

Conducting research in K-12 schools can be complex with several things to consider. The HREB has been asked to create guidelines to help clarify the process and identify the challenges. Please speak with the ethics officer if you are unsure about anything.

The time it takes a submission like this to go through the HREB is usually four to six weeks, sometimes longer, as it usually involves

If a teacher is responsible for teaching and the researcher wishes to observe what is occurring in the classroom, this is not an experimental or controlled research project. It is also not naturalistic observation where the observer works to minimize their presence in the community. There are many observers in classrooms every week; it is not something unusual. In this case:

- The researcher needs to minimally describe what is going on in the classroom that they will be observing (2.10 and 3.20).
- Consent forms will need to be completed prior to the start of observations. Researchers should be the ones explaining the project (3.8).
- The consent form (and 3.20) needs to clearly outline what the researchers will be observing and why, and how they may interact with students (e.g., are they just observing, are they asking students questions, are they audio recording anything, are they taking pictures, are they gathering student products).
- If a participant and/or parent/guardian does not want to participate, that would require the researcher to not engage, record (i.e., observations), question, or gather anything from those students. While the teacher will know who chooses not to participate (and this should be noted in the confidentiality section of the consent form), no one else in the class should be aware of those who chose not to participate (3.40).

If a teacher is responsible for teaching and a researcher wishes to interview students with regards to an activity completed in class (whether observed or not), there are many things to consider.

- If a student and/or parent/guardian does not want a student to be interviewed:
 - (a) will other students know who chooses not to participate and how will this be

Other tips:

If this is a classroom activity that you are collecting data on, the ethics officer cannot be the point of contact for concerns.

If a researcher is conducting research at a school site, the school is not considered a collaborator; they are just an institution where research is taking place.

At no time should deception be used in school research (section 4).

Schools, especially public schools, are potentially contentious places when it comes to private funding or benefit (5.2). Given the position of power that schools, principals, and teachers have over students and their parents/guardians, it is critical that schools are not perceived to pressure students (or teachers) to participate. If a school may/will acquire funding or resources if research is completed, that would constitute pressure.

Benefits of the research alone need to be clear to the parents/guardians giving consent. If there is a classroom activity that you are collecting data on, the classroom activity is not a benefit of your research (5.1).

Risks should include reference to not only risks in participating, but also risks in relation to not participating and exclusion (section 6).