tdsb Toronto District School Board

TDSB External Research Application

Researcher Information

1. Name of Investigator(s) *

2. Institution/Agency *

3. Contact Phone Number *

4. Contact E-mail Address *

5. Please check all that apply *

- [ ] Doctoral Thesis
- [ ] Master's Thesis
- [ ] Institutionally Funded Project
- [ ] Externally Funded Project
- [ ] Other - please describe:

6. Are you a TDSB employee? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

7. What is your role/title at TDSB? If school-based, please include the name of the school site where you work.

8. Do you have a partnership/MOU with the TDSB? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

9. What is the name of the TDSB MOU/partnership connected with this research study?

10. Please share the name and contact information of the primary contact person for the MOU/partnership.

Study Information

11. Title of Study *

12. Area of Focus *

13. Indicate other school boards to which you are applying

14. If applicable, Supervisor/Sponsoring Department

15. If applicable, Chairperson of Department

16. If applicable, TDSB School or Staff Endorsement

Study Dates

17. Data collection start date (dd/mm/yyyy). *

18. Estimated completion of data collection (dd/mm/yyyy). *

19. Estimated completion of the final report (dd/mm/yyyy). *

Study Overview and Theoretical Framework

20. Please explain in plain language a general and brief description of your research project. Please include the study/research project questions. *

21. Please describe the relevance and value of the study/research project to education and the TDSB, including how it supports the goals outlined in the TDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) 2024-28. *

22. Please provide a brief, high-level summary of the project's theoretical framework and highlights of the most relevant literature. *

23. Is this a multi-phase or multi-year study? If yes, please only include information in the application for the current year/phase. Additional phases/years will require further approval. *

- Yes
- No

Methods

24. This study will involve the following (select all that apply) *

- [ ] Web-based surveys/questionnaires
- [ ] In-person/verbal surveys or questionnaires
- [ ] Interviews
- [ ] Focus groups
- [ ] Workshops
- [ ] Virtual teleconferencing (e.g. Zoom, Teams, FaceTime, phone)
- [ ] Sharing circles/talking circles
- [ ] Story-based research/learning from Elders
- [ ] Arts-based data collection
- [ ] Interventions/exercise
- [ ] Action research
- [ ] Experiments (lab-based, field, online)
- [ ] Observation
- [ ] Audio/video-recording of persons 18 and older
- [ ] Conducting, administering or supervising tests or therapies that require professional credentials (please describe in the "other" option below)
- [ ] Other - please describe:

25. The TDSB discourages video recording of students under the age of 18. Will this study involve audio/video-recording of students? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

26. If you will be using audio/video recording or taking photographs/images of participants under the age of 18, please explain this process and why this information is required for research purposes.

27. Please describe how each method selected above will be implemented and the key concepts being measured. Please make sure to include all details in plain language. *

28. Will you be using secondary data (i.e. data originally collected for a purpose other than the current research study)? Please note, if this data is TDSB data, a data request form will need to be completed in addition to this application. Please email research@tdsb.on.ca for a data request form. *

- Yes
- No

Data Analysis

29. Briefly describe the proposed method(s) of data analysis and the theoretical framework you will be using. *

30. Will you be using AI (e.g. Copilot, Gemini, ChatGPT, Claude, etc.) to support your data analysis? *

- Yes
- No

31. Will the AI model be a closed, secure system within an institution or an open public-facing AI model?

- Closed, secure institutional system
- Open, public-facing AI model
- Unsure

32. Will any identifying or sensitive information be uploaded into an AI model as part of data analysis for this project?

- Yes
- No

33. If you plan to involve AI in your data analysis, please describe how it will be used, how data storage/access/retention will be handled, and whether participants can decline AI processing of their data while still being eligible for study participation.

34. Please explain how you will consider/address systemic biases inherent in AI models in your data analysis.

Risks, Benefits and Incentives

35. Describe any direct benefits that participants and/or communities may receive from participating in this study. If there are no direct benefits to participants and/or communities, state this in the application form and the Letter of Information/Consent Form. *

36. Describe any incentives or compensation being provided to participants and explain why it is being offered. *

37. Select all risks (real or potential) associated with participation in this study (select all that apply): *

- [ ] Physical risk (e.g. injury)
- [ ] Privacy risk (e.g. sending information, collection of sensitive personal information)
- [ ] Less than 6 participants (increased risk of identification/re-identification)
- [ ] Psychological or emotional risk
- [ ] Questions about sensitive or personal issues
- [ ] Social risk
- [ ] Risks to participants due to power imbalance (e.g. instructor/student)
- [ ] Cultural sensitivities
- [ ] Third-party risks (e.g. risks to family)
- [ ] Risk to greater community
- [ ] No known risks
- [ ] Other - please describe:

38. Please describe all potential short-term/long-term risks selected above. This includes any foreseeable harms, discomforts, and inconveniences, etc. for study participants and/or the general population/community. Ensure that you describe risks to all participant populations/communities, as applicable. Note: If your study includes images/videos or content that may be upsetting, please ensure there is language included in study materials and instruments in advance of this type of content to provide an immediate notification/warning (e.g., trigger warnings). *

39. Identify any privacy risks and threats to the security of information for all stages of the research life cycle, and how appropriate measures will be implemented to protect against such risks. *

40. Please describe your plan if an identified risk were to occur. Describe how you will provide support to participants/communities in the context of these risks. *

Recruitment

41. Explain how participants will be recruited (e.g., snowball technique, random sampling, previously known to interviewer, telephone solicitation, etc.). Provide information about who will be recruiting participants.

Please note, where applicable, all external researchers must approach the school principal first during recruitment. *

42. Describe how schools/participants will be selected. (Note: individual names and/or other personal information will not be disclosed to researchers for their sample selection.) Please confirm if the PI already knows or has approached any potential TDSB participants/schools for this study. *

43. Please specify the following (if not applicable, please put N/A):*

	Number
Number of schools (elementary, middle, and/or secondary).	
Number of Students	
Number of Teachers	
Number of School Administrators	
Number of School Support Staff	
Number of TDSB Central Staff	
Number of Parents	
Other Participant (please specify):	

44. Please specify the time commitment for participants (if not applicable, please put N/A): *

	Time Commitment
Students	
Teachers	
Administrators	
School Support Staff	
TDSB Central Staff	
Parents	
Other Participant (please specify):	

Study Location/Facilities

45. Please describe where the study/research project will be conducted and what facilities will be required (e.g. virtual/online only, in a classroom space in a school, participants require a laptop or device with internet, etc.). *

Informed Consent

46. Active parental permission is required for any research with or about students under the age of 18 years in TDSB schools. Passive or implied consent is not accepted and parental/guardian permission must be signed for informed consent. Please ensure that application consent forms include all the information noted in the Guidelines documents, which can be found on TDSB's ERRC website: External Research Application. Please note that explicit consent is required to use methods of recording (audio and video).

Please explain how and when participants will be approached for recruitment and who will obtain consent/assent. If there is an existing relationship between the potential participants and the person obtaining the consent/assent, explain the nature of the relationship (e.g., circle of care, employer, supervisor, instructor, etc.) and describe how you will minimize any undue influence/power imbalance. *

47. Describe the process by which participants can withdraw their consent including consent to use their data. *

Privacy, Confidentiality and Data Storage

48. List all demographic, sensitive, personal and/or health information that you will be collecting. Explain why you need to collect this information and how it will be used for the study. This includes both research and logistical purposes (e.g., as research data, for scheduling appointments/interviews, providing compensation, etc.). *

49. Describe who will have access to the data and/or personal information collected during this research. Will the data be accessible to collaborators outside the named research team? If so, please specify. Please note: the TDSB reserves the right to request that any individual to whom personal information may be accessible for the study/research project signs a privacy and confidentiality agreement in the form acceptable to the TDSB. *

50. If there are any plans to share study data outside of the research team, provide all of the details related to data transfer, including privacy and security considerations. If the data in this study will be accessed through secondary data for additional research studies in the future, please ensure participants are made aware during the consent process of how their data will be used and shared in the future. *

51. Provide a detailed description of the procedures and timeframes for the secure use of data through the course of your research study. How will the research team (and other collaborators if applicable) access, modify, and contribute data throughout the project? How and where will your data be stored and backed up during your research project? *

52. Describe the provisions and specific safeguards that will be taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality of participant information, including the collection, use and disclosure of personal information (if any). Describe how the data and personal information will be protected from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification, loss, or theft. Include information on physical, administrative and/or technical security measures in place to protect the data and personal information. *

53. When the study is complete, how long will the data be kept? Where will you deposit your data for long-term preservation and access at the end of your research project? *

Feedback

54. Describe the procedures for providing feedback to the participating schools, students, staff and/or communities involved. *

55. What are your intended plans for the future use and/or publication of results? As a condition of ERRC approval, it is required that an electronic copy of study results be submitted via email to the ERRC Chair. In addition to the full report, please attach a one to two-page abstract that highlights the key findings and describes the relevance and implications of the research findings to educational practice. *

Indigenous and Community-based Research

56. Is this research designed to specifically recruit or analyze data from Indigenous participants and/or will it involve community based-research? Are you asking First Nation, Métis, or Inuit individuals to self-identify? Note: Per TCPS 2 Chapter 9 'Community – describes a group of people with a shared identity or interest that has the capacity to act or express itself as a collective. A community may include members from multiple cultural groups. A community may be territorial, organizational, or a community of interest.' Please note, the TDSB is currently reviewing guidelines for external research with Indigenous peoples and community-based research. As this review is ongoing, additional information may be required outside of this application form. *

- Yes
- No

57. Have potential participants/communities been involved with the development of this research project (individuals, organizations, advisory groups, etc.) to date? If no consultation process is planned explain why not. Describe if Elders and/or knowledge holders will be involved in the project. Explain the protocols used for engagement with Indigenous knowledge and describe how it will be protected. Describe how your project will help address participants' and/or communities local priorities and/or describe the relevance of this research project for the participants/communities. Describe how your project supports local needs.

58. Describe who will make decisions about data governance and discuss if a data governance agreement will be maintained with the participants/communities throughout the life of the project. Please note, Chapter 9 of the TCPS 2 Article 9.16 suggests that “Researchers and community partners shall address privacy and confidentiality for communities and individuals early on in the community engagement process.” If working with First Nation peoples, please describe how OCAP Principles will be taken into consideration. *What is OCAP®? The First Nations principles of OCAP® are a set of standards that establish how First Nations data should be collected, protected, used, or shared. They are the de facto standard for how to conduct research with First Nations. If you will be using the OCAP® principles, describe who will own the data and research results; who will have access to data; and describe how and where the data be stored. There are four components of OCAP®: Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession.*

59. Describe how the participants and/or communities will be involved in the interpretation, analysis, and dissemination of knowledge sharing (e.g., conferences, workshops, creation of audiovisual materials, co-creation of knowledge mobilization plan). If no external involvement is planned, explain why not.

Submission of Additional Materials

60. Please submit all materials relevant to the study/research project as ONE file. Materials must be submitted in FINAL form. The research proposal must have the support of the researcher's affiliated agency or institution and where applicable their Research Ethics Board's approval prior to submission to the TDSB. By submitting your application, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the complete "Guidelines of Conducting External Research in the TDSB."

Your research may have additional relevant materials, but please include:

- All final data collection instruments (surveys, interview/focus group questions, observation protocols, etc.)
- Information letters and consent forms for all participant groups. Note: active parental consent is needed for all students under age 18
- Institutional research ethics approval
- A vulnerable sector police check (if working in schools and/or with students)
- Information letter or e-mail invitation for administrators (if recruiting TDSB school-based staff/students)
- Study recruitment flyers (if relevant)

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Final Checklist

61. Before you submit this application form, please ensure that final versions of all additional materials relevant to the study/research project have been attached and all questions have been answered.

Please confirm your application complies with the following requirements: *

- [ ] The application has the prior approval of the researcher's affiliated agency or institution. If you are associated with a university or hospital, your proposal must have successfully undergone the ethical review process in your organization before submitting to TDSB.
- [ ] FINAL copies of all data collection instruments (e.g. surveys, interview questions, focus group protocols) information letters for all groups of participants (e.g. parents, students, educators), including, if appropriate, an information letter for school principals that outlines the purpose and scope of the study/research project and the commitments required of all potential participants have been attached to this application.
- [ ] I acknowledge that written parental permission/consent is required for any research involving students less than 18 years of age. In some cases, the translation of materials may be required. All supplementary documents, including consent and permission forms shall be reviewed and approved by the TDSB prior to distribution.
- [ ] The demands on staff and students have been considered. The numbers of schools, participants and the amount of time requested have been minimized. Large-scale studies or studies that are intrusive or interfere with regular school time will not be supported.
- [ ] I understand that if the research involves school visits, student data collection, or any data that personally identifies students, a valid Vulnerable Sector Screening Police Check must be submitted for any person(s) who will access this data.