**Guidance Document:**

**Research with Human Participants Conducted Through School Boards**

This guidance sheet provides information under the following headings:

* Tips for Researchers
* Tips for Supervisors of McMaster Student Researchers
* Hamilton Public and Separate School Boards’ Research Review Requirements
* Contact information for local and Greater Hamilton school board research review committees

**Tips for Researchers**

* McMaster researchers must obtain research ethics clearance at McMaster ***as well as*** from the at the school research site. In fact, many school board research review committees expect university based researchers to obtain clearance from their institution’s REB first and then send their application and supporting documents. BUT check each school board’s requirements about this first, some boards encourage simultaneously submitting the application to both the school board’s committee and the University REB. This allows for the request to be placed in the Board’s queue for review as the REB clearance is received.
* In Ontario, most municipalities have public and separate (Catholic) school boards. Most school boards now have their own Research Review Committees (RRC) with their own policies, requirements, forms, deadlines and other processes that must be satisfied before they will permit you to recruit study participants or collect data within their boards.
* Some school boards also require you to also provide a background check known as a “Vulnerable Sector Check”, “Criminal Background Check” or “Police Check” before they will permit you to conduct your research in their schools. Here is a link to the Hamilton Police Services Website. If you come from elsewhere you may need to go to your home municipality <https://hamiltonpolice.on.ca/how-to/obtain-criminal-records-check> . Don’t leave the police check to the last minute. Sometimes they take time.
* Because research conducted in elementary or high schools adds an additional layer of procedures, it helps to work backwards from the date the final submission date that a thesis, report or paper needs completed. Making a timeline can really help keep things on track. Make sure you investigate these different requirements early, such as when you are designing your research proposal. Give yourself enough time to obtain permission to collect the data, get police checks if required, get ethics and other clearances so you can collect and analyze the data, and write it up and finalize.
* Canada’s Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) states that researchers can engage in initial exploratory activity to determine if it is even feasible to do a study with a population or to investigate if organizations might be able to assist with passing on information about the study to potential participants. Of course, NO recruitment or data collection can occur until research ethics clearance has been obtained. Some school boards also ask researchers to refrain from directly contacting staff and stakeholders until their research application has been approved and coordinating efforts at the school board have been established. It is helpful to contact your REB at the university for advice proactively Researchers should be aware that while the Board’s Research Review Committee and/or Senior Administration may approve a research application, principals, students and parents are under no obligation to participate in any research activity. A Principal may decline their school’s participation while the Board provided approval. In general, Principals may **NOT** initiate participation in a research project within their school if the project has not been reviewed and approved by the Board’s Research Review Committee and/or Senior Administration.
* Many school boards have also established “Strategic Directions for Research” documents that describe the school board’s research goals. These research goals guide the type of research they will endorse in their schools. They are more likely to grant permission to conduct research that involves their students or staff, if your research falls within these categories. **HINT**: Do your homework before you finalize your research topic.
* School Board Research Review Committees (RRC) have also reported that university researchers need to pay special attention to the appropriate reading level of study documents, especially parental consent forms, child/youth assent forms, and survey or interview questions. See the MREB website for “*A Guide to Converting Documents into Plain Language*” <http://reo.mcmaster.ca/educational-resources> this resource can really help make sure people understand what you are asking them to do and can contribute to a better response rate.
* Another area of careful consideration is the inclusion of sensitive items in questionnaires. For example, items that pertain to sensitive issues like sexuality, gender identity or suicidality can cause discomfort for some individuals. Inclusion of those items needs careful consideration and researchers should be prepared that they may be asked to remove or edit those items when the school board deems that their inclusion would not be appropriate. Other sensitive items pertain to questions that may be interpreted as evaluative of teachers’, principals’ or other staff’s practices. Collecting data pertaining to school board staff’s practices must not conflict with the respective Employee Collective Agreements.
* Researchers should be prepared that their application may not receive approval at a board and therefore ought to consider the idea of submitting their application to multiple school boards. Applications are typically denied due to the large number of research requests that school board receive and the need to balance competing priorities including the school board’s own system-level research.

**Tips for Supervisors of McMaster Student Researchers:**

* Please work carefully with your student to ensure that the research they are planning to conduct under your supervision is methodologically and ethically sound. In addition to satisfying McMaster’s research ethics requirements, school boards have their own additional **requirements and timelines for submission and review** that must be factored into the overall timeline for student projects.

**Hamilton Public and Separate School Boards’ Research Review Requirements:**

* The following section provides contact information about Hamilton’s two school boards, their guidelines for applying for approval to conduct human participant research within their boards.

**Contact Information: School Board Research Review Committees *(26 April 2017)***

* Guidance for greater Hamilton area (GHA) school boards found in this document and the contact information below can help you search for similar school board-based research review committees in other jurisdictions.

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| **PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS** | **SEPARATE (CATHOLIC) SCHOOL BOARDS** |
| **Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board**  **E-BEST** Email:  [ebest@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:ebest@hwdsb.on.ca)  **Tracy Weaver** – Research Assistant  905-527-5092 x2263  **Dr. Rossana Bisceglia** – Research Officer  905-527-5092 x2253 On res  Acting during Dr. Bisceglia’s leave:  **Ann McKerlie** Manager,  Evidence-Based Education Services Team (E-BEST) T: 905-527-5092  Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board 20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558 Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1 T: 905-527-5092 ext. 2259 Email: [ebest@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:ebest@hwdsb.on.ca)  Detailed Guidelines, submission deadlines & application form**:** [**http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/e-best/?page\_id=17**](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/e-best/?page_id=17) | **Hamilton-Wentworth District Catholic School Board**  Dr. Clinton Davis, 905-525-2930 ext. 2841  (Thu & Fri)  Rose Cook (Administrative Assistant) X 2852  [*davisc@hwcdsb.ca*](mailto:%20davisc@hwcdsb.ca)  FAX: 905-525-1724  90 Mulberry St. P. O. Box 2012  Hamilton, Ont. L8N 3R9  Guidelines deadlines for submission of documents and application form (in one document0**:**  [**https://www.hwcdsb.ca/board/biddingandproposals/**](https://www.hwcdsb.ca/board/biddingandproposals/) |
| **Halton District School Board**  (For September meeting submit before June 15th)  Camille Petch, Administrative Assistant  Research Advisory Committee  Halton District School Board  J. W. Singleton Education Centre  P.O. Box 5005, 2050 Guelph Line,  905-335-3663 ext. 3378 Burlington, Ont. L7R 3Z2  **Guidelines and application form:** | **Halton District Catholic School Board**  Research and Development  Erica Van Roosmalen   * + 1. ext. 367   **Guidelines and application form:** |
| **Peel District School Board**  External Screening Committee  Paul Fabro  905-890-1010 ext. 2610 FAX: 905-890-2752  [paul.favaro@peelsb.com](mailto:paul.favaro@peelsb.com)  Meetings Sept. 24 (submit one week before)  Oct. 29 Nov. 26  **Guidelines and application form:** | **Differin-Peel District Catholic School Board**  Contact: Diana Cromarty  905-890-0708 ext. 4261  Chair: Principal Rina Berlingieri  [Rina.berlingieri@dpcdsb.org](mailto:Rina.berlingieri@dpcdsb.org)  905-501-0400  **Guidelines and application form:** [**http://www3.dpcdsb.org/about-us/research-applications**](http://www3.dpcdsb.org/about-us/research-applications) |
| **Brantford, Brant County and area --**  **Grand Erie District School Board**  Direct questions to: Greg Rousell  519 756-6301 ext.281042 or [greg.rousell@granderie.ca](mailto:greg.rousell@granderie.ca)  Guidelines for how to apply, needed documents and application form**:** (Guidance and application form found on this website:  <http://www.granderie.ca/Community/research/Pages/default.aspx#.WQDrMvnyuUk> | **Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic School Board**  Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic School board  Education Centre 322 Fairview Drive, P.O. Box 217, Brantford, ON N3T 5M8  Phone: 519.756.6369 Fax: 519.756.9913 Email: [**info@bhncdsb.ca**](mailto:info@bhncdsb.ca)  Guidance and research application form found here: <http://www.bhncdsb.ca/sites/2016-17/files/resources/Research%20Initiated%20by%20External%20Agencies_500.10_complete.pdf> |