

# Administrative Procedure 515

## Business Administration

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## EXTERNAL RESEARCH INITIATIVES

### BACKGROUND

Westmount Charter School (WCS) recognizes the value of educational research in supporting continuous improvement, innovation, and the advancement of teaching and learning. As a charter school with a mandate to implement research-based practices, the Charter Board supports participation in high-quality external research that contributes to student learning, professional practice, and the broader Alberta education community.

All research conducted within Westmount Charter School must:

- protect the rights, safety, dignity, and privacy of students, staff, and families;
- comply with the *Education Act*, the *Access to Information Act (ATIA)*, and the *Protection of Privacy Act (POPA)*; and
- align with the school's charter, vision, mission, and student-first priorities.

Research undertaken primarily for commercial or financial gain is not permitted.

The Superintendent is responsible for administering this Administrative Procedure.

### RESEARCH REQUEST PROCEDURES

1. Scope of Research Requiring Approval
  - 1.1 Any external research that:
    - 1.1.1 Involves students, parents, or staff;
    - 1.1.2 Collects, accesses, or uses personal or identifiable information; or
    - 1.1.3 May result in publication, presentation, or public reporting.must receive written approval from the Superintendent before any recruitment or data collection occurs.
  - 1.2 Informal classroom inquiries or internal school-based inquiries that do not involve external researchers or public dissemination are not governed by this procedure.
2. Research Proposal Requirements
  - 2.1 All requests must be submitted in writing to the Superintendent and must include:
    - 2.1.1 A detailed description of the purpose, scope, and timeline of the study;
    - 2.1.2 A clear explanation of what participation will involve for students, parents/guardians, and staff;
    - 2.1.3 Copies of all research instruments (e.g., surveys, interview protocols, observation tools);
    - 2.1.4 A description of how data will be collected, stored, protected, used, and destroyed;
    - 2.1.5 Confirmation of ethics approval from a recognized post-secondary or research ethics board;
    - 2.1.6 A plan for obtaining informed consent; and

- 2.1.7 Any other information requested by the Superintendent to assess risk, workload, or alignment.
- 3. School Involvement Prior to Approval
  - 3.1 Researchers may consult informally with Principals or teachers to explore feasibility.
  - 3.2 No school, staff member, student, or parent/guardian may participate in any part of a research project until formal Superintendent approval has been granted.
- 4. Informed Consent and Voluntary
  - 4.1 Informed, written consent must be obtained from parents/guardians for any research involving students.
  - 4.2 Where appropriate, student assent must also be obtained.
  - 4.3 Participation in any research study is entirely voluntary. Approval of a research project does not obligate any student, parent, or staff member to participate.
  - 4.4 Non-participation shall not result in any penalty, disadvantage, or loss of educational opportunity.
- 5. Privacy and Information Protection
  - 5.1 All personal, identifiable, and confidential information collected, used, or accessed through research activities shall be handled, stored, disclosed, retained, and disposed of in accordance with:
    - 5.1.1 The *Access to Information Act (ATIA)*;
    - 5.1.2 The *Protection of Privacy Act (POPA)*; and
    - 5.1.3 Westmount Charter School's privacy and records procedures, including AP-170 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy.
  - 5.2 Researchers must use only the data approved for collection and must not share, reuse, or publish identifiable information without explicit authorization.
- 6. Approval Criteria
  - 6.1 The Superintendent may approve, deny, or require modifications to a research request based on:
    - 6.1.1 Alignment with student learning and well-being;
    - 6.1.2 Impact on instructional time and staff workload;
    - 6.1.3 Ethical and privacy protections;
    - 6.1.4 Safety and risk considerations;
    - 6.1.5 Clarity of consent and communication; and
    - 6.1.6 Benefit to Westmount Charter School and the broader Alberta education community.
- 7. Reporting and Dissemination
  - 7.1 Researchers must provide the Superintendent with a summary of findings upon completion of the study.
  - 7.2 Any public reporting of results must:
    - 7.2.1 Protect confidentiality;
    - 7.2.2 Not identify Westmount Charter School or individuals without permission; and

7.2.3 Reflect the context of the study.

**Legal Reference:** *Education Act*  
*Access to Information Act (ATIA)*  
*Protection of Privacy Act (POPA)*  
**Cross Reference:** AP-170 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy  
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