POLICY:	RESEARCH ACTIVITIES	#	904
SECTION:	900 : School and Community Relations	Page	1 of 4
APPROVAL/REVISION DATE:	April 20, 2026	EFFECTIVE DATE:	April 21, 2026
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CROSS REFERENCE:	Research Agreement Code of Ethics Form Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Personal Health Information Protection Act		

A: POLICY

1. 1.1 The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board (TBCDSB) supports research and program evaluation activities that contribute to improved student achievement, well-being, equity, inclusion, and system effectiveness, and that are aligned with the Board's strategic priorities, values and mission.

1.2 All research conducted within or involving the Board must:

1.2.1 demonstrate clear educational value and relevance to Board priorities;

1.2.2 protect the dignity, rights, respect for diverse identities and communities and privacy of all participants;

1.2.3 comply with applicable legislation, including the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), the Education Act, and related guidelines;

1.2.4 minimize disruption to instructional time and school operations; and

1.2.5 adhere to ethical standards for research

B: GUIDELINES

2. General

2.1 All research and experimental projects that require the use or cooperation of school students, the use of facilities or System personnel are to be conducted in accordance with this policy.

2.2 "Research" is defined as any activity which requires the facilities or use of the student, teacher or administrative populations of the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board for the purposes of scientific studies, the collection of statistical data, surveys or questionnaires, or manipulation of variables, or for the purpose of using such populations thereof for practical field work or for the advancement of the training or university or college students.

2.3 Internal research may be conducted by members of the Board's teaching staff, by teachers on leave, as part of their professional responsibilities to support system improvement. External research may be conducted by members of a university or college faculty, by authorized undergraduate or graduate students, or by persons associated with educational groups or organizations external to this system.

2.4 Research may be conducted only with the prior approval of the Senior Team and the Principal(s) of the school(s) involved.

3. Submitting Research Requests

All research requests are to be forwarded to the Director of Education and are to be accompanied by two (2) copies of the following documents:

3.1 An official letter of introduction from the researcher's supervisor;

3.2 A brief proposal outlining the purpose and nature of the research including:

- the topic and purpose of study;
- the department or school, space and facilities required;
- the number, age and grade level of students required;
- the dates and time required for conducting the research;
- the procedure or methodology for conducting the research, including a precise indication of the researcher's task;
- copies of all research instruments (e.g.: surveys, interview guides)
- proposed timeline
- plan for dissemination of findings
- proof of insurance and/or Vulnerable Sector Screening, as per Policy
- the potential risks and/or benefits to the subject(s)
- evidence of submission and approval of the project by the institution's Ethics Committee, where applicable.

3.3 Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Researchers are prohibited from contacting schools, staff, students, or families prior to receiving formal Board approval.

3.4 All researchers will adhere to the guidelines provided by the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.* This will include informing study participants when personal information is being collected. Researchers will inform the participants as to who will have access to the information, how the information will be used, and who to contact for more information about the data collected. Personal Information is defined in the legislation as: "information related to race, religion, age, sex, marital or family status, psychiatric, criminal or employment history, any identifying number assigned to an individual, the address, telephone number and personal views of the individual relating to another individual".

4. Research Approvals

4.1 Senior Team will assess the proposal in terms of appropriateness and timeliness. This will include but not be limited to:

- alignment with Board priorities and Catholic values;
- educational merit and potential benefit to the Board;
- methodological quality and feasibility;
- minimal disruption to learning and school operations;
- appropriateness for the age and needs of participants;
- compliance with privacy, confidentiality, and ethical standards; and
- consideration of equity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness.

If the proposed research is approved, a copy of the proposal will be forwarded to the Principal(s) in whose school(s) the research is to be undertaken and a Supervisory Officer will be designated to oversee the research project.

4.2 In the event that the research cannot be conducted, the Principal will notify the designated Supervisory Officer of his or her decision.

4.3 Where research activities involve students and/or staff members, the informed consent of the individuals or, in the case of a student under 18 years old, the consent of the parent or guardian is also required.

4.4 Research approved by the Senior Team that is not school-based will be under the jurisdiction of the appropriate Supervisory Officer.

4.5 Upon notification of approval of the proposed research, the Supervisory Officer will inform the researcher(s) and request the latter to sign the *Research Agreement Code of Ethics Form*. No research activity is to commence until the *Research Agreement Code of Ethics Form* is returned to the Supervisory Officer.

5. Privacy and Data Management

5.1 All research must comply with MFIPPA, PHIPA, and applicable privacy legislation.

Researchers must:

- collect only the minimum amount of personal information necessary;
- ensure secure storage and restricted access to data;
- de-identify or anonymize data wherever possible;
- not disclose identifiable information without explicit written consent;
- comply with Board requirements regarding the use of digital tools and platforms; and

- securely destroy data in accordance with the approved data retention schedule.

Any privacy breach must be reported immediately to the Board.

6. Conducting Research and Final Reports

6.1 Researchers, while in the school, must adhere to all Board policies and procedures, including visitor protocols.

6.2 The Superintendent of Education, Superintendent of Business or the School Principal may suspend or terminate a research activity where either believes the activity is being conducted in an unsatisfactory manner, or where the activity unduly disrupts the operation of a class, the school, the System or where the Code of Ethics has not been respected.

6.3 Researchers shall hold in strict confidence, all data collected and information as to its source. Strict anonymity of sources is to be preserved. Results of the research may be disseminated through academic publications and shared with participating school staff and the appropriate Superintendent of Education in the form of a research report. All reporting shall ensure that no school, student, or individual is identified without the prior written consent of the Board.