1. **Preamble**

   1.1 It is the policy of the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) to permit authorized research personnel to use its facilities and involve students, employees and/or caregivers from the WRDSB in various research projects provided that:

      1.1.1 the research has received prior approval of the Research Review Committee;

      1.1.2 adheres to the guidelines outlined in this policy including ethical guidelines as set out by the Tri-Council Policy Statement of Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans TCPS 2;

      1.1.3 the number of requests to conduct research in schools is of sufficient quantity to require some kind of control in order to permit schools to fulfill their main role of providing students with first class public education;

      1.1.4 the research is being conducted in accordance with federal and provincial legislation governing the collection, use, disclosure and retention of personal information, including consent requirements, data security and data disposal.

   1.2 The WRDSB considers all activities where external researchers are endeavouring to collect information/data from WRDSB students, staff, and/or families as research that is subject to review by and approval from the WRDSB Research Review Committee.

   1.3 The Board recognizes that interest in conducting research related to student learning, or education more broadly, extends well beyond traditional academic research typically
1.3.1 program evaluations or research conducted by community organizations or nonprofit research organizations,
1.3.2 research conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Education or arms-length Ministry organizations (e.g., Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), School Mental Health Ontario),
1.3.3 research or inquiries conducted by WRDSB educators or school principals as part of Additional Qualification courses, Principal Qualification Program courses, and graduate degrees, and
1.3.4 research conducted by for-profit companies.

1.4 The Board appreciates that by allowing external researchers to conduct research related to student learning, or education more broadly that:
1.4.1 students, employees and caregivers can benefit in many ways as a result of some of the studies in which they participate; and
1.4.2 the collection of data through these projects can support WRDSB in engaging in data informed decision making.

1.5 Internal projects conducted by the Research Department to support the Strategic Plan and Operational Goals follow the ethical guidelines as set out by the Tri-Council Policy Statement of Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

2. Application of Core Principles

2.1 This policy is guided by the following three Core Principles (Chapter 1, Section B. Article 1.1, TCPS 2, 2018): Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice.

The practical application of these three Core Principles is reflected in, but not limited to, the following requirements of research conducted with WRDSB:

2.1.1 the participation of WRDSB students, staff, and/or caregivers in research is, and must be characterized as, voluntary,
2.1.2 researchers must obtain active, informed consent from WRDSB participants, and for students 18 years of age and younger, must obtain consent from students’ parents/guardians, and
2.1.3 the decision to participate in research must be fully informed.

2.2 For participants to make a fully informed decision about participating in research, the following information must be provided in plain language that is free of jargon:

2.2.1 the purpose of the research,
2.2.2 what participating in the research entails, including the amount of time required for participation,
2.2.3 the foreseeable risks to participating and the steps researchers will take to mitigate these risks,
2.2.4 the potential benefits of participating,
2.2.5 the steps that researchers will take to safeguard the confidentiality and security of the information participants provide, including the length of time the information will be retained,
2.2.6 the name and contact information of the individual that prospective participants may contact to have any of their questions about the research answered.

2.3 Participants are free to decline to participate in research and may withdraw their consent to participate without penalty. This includes assurances that a participant’s decision to decline participation or withdrawing their consent to participate will not impact their
relationship or standing with their school, department, the board, the researcher or the researcher's institution/organization.