Introduction

The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board supports educational research through the Research Advisory Committee.

The Guidelines for Educational Research in Schools have been developed to support research within the school district.

In all cases, whether or not there is a formal application to the Committee, it is expected that there will be adherence to the criteria and principles of quality research and the protection of individuals as outlined in these Guidelines. Principals may elect to refer questions from applicants, from their staff members or from the school community to the Research Advisory Committee if needed.

1. Research Advisory Committee

1.1 Composition

Normally, the Committee consists of at least one representative from each of the following groups:

1.1.1 one (1) elementary school administrator;

1.1.2 one (1) secondary school administrator;

1.1.3 one (1) elementary teacher;

1.1.4 one (1) secondary teacher;

1.1.5 one (1) member of psychological services;

1.1.6 one (1) member from Teaching and Learning Department; and

1.1.7 one (1) university faculty member.

The Superintendent of Education: Teaching and Learning, or designate, shall appoint a Chair.

1.2 Term of Office

Membership on the Committee is for a two-year renewable term.

1.3 Mandate

Normally, the Committee meets a minimum of four times per year at the

call of the Chair to:

- 1.3.1 review research proposals and approve those which meet the criteria outlined;
- 1.3.2 identify areas where research would be of potential value to the system;
- 1.3.3 offer advice and assistance, when appropriate, on matters of research methodology, statistical analysis, etc.;
- 1.3.4 monitor the quantity of topics of research to ensure a fair distribution of research studies throughout Kawartha Pine Ridge District schools;
- 1.3.5 play a role in protecting staff and students from invasion of privacy and from unwarranted and / or excessive demands on their time by researchers; and
- 1.3.6 promote research and a culture of inquiry in schools.

1.4 Roles and Responsibilities

1.4.1 Role of the Chair:

- 1.4.1.1 call, organize and chair meetings;
- 1.4.1.2 ensure compliance with Guidelines for Educational Research in Schools;
- 1.4.1.3 liaise with stakeholders (e.g. research applicants, schools, teachers, parents, Senior Administration);
- 1.4.1.4 track and support research projects;
- 1.4.1.5 provide a summary of applications to KPRDSB Senior Administration prior to each scheduled meeting;
- 1.4.1.6 determine if an application requires expedited review;
- 1.4.1.7 report to KPRDSB Senior Administration.

1.4.2 Role of Committee members:

- 1.4.2.1 review materials /proposals in advance of meeting;

1.4.2.2. act as a representative of a designated group (see 1.1);

1.4.2.3. maintain confidentiality;

1.4.2.4 declare conflict of interest.

1.4.3 Role of Research Applicants:

1.4.3.1 maintain open communication with the Research Advisory Committee Chair to ensure safety, privacy and support for all research participants;

1.4.3.2 adhere to the content of these Guidelines;

1.4.3.3 provide evidence of adherence to Guidelines of associated stakeholders (e.g. current institutional ethics approval from an associated university or college, proof of affiliation with external organization).

1.5 Decisions on Proposals

1.5.1 Five criteria are used by the Committee when reviewing proposals

1.5.1.1 relevance: (to public education; consistent with the Board's policies, priorities and strategic plan);

1.5.1.2 protection of staff and students: (expectations for staff and student time; disruption to school program; degree of intrusiveness; protection from physical and mental discomfort or harm; free from sensitive or offensive items and activities; free from racist, sexist, religious or other bias; written informed consent; protection of confidentiality of participants);

1.5.1.3 study design: (clear research questions; appropriate instruments; acceptable research procedures and statistical analysis; instructions to participants; appropriate consent in place);

1.5.1.4 feedback of results: (process for feedback to schools, individuals, Committee);

1.5.1.5 application meets requirements of all stakeholders (e.g. current ethical review provided from applicant's institution; current vulnerable sector screening is provided).

1.5.2 Decisions

- 1.5.2.1 Meetings will be convened with quorum and all decisions require quorum (51% of members, or half of the total Committee membership plus one).
- 1.5.2.2 Approval: when an application to conduct research is approved, a letter of approval is provided to the researcher and a memorandum is sent out to the Principals and Supervisory Officers with information about the study;
- 1.5.2.3 Deferral: when an application to conduct research is deferred, a letter is provided to the researcher with an explanation of the rationale. If the deferral is based on changes required to the application, the letter shall outline the required amendments and the time frame for submission of the revisions;
- 1.5.2.4 Rejection: when an application to conduct research is rejected a letter is provided to the researcher with an explanation of the rationale.

1.5.3 Participation in Approved Studies

- 1.5.3 The decision to participate in a study that has been approved by the KPRDSB Research Advisory Committee remains with the School Principal and / or the proposed participant(s).

2. Applications

In all cases, whether or not there is a formal application to the Committee, it is expected that there will be adherence to the principles of quality research and to the protection of individuals as outlined in these Guidelines.

- 2.1 Research that requires KPRDSB Research Advisory Committee approval:
 - 2.1.1 Research conducted by an external agency (e.g. the Addiction Research Foundation wishes to collect information from staff and students by observations and questionnaire);
 - 2.1.2 Research that is intended for publication or presentation in a public forum (e.g. a teacher working in collaboration with a professional association collects information regarding student achievement at a school that is then incorporated into a published report).

2.2 Exemptions

2.2 The regular activities conducted in schools that support assessment, evaluation or improvement are exempt if the results of such activities are not disseminated beyond the school in which they are conducted unless the identifying information is removed from the report. These activities are subject to the approval and supervision of the School Principal. For example:

- 2.2.1.1 a teacher or teacher candidate reads about an innovative method of assessing student strengths in mathematics. The teacher tries the process and shares the results of his/her efforts with staff or division members at a school meeting;
- 2.2.1.2 an employee working on an assignment related to a course, institutes a new strategy with the intent of comparing the results with those of previous practice. The information is to be incorporated into an essay or report submitted to the course instructor with no names, or other identifying factors of participants made available;
- 2.2.1.3 an individual working on a course or internship records observations or other anecdotal information based on regular practice in the context of their employment or internship. This information is not published beyond the requirements of their course or internship and no names are mentioned in any written or oral report;
- 2.2.1.4 a school council develops a questionnaire to determine local community concerns with respect to an issue of interest or concern to the school. The results of the survey will be used to inform action planning on the issue and will not be communicated beyond the school community;
- 2.2.1.5 mandatory activity as directed by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (e.g., EQAO assessments, PISA, TIMMS);
- 2.2.1.6 mandatory activity as directed by the Ministry of Education (e.g. data collection supporting Ministry program funding);
- 2.2.1.7 mandatory activity as directed by Senior Administration (e.g. organizational surveys, system data collection).

2.3 Extensions

2.3 In the event that an approved research project is not completed within the stated time frame, researchers may contact the KPRDSB Research Advisory Committee for an extension. Researchers must contact the Chair of the KPRDSB Research Advisory Committee outlining the circumstances and the Committee will review the extension at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

2.4 Application to Conduct Research at the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board (Appendix A).

3. **The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990**

3.1 Procedures for Collecting Information

The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990, as it suggests, consists of two main parts:

3.1.1 to provide a right of access to information under the control of the institutions (e.g., school boards); The public has a presumed right to access to general records and exemption from that right should be limited and specific;

3.1.2 Protection of Privacy: to protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by institutions. A disclosure of personal information is presumed to constitute an unjustified invasion of personal privacy if the personal information

3.1.2.1 relates to a medical, psychiatric, or psychological history, diagnosis, condition, treatment or evaluation;

3.1.2.2 relates to employment or educational history;

3.1.2.3 consists of personal recommendations or evaluations, character references or personal evaluations; or

3.1.2.4 indicates the individual's racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or religious or political beliefs or associations.

Under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990, information which is collected as part of school records is not obtained with the expectation that it will be disclosed to independent researchers. Therefore, it is not possible for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board to identify particular

individuals or groups of students or staff members for researchers. For example, if one wished to select students on the basis of some identifying characteristic (e.g., all nine-year old girls in French Immersion classes who live with one parent only) and one needed the names of the students in order to select a sample of them, parental consent would be required. The board and its employees cannot provide researchers with the names of individual students. The researcher would have to find a way to get the sample needed without undue demands on the school system. For example, one could send home a letter with all the potential participants, and ask that those interested in the study contact with research directly.

3.2 Implications for Researchers Proposing to Conduct Research in Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board schools

The following are terms and conditions relating to security and confidentiality to which a person is required to agree before personal information can be disclosed to that person for a research purpose

- 3.2.1 The researcher shall use the information only for a research purpose for which the researcher has written authorization from Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.
- 3.2.2 The researcher shall name any other persons who will be given access to personal information of participants.
- 3.2.3 Before disclosing personal information to other persons under paragraph 3.2.2 above, the researcher shall enter into an agreement with those persons to ensure that they will not disclose it to any other person.
- 3.2.4 The researcher shall keep the information in a physically secure location to which access is given only to the researcher and to the persons given access under paragraph 3.2.2 above.
- 3.2.5 The researcher shall destroy all individual identifiers in the information by an agreed upon date.
- 3.2.6 The researcher shall not contact any individual about whom personal information relates, directly or indirectly, without the prior written authority of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.
- 3.2.7 The researcher shall notify the Board in writing immediately if the researcher becomes aware that any of the conditions set out in this section have been breached.

4. Informed Consent

- 4.1 Written informed consent must be obtained from all student participants in a research study. In the case of students under the age of 18, parent consent is required. The following supports are available to applicants to ensure procedures for active, informed consent are followed:
 - 4.1.1 Application to Conduct Research at KPRDSB (Appendix A);
 - 4.1.2 checklist for informed consent documents (Appendix A, page 5).
- 4.2 Information letters to participants may be sufficient in some cases (e.g. accompanying a survey data collection; action research with a small group of teachers involved in a collaborative project). In this case, the following information must be clearly specified in the information letter:
 - 4.2.1 who is conducting the research and how that person can be contacted;
 - 4.2.2 the nature of involvement of the participants (e.g. the data collection method; the amount of time required; the setting and all other features of the research which might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate);
 - 4.2.3 the timelines for the study;
 - 4.2.4 a clear statement indicating individuals may decline to participate or withdraw from participation without consequence;
 - 4.2.5 guarantee of individual confidentiality;
 - 4.2.6 the methods to be employed to ensure data security;
 - 4.2.7 conditions under which the data will be made available to another person.
- 4.3 Samples of informed consent letters are available upon request.