

An Ontario university wishes to conduct a writing study with my Grade 6 classes. What are the aspects of privacy and confidentiality that come into play?

This is a cross-sectional research study. Boards usually have procedures for research projects and criteria must be met before any personal information may be provided. Safety of personal information and the integrity of the pupils' learning experience must be considered and respected. Proof of consistent purpose and consent must be included. Note the MFIPPA regulation that applies, Specifically, S. 14 1 (e): A head shall refuse to disclose personal information to any person other than the individual to whom the information applies, except for a research project if,

- I. the disclosure is consistent with the conditions or reasonable expectations of disclosure under which the personal information was provided, collected or obtained,
- II. the research purpose for which the disclosure is to be made cannot be reasonably accomplished unless the information is provided in individually identifiable form, and
- III. the person who is to receive the record has agreed to comply with the conditions relating to security and confidentiality prescribed by the regulations.

The principal investigator and all persons working for or with the principal investigator on the approved research must agree to the terms of the Research Agreement, including the Intellectual Property and Ethics section thereof and commit to measures to ensure the security of the data as required by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Do school boards require consent to access their students' personal data when they wish to do a longitudinal research study?

A longitudinal research study is done using data from a particular source over a number of years. If the expressed purpose for doing the research is to improve student learning, then consent is not required as this use is consistent with legislated authorities for the provision of education services and their ongoing improvement.

Principal's Best Practice: Meet with your board's Chief Research Officer and discuss the parameters of the project. You may need to consult your PIM Champion as well. Ensure that you've advised parents of the study and how it will impact their children. Provide the parents an opportunity to decline. Signed consents should be collected from the parents and their children, if they are under 18 years of age.