



GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

**for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements,
Practices, and Observances**

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Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances, 1st Edition

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Director's MESSAGE

The Durham District School Board has the privilege and opportunity, through public education, to serve students from a diverse range of backgrounds, which includes a variety of faiths. For many families, religion is a significant part of life—as a board, the DDSB acknowledges the importance of religious traditions and calendar dates to all faiths in Durham, and recognizes that these need to be considered in planning school and board events.

I would like to thank the members of the writing team for their efforts in creating this guideline with the goal of increasing awareness to the richness of religious faiths in our community. I would also like to thank our community members who have given their time and commitment to provide information and guidance to the DDSB in the creation of this document.

This guide, together with DDSB Policy 4107, will provide an important resource which will support our efforts in recognizing the importance of religious faith in the daily lives of all people in our community.

Sincerely,

Martyn Beckett
Director of Education

Acknowledgement

This document is produced under authorization of the Toronto District School Board. Changes to the document are the responsibility of the Durham District School Board.

We would like to acknowledge the work of all those from the Toronto District School Board who assisted with the development of the original document.

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*Christian system is used for dates in this document.

Durham District School Board MISSION AND VALUES



Religious pluralism poses an opportunity in any multicultural society, especially one as diverse as ours. Although the law is developing rapidly in this area, an informed spirit of understanding and compromise is indispensable to any civil society, as well as to its capacity to make opportunities available to everyone, on equal terms, regardless of creed.

Ontario Human Rights: Policy Guidelines on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances

The Durham District School Board Mission Statement

Success in learning to meet the challenges of the future.

The Durham District School Board Values

- each and every student
- a strong public education system
- a partnership of students, schools, family, and community
- the uniqueness and diversity of its students and its community
- the commitment and skills of its staff
- equity, innovation, accountability, and accessibility
- learning environments that are safe, nurturing, positive, and respectful

DURHAM DIRECTIONS

Our Plan for Student and School Success — 2009-2013

Ensure Openness, Accountability and Safety

- Provide safe and secure learning and work environments
 - Promote positive relationships among all staff, students, and parents
- Provide complete information about student progress and achievement to parents/guardians
- Promote effective management of available resources
 - Provide opportunities for staff and students to demonstrate respect for our environment
 - Ensure a welcoming environment in all schools and Board offices
- Communicate openly and proactively with the public

Promote Student Achievement and Discovery

- Set high expectations for student achievement and measure the outcomes
- Focus on literacy and numeracy as key areas of learning
- Deliver a range of programs to meet the learning needs of all students
- Strive to be leaders in Special Education
- Use technology effectively to enhance student learning
- Support students' development through the arts and physical activity
- Promote critical and creative thinking to prepare students to face challenges and changes
- Provide opportunities to develop leadership skills in staff and students

Implement Equitable Principles and Practices

- Strive to provide equitable services, programs and facilities
 - Support diversity through anti-racism and equity education
 - Attract and retain a diverse staff of dedicated professionals
 - Encourage cooperation, acceptance and respect in our school communities
 - Provide opportunities for students to develop positive character traits
 - Support quality education through system-wide professional learning for staff



Success in learning to meet the challenges of the future.

General Guidelines and Procedures for **RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION**

A. Introduction

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) values the uniqueness and diversity of its students and community, and understands that people from diverse religious communities need to work and study in environments that are safe and respectful.

In a region as dynamic and diverse as Durham, it is important that the public school system actively acknowledge both the freedom of religion that is protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the protection from discrimination and harassment based on religion that is part of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. This proactive stance is demanding: it requires constant integration and evaluation of new knowledge and new approaches. Ultimately, the DDSB believes that the process of accommodation and partnership with members of its community will help to build an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

While this document establishes guidelines and procedures for religious accommodation in the DDSB, the Board acknowledges the fact that many of those who study and work in the school system do not have religious affiliation. The Board assures these members of its community that their rights and privileges are not interfered with by the religious accommodation guidelines and procedures.

In addition to the guidelines and procedures for religious accommodation in DDSB schools and properties, this document also provides:

- the legislative and policy context for religious accommodation

- appendices that briefly describe some of the religions of the staff and student body of the DDSB, noting the practices and observances that may need accommodation (These descriptions have been developed in consultation with Faith Group Representatives from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.)
- an appendix that provides interfaith education resources
- Frequently Asked Questions
- case scenarios

While these guidelines and procedures recommend courses of action and expectations for those who work in or are associated with the DDSB, in the long term, the best strategies for achieving an inclusive learning and working environment is a pro-active education system. It is essential that the curriculum, teaching methods, and management practices of the DDSB support the values embodied in this document. As well, it is essential that the Board make every effort to remove any discriminatory barriers experienced by members of religious communities in employment policies and practices, and in access to programs, resources, and facilities for members of religious communities.

Respect for religious diversity is a shared responsibility. While the Board works to ensure that students and staff are able to observe the tenets of their faith, free from harassment or discrimination, it is also the responsibility of the students and the community to help the schools by highlighting and providing understanding of

the needs of the many religious communities that share the resources of Durham schools.

B. Legislative and Policy Context

All school boards exist within a broader context of law and public policy that protect and defend human rights. At the DDSB, a number of policy statements have been developed that both reinforce federal and provincial legislation, and help ensure that the freedoms they name are protected within the school system.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protects freedom of religion. The *Ontario Human Rights Code* protects an individual's freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion. The Ontario Ministry of Education's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and Program/Policy Memorandum (PPM 119) identifies the shared mandate of all publicly funded school boards to ensure the development, implementation, and monitoring of equity and inclusive education policies, board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices, as well as shared and committed leadership, inclusive curriculum and assessment practices, school community relationships, religious accommodation, school climate and the prevention of discrimination and harassment, professional learning, and accountability and transparency.

The Durham District School Board recognizes and is committed to the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion through its commitments to Equity Policy implementation, the Human Rights Policy and Procedures, and the Safe Schools Policy.

B1: Accommodation Based on Request

The DDSB will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation to individual members of a reli-

gious group who state that the Board's operations or requirements interfere with their ability to exercise their religious beliefs and practices. The Board will balance its decision to accommodate on several factors, such as undue hardship, including: the cost of the accommodation to the Board, health and safety risks to the person requesting accommodation and to others, and the effect of accommodation on the Board's ability to fulfill its duties under Board policies and the *Education Act*.

B2: Unresolved Requests

Despite the Board's commitment to accommodate, an individual may feel that discrimination based on religion has occurred. The Board will, through its Equity Policy and Procedures, take reasonable steps to address the unresolved issues raised by the affected person.

C. Definitions

C1: Accommodation

The Durham District School Board's Equity Policy and Procedure defines accommodation as an "obligation to meet the special needs of individuals and groups protected by the Policy, unless meeting such needs would create undue hardship. For a blind employee, accommodation could mean providing a voice synthesizer on a computer; for other protected groups, it could mean altering a dress code or changing shift work to accommodate employees' individual religious practices." (Definitions and Glossary, Appendix A)

The Ontario Human Rights Policy Guidelines on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances defines accommodation as a duty corresponding to the right to be free from discrimination.

The Code provides the right to be free from discrimination, and there is a general corresponding duty to protect the right: the "duty to accommo-

date.” The duty arises when a person’s religious beliefs conflict with a requirement, qualification, or practice. The code imposes a duty to accommodate based on the needs of the group of which the person making the request is a member. Accommodation may modify a rule or make an exception to all or part of it for the person requesting accommodation.”

(Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances, Ontario Human Rights Commission, Oct. 20, 1996, p. 5)

The duty to accommodate, then, is an obligation that arises where requirements, factors, or qualifications, which are imposed in good faith, have an adverse impact on, or provide an unfair preference for, a group of persons based on a protected ground under the code. The duty to accommodate is not required where it would cause an undue hardship.

C2: Creed

The Ontario Human Rights Policy Guidelines on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances defines creed in the following terms:

Creed is interpreted to mean “religious creed” or “religion.” It is defined as a professed system and confession of faith, including both beliefs and observances or worship. A belief in a God or gods, or a single supreme being or deity, is not a requisite.

Religion is broadly accepted by the Commission to include, for example, non-deistic bodies of faith, such as the spiritual faiths/practices of Aboriginal cultures, as well as *bona fide* newer religions (assessed on a case-by-case basis).

The existence of religious beliefs and practices are both necessary and sufficient to the meaning of creed, if the beliefs and practic-

es are sincerely held and/or observed.

“Creed” is defined subjectively. The Code protects personal religious beliefs, practices, or observances, even if they are not essential elements of the creed, provided they are sincerely held.

It is the Commission’s position that every person has the right to be free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour that is based on religion or which arises because the person who is the target of the behaviour does not share the same faith. This principle extends to situations where the person who is the target of such behaviour has no religious beliefs whatsoever, including atheists and agnostics who may, in these circumstances, benefit from the protection set out in the Code.

In either situation, creed must be involved—either because the person who is the subject of the discrimination is seeking to practise his or her own religion, or because the person who is harassing or discriminating is trying to impose his or her creed on someone else. In both cases, creed must be involved. Creed does not include secular, moral, or ethical beliefs, or political convictions. This policy does not extend to religions that incite hatred or violence against other individuals or groups, or to practices and observances that purport to have a religious basis, but which contravene international human rights standards or criminal law.

(Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances, Ontario Human Rights Commission, Oct. 20, 1996, p. 2)

D. Areas of Accommodation

For many students and staff in Durham schools and workplaces, there are a number of areas where the

practice of their religion will result in a request for accommodation from the school and/or the Board. These areas may include the following:

- Observation of major religious holy days and celebrations
- School opening or closing exercises
- Prayer
- Dietary requirements
- Fasting
- Religious attire
- Modesty requirements in Physical Education
- Participation in daily activities and curriculum

When concerns related to beliefs and practices arise in schools, collaboration among school, student, family, and religious community is often needed in order to develop appropriate accommodations. Building trust and mutual respect is an important aspect of accommodation, and it is the role of the administrators and teachers to ensure fairness and respect for the diverse religious beliefs and practices of students and staff in the school system. However, school administrators and teachers should not be placed in the position of monitoring a child's compliance with a religious obligation, and enforcing such practices as performing daily prayers or wearing a head covering is not the responsibility of the school.

Religious accommodation in the DDSB will be granted in the context of respect for the Human Rights and Safe Schools Policies, and the DDSB's Mission and Values.

E. General Guidelines and Procedures for Religious Accommodation

The following are general guidelines and proce-

dures to be followed when considering accommodation for religious purposes. These general statements do not name specific religions, but simply refer to common areas of concern.

E1: Procedures for Religious Holy Days and Celebrations

The Education Act, Section 21:2(g) establishes that "A child is excused from attendance at school if he/she is absent on a day regarded as a holy day by the church or religious denomination to which he/she belongs."

Collective agreements and Terms and Conditions of Employment provide for the accommodation of employees wishing to observe holy days.

All staff and students who observe religious holy days should be allowed leave without having to undergo unnecessary hardship in the request of the leave. The following procedures should be followed.

Staff

The person requesting the leave should advise the administration at the beginning of the school year. If notice in September is not feasible, the person should make the request as early as possible. The absence of employees due to religious observances should be granted as determined by the appropriate collective agreements and Terms and Conditions of Employment.

Students

Students are required to present a written notice from their parents/guardians/caregivers, specifying the religious holy days in which they will be absent from school. This notice should be made enough in advance (preferably at the beginning of the school year) to ensure that scheduling for major evaluations (e.g., tests, assignments, examinations) takes the holy days into consideration.

Student handbooks, parent newsletters, and school announcements should include information about religious holy days procedures.

Schools must make every reasonable effort to be aware of the religious observances of their staff, students, and community when planning special school activities; examination schedules, school concerts, parent interview dates, field trips, and other events.

In the case of an absence for religious holy day reasons, major tests or exams should be rescheduled for the student.

A list of major religious holy days is provided in Appendix 2.

E2: Opening and Closing Exercises

Procedures

If a student or parent/guardian objects to all or part of opening or closing exercises due to religious beliefs, the pupil will be exempted and given the option not to participate and to remain in class or in an agreed-upon location throughout the duration of the exercise.

Opening and Closing Exercises, and exemption from them, are established in Ontario schools by the *Education Act*, in Section 304 of the *Safe Schools Act*, 2000, and in Section 4 of Regulation 298.

Under section 304 of the *Safe Schools Act*, 2000, boards are required to ensure that opening and closing exercises are held in all of their schools. The exercises are required by the *Safe Schools Act* must include the singing of “O Canada” and may include the recitation of a pledge of citizenship. Students can be excused from participating in the exercises in the circumstances set out in the regulations:

“Exemptions:

4. A student is not required to sing ‘O Canada’ or recite the pledge of citizenship in the following circumstances:

- (1) In the case of a student who is less than 18 years old, if the student’s parent or guardian applies to the principal to be exempted from doing so
- (2) In the case of a student who is at least 18 years old, if the student applies to the principal to be exempted from doing so.”

According to “Regulation to amend Regulation 298 of the Revised Regulations of Ontario, 1990, section 4” (September 1, 2000):

- “4. (1) Every public elementary and secondary school shall hold opening or closing exercises in public elementary and in public secondary schools.
- (2) Opening or closing exercises shall include ‘O Canada’ and may include ‘God Save the Queen’ and may also include the following types of readings that impart social, moral, or spiritual values, and that are representative of Ontario’s multicultural society.
 1. Scriptural Readings including prayers.
 2. Secular writings
 - (3) The opening or closing exercises may include a period of silence.
 - (4) In the following circumstances, a student is not required to participate in the opening or closing exercises described in this section

1. In the case of a student who is less than 18 years old, if the student's parent or guardian applies to the principal of the school for an exemption from the exercises.
 2. In the case of a student who is at least 18 years old, if the student applies to the principal for an exemption from the exercises."
- (5) No pupil enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school shall be required to take part in any opening or closing exercises where a parent or guardian of the pupil or the pupil, where the pupil is an adult, applies to the principal of the school that the pupil attends for exemption therefrom."

E3: Prayer

Guidelines

Schools and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to accommodate the requirement for daily prayer by providing an appropriate location within the building for prayer. This may mean a quiet space in the library or an empty room, or wherever it is mutually satisfactory for the school or workplace and the student or staff member requesting the accommodation.

Some accommodation for late school or workplace arrival or early school or workplace leaving may be necessary. For some religions, the time for prayer changes with the seasons.

E4: Dietary Requirements

Guidelines

Schools and workplaces should be attentive to the dietary restrictions of the various religious

groups. This includes attending to issues related to the menus provided by the catering firms, snacks in elementary schools, and catering for special occasions and community events.

Breakfast and lunch programs in both secondary and elementary schools should consider dietary restrictions in their menu planning. Availability of vegetarian options is recommended.

Special attention needs to be given to overnight outdoor education activities, as well as field trips that extend over a mealtime period.

E5: Fasting

Guidelines

Schools and workplaces should accommodate with respect to religious practices related to fast periods. Appropriate space, other than cafeterias or lunchrooms, should be designated during lunch periods for students who are fasting. Field-trip planning should attend to the needs of students who might be fasting. Fasting students may need exemptions from some classes (e.g., swimming classes because of ingestion of water or sports classes where dehydration could be an issue).

E6: Religious Attire

Guidelines

Schools and workplaces should accommodate students and staff with regard to religious attire. Religious attire is not cultural dress; it is a requirement of religious observation.

Religious attire that should be appropriately accommodated in school includes, but is not limited to:

- hairstyles
- yarmulkes (skullcaps), turbans, Rastafari headdress
- head scarves

- crucifixes, Stars of David
- items of ceremonial dress

In schools where uniforms are worn, administrators may ask the students to wear religious attire in the same colour as the uniforms (e.g., the head scarf for Muslim girls). However, there may be religious requirements of colour that cannot be modified.

Harassment about religious attire is one of the most common types of harassment; school staff should be sensitive to it and be proactive in setting a climate of understanding.

There are religious communities that require specific items of ceremonial dress that may be perceived as contravening Board policies, for example, the wearing of the kirpan by Khalsa Sikh students. Refer to Appendix 1, page 56, for the kirpan accommodation procedures.

E7: Modesty Requirements

Guidelines

Some religious communities observe strict modesty in attire. This can become a matter of concern when the students are asked to wear the brief clothing used in Physical Education activities.

If a family has concerns about this, the school should discuss the modesty requirements with them, and, taking into consideration Ministry of Education mandated expectations in the Physical Education curriculum, provide reasonable accommodations. The curriculum requirements should be explained to the family so that it has sufficient information to understand the Physical Education curriculum and to select available curriculum alternatives.

E8: Participation in Daily Activities and Curriculum

Guidelines

When accommodation is requested related to the contents of a curriculum in which there is a dem-

onstrated conflict with a religious requirement, the school should have an informed discussion with parents/guardians and students.

The school should make it clear during the discussion that its role is to protect students and staff from harassment and discrimination that arise because of the religious practices that set individuals apart, and conflict with school routines and activities. Therefore, if curriculum directly conflicts with these practices, the school can consider accommodation. It cannot, however, accommodate religious values and beliefs that conflict with Board policies.

It is important to note that when an individual requests an accommodation related to the curriculum, the accommodation applies to that individual in question and not to the whole class or to classroom practices in general.

The Ministry of Education recommends substitutions when there are exemptions requested related to specific curriculum requirements. (OSSD, Grades 9–12, Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999, 3.2)

In general, these Guidelines and Procedures recommend an informed, common-sense approach to questions of religion and curriculum; some questions and issues can be solved by an open discussion between the teacher and the student.

F. Limitations to Religious Accommodation

Religious accommodation in the DDSB is carried out in the larger context of the secular public education system. While the Board works to create a school system free from religious discrimination, this freedom is not absolute. The Board will limit practices or conduct in its schools that may put public safety, health, or the human rights and freedoms of others at risk. As well, the Board will limit practices or conduct in its schools that are in violation of other Board policies.

Appendix 1: **DESCRIPTIONS OF RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS, PRACTICES, AND OBSERVANCES**

The descriptions of religions that follow have been developed in consultation with Faith Group representatives from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care to provide guidance to schools regarding religious accommodation requests. The description of each religion outlines aspects of the religion that may require accommodation on the part of the DDSB. To ensure currency, and in consultation with Faith Group representatives from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care, two more descriptions of religions were developed for this 2010 edition of the *Guideline and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances*.

These descriptions are intended for use by those not familiar with the religion. The descriptions cover those practices and observances of the religion (including those followed by more orthodox members) that may lead adherents to ask for accommodation from the Board. Therefore, these are not full explanations of the religion, but provide sufficient information for Board personnel to use when considering a request for accommodation.

Individuals in all religions make personal decisions about the practice of their faith. For some, no accommodation from the DDSB is needed to freely practise their religion. For others, there is a need for accommodation. As well, religious practice varies somewhat within some religions, and there are varying levels of orthodoxy. Therefore, the descriptions that follow do not necessarily describe the beliefs and practices of all those who follow the religion under discussion. The Board has been guided by the Faith Groups in developing these descriptions.

A large number of communities were contacted for this project. Only those whose practices and observances may require accommodation have been included. The list is not exhaustive. For information about other religious communities, consult *The Multifaith Information Manual*, Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care, 2000 which has been distributed to all DDSB schools; or contact the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care, 789 Don Mills Road, Suite 608, Toronto, Ontario, M3C 1T5, telephone: 416-422-1490, email: omcsrc@omc.on.ca, website: www.omc.on.ca.

The role of the DDSB with respect to religious requirements, practices, and observances is to make suggestions for possible accommodations when they are requested. The Board does not comment on matters of religion.

ABORIGINAL WORLD VIEW/ NATIVE SPIRITUALITY

A world view refers to the principles, values, traditions, and customs that a society has in order to make sense of the world. Once a world view has been formed, people are able to identify themselves as unique. Since Aboriginal peoples comprise many nations, they have many world views. However, certain themes seem to be prevalent in most Aboriginal societies. There is, for example, less emphasis on hierarchies and more on interactional, mutually beneficial relationships. Co-operation is valued, and all views are respected and taken into consideration. There is recognition that there is harmony in diversity.

In analyzing the beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples from around the world, Knudston and Suzuki (1992) identified the following characteristics as distinguishing indigenous world views:

- The spiritual beliefs of many Aboriginal peoples were based on a relationship to nature. They considered the physical and spiritual worlds to be inseparable.
- Spirituality is embedded in all elements of the cosmos: the land, water, wind, Great Mystery, sun, moon, stars, plants, animals, and humans.
- Time is circular, with natural cycles that sustain all life.
- Humans have responsibility for maintaining harmonious relationships with the natural world.
- There is a need for reciprocity between human and natural worlds—resources are viewed as gifts.
- Nature will always possess unfathomable mysteries.
- Nature is honoured routinely through daily spiritual practice.

- Nature is viewed as a continuous two-way, transactional dialogue.
- The human role is to participate in the orderly designs of nature.
- Respect for Elders is based on compassion and reconciliation of outer and inner directed knowledge.
- There is a sense of empathy and kinship with all other forms of life.
- Human thought, feelings, and words are inextricably bound to all other aspects of the universe.
- The universe is viewed as a holistic, integrative system with unifying life force.

Traditional Aboriginal education systems worked with two processes that supported learning of world views and values. These two processes will be equally effective in teaching non-Aboriginal students about the various Aboriginal cultures and peoples being studied.

Use of Native/Aboriginal Cultural Symbols

Teachers should be aware that engaging students in creating items such as totem poles, dream catchers, masks, teepees and the like may trivialize Aboriginal cultures, spirituality or world views. These items have spiritual significance that may not be completely understood in the context of the spirituality of the cultures of which they are a part. Teachers should research meanings carefully and are strongly encouraged to consult and/or invite Elders and members of Aboriginal communities to teach students to make these items as part of a lesson or a workshop.

(The Aboriginal Education Advisory Circle of the DDSB was consulted on this section.)

BAHÁ'Í

Founded by Bahá'u'lláh (meaning “The Glory of God”) in 1844, the Bahá'í Faith is a monotheistic religion. The basic beliefs are as follows:

- The oneness of God, the oneness of religious, and the oneness of humanity
- The purpose of religion is to unify humanity
- All great religions and prophets are divine in origin
- All great religions represent successive stages of divine revelation throughout human history
- The eradication of racial and religious prejudice
- The search for truth as an individual responsibility
- The harmony of religion and science as complementary aspects of the truth
- The establishment of an international auxiliary language
- Basic education for all children
- Abolition of extreme wealth and poverty
- Equality of the sexes

Religious Accommodation for Bahá'ís

Prayer and Worship

Beliefs and Practices

Daily prayer and reading of Bahá'í sacred writings is the individual's responsibility. All work performed in the spirit of service is also considered to be worship.

School Accommodation

If there is a request for accommodation, an appropriate room/space should be made available.

Observations of Bahá'í Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices There are nine holy days

throughout the year on which a Bahá'í should abstain from school or work.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Ridván | April 21,
April 29,
and May 2 |
| • Declaration of the Báb | May 23 |
| • Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh | May 29 |
| • Martyrdom of the Báb | July 9 |
| • Birth of the Báb | October 20 |
| • Birth of Bahá'u'lláh | November 12 |
| • Naw-Rúz (New Year) | March 21 |

School Accommodation

Students/staff are to be excused from attendance at school on these holy days. Scheduling of school and school-related activities should take Bahá'í holy days into consideration. In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams, and major tests, Bahá'í students need to be accommodated.

Other significant holy days (one may work or attend school):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Day of the Covenant | November 26 |
| • Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá | November 28 |
| • Intercalary Days | February 26–
March 1 |
| • The Bahá'í Fast | March 2–20 |

Dietary Considerations

Beliefs and Practices

Consumption of alcohol or mind-altering drugs is forbidden, except when prescribed by a physician.

Fasting

Beliefs and Practices

The 19-day annual fast occurs from March 2–20. Bahá'ís do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset on each of the 19 days. It is obligatory for all those

who reach the age of 15. Persons may be exempt from fasting for health or medical reasons.

School Accommodation

Students and staff should be allowed to gather in an area apart from the cafeteria during lunch breaks. Students may ask to be excused from strenuous exercise during the fast.

(Developed in consultation with The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Toronto)

BUDDHISM

Buddhism was founded by Lord Shakyamani Buddha in 539 BCE. Buddhism is essentially a monastic religion. However, Lord Buddha also taught spiritual practices for lay people to follow.

All paths of Buddhism embrace the following basic teachings of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Four Noble Truths:

- Dukkha: Ordinary existence is a state of suffering
- The Arising of Dukkha: Cause of Suffering
- The Cessation of Dukkha: End of Suffering
- The Path: Embracing the Teachings of Lord Buddha

The only method by which one can attain liberation from suffering is to follow the path of Buddhism. This requires mental discipline and the actual practice of Buddha's teaching, which involves many lifetimes of devoted effort and commitment. For lay people, the eightfold noble path involves the following:

- Wisdom: Right Understanding and Right Intention
- Ethical Discipline: Right Speech, Right Action, Right Means of Livelihood
- Mental Discipline: Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration

The eightfold noble path also involves the following five precepts that deal with all aspects of life, body, speech, and mind.

Body

1. Abstention from killing
2. Abstention from stealing
3. Abstention from sexual exploitation

Speech

4. Abstention from lying

Mind

5. Abstention from all drugs and intoxicants which alter the mind

To worship, Buddhists meet in a group in temples or centres to learn spiritual practices, and follow up with individual practice.

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual*)

Religious Accommodation for Buddhists

Dietary Considerations

Generally speaking, Buddhism recommends people eat foods that are grown in their particular location of the world. As well, people are encouraged to eat food that is needed for their unique health requirements, which may not necessarily be vegetarian. However, many Buddhists are strict vegetarians (meaning: no eggs, dairy, fish, or meat).

School Accommodation

Teachers and cafeteria staff must be aware of food restrictions. Availability of strict vegetarian options that include no eggs and dairy are advisable in school cafeterias; elementary school snacks, breakfast or lunch programs; as well as on overnight stays and school or Board events that involve a meal.

(Developed in consultation with Gen-La Venerable Lama Tenzin Kalsang, Faith Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care)

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is a monotheistic faith that is, itself, very diverse, and is practiced in diverse ways by its many adherents. Christians believe in one God who is the creator of all things and who desires a loving relationship with all people. However, through both their relationship to the first humans as well as their own actions, everyone has, at some point, broken that loving relationship with God, and this is what Christians mean by the word “sin”. What all Christians have in common is a belief in the deity of Jesus of Nazareth, and that he came into the world to restore this relationship through his death on the cross and his resurrection. Because of Jesus’s sacrifice, each individual has the option to re-enter a relationship with God through repentance, or turning away from sin to God. One grows in the Christian life through prayer, studying the Bible, and by regularly gathering together with other Christians to worship. Christians believe that eternal life with God awaits them after their physical death.

The major holy days of the Christian year are: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, and Ascension. Though many of these are statutory holidays, there may be times during the year where church attendance conflicts with school schedules. Staff should be aware of this, and the diversity within Christianity. Within the description above, various Christian groups will have varying beliefs and practices that may give rise to the need to consider accommodation in one or more of the areas of religious accommodation—namely, religious holy days and celebrations, opening and closing exercises, prayer, dietary requirements, fasting, religious attire, modesty requirements, and participation in daily activities and curriculum. Some of the groups from whom the most common requests for Christian religious accommodation arise are listed in the following pages:

CHRISTIANITY

APOSTOLIC OR ONENESS PENTECOSTALS

Dress and Modesty

Beliefs and Practices

Apostolic Christians believe that both men and women should dress modestly, and may believe in gender specific attire. This can be interpreted in different ways depending on one’s or one’s congregation’s interpretation. Some males will wear only long pants when in public. Some females will not wear pants, and will only wear skirts (usually that are at least knee length).

Apostolic Christians also observe biblical requirements concerning the covering of the head—that is, that men’s heads should be uncovered, and women’s heads should be covered during prayer. However, since the Bible also requires that Christians be in an attitude of prayer at all times, some Apostolic groups will observe these requirements continuously, rather than only during times of formal prayer. Thus, female students may be required to cover their heads with a hat or other head covering at all times, while some groups regard women’s uncut hair as the means of fulfilling the requirement for the woman to be covered during prayer.

Some groups also disallow swimming with members of the opposite sex because of the brief nature of swimming attire.

School Accommodation

School expectations regarding uniforms and head coverings should take these requirements into account. There may be particular need for accommodation during physical education. To maintain modesty, both male and female students may opt not to wear shorts, and thus will need to be accommodated around required gym uniforms or guidelines. For male students, a track suit or jogging pants will normally be appropriate. Some students will consider shorts that are knee-length or longer

to be sufficient. For female students, a track suit or jogging pants may be considered appropriate, or they may wish to wear a long skirt during physical education classes as well. Exemptions may become necessary in some cases. Schools should ensure that parents/guardians know and understand the Physical Education curriculum so that they can come to an informed decision about co-educational activities, as well as about acceptable attire for such activities as gym and swimming. Parents should also understand what the alternatives are to compulsory high school credits. *See Appendix 6, pp. 77-78 for exemption procedures.*

There should be a climate of acceptance of individuals' choices and commitments with regard to spiritual expression through their attire. The student body should be aware of the consequences of harassing students because of their spiritual choices and commitments.

Fasting

Beliefs and Practices

Apostolic Christians often practice fasting, though the times of year for fasting are not predictable. Some congregations encourage fasting one day per week or one day per month; they may also observe specific times of fasting set by the pastors of their congregations. Fasting may or may not allow the ingestion of water.

School Accommodation

For accommodation, follow Guidelines and Procedures, item E5, page 13.

Curriculum Concerns

Halloween

Halloween is considered to be a pagan celebration that in the past included rituals with some ties to chasing away evil spirits.

School Accommodation

Some Apostolic parents/guardians may request

that their children be exempted from any activities related to Halloween. If exemptions are requested, provision of curricular alternatives is recommended.

See also Accommodation for school activities, pp. 68-69.

Human Sexuality – Healthy Active Living Education

Beliefs and Practices

Apostolic Christians believe that teaching children about sexuality is the responsibility of parents/guardians. Some parents/guardians may request that their children be excused from human sexuality classes.

School Accommodation

For accommodation, follow Guidelines and Procedures, item E8, page 14.

Social Events and School Dances

Beliefs and Practices

For many Apostolic Christians, social events and school dances may represent exposure to music and influences that are considered worldly and inappropriate.

School Accommodation

Consideration should be given to the timing of the event within the school day. If a dance happens during the school day, and accommodation is requested, students should be given valuable alternative activities that are not, and will not appear, punitive. They should not be grouped with students who are not allowed to attend the dance for disciplinary reasons.

(Developed in consultation with Bishop E. Nunes, Canadian Apostolic Ministries)

CHRISTIANITY

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Charles Taze Russell, along with a small group

of Bible students, founded the Jehovah's Witnesses in the late nineteenth century. They were first known as "International Bible Students." In 1879, they began publishing the Bible journal now called *The Watchtower*. In 1931, they adopted the name "Jehovah's Witnesses."

Jehovah's Witnesses base their beliefs solely on the principles found in the Bible and view first-century Christianity as a model. They believe that in addition to drawing one closer to God, living by Biblical principles gives purpose to life, promotes strong family ties, and develops productive and honest citizens.

Observations of Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices

Annually, Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate Christ's death. This commemoration is referred to as the Lord's Evening Meal. A simple religious ceremony is held at the Kingdom Hall after sunset. The Lord's Evening Meal occurs in March or April (based on the Jewish lunar calendar).

Jehovah's Witnesses hold weekend assemblies twice each year. In addition, they attend a three- or four-day Bible education convention annually.

School Accommodation

Students/staff may ask to be excused from attendance at school/Board evening meetings on the day of the Lord's Evening Meal celebration.

Celebrations, Birthdays, Holidays, Functions, and Social Events

Beliefs and Practice

Jehovah's Witnesses celebrate special events such as weddings, anniversaries, engagements, or baby showers. Witness families find enjoyment in spontaneous giving throughout the whole year as expressions of love and affection.

They encourage generosity, gift giving, and other expressions of appreciation.

Holidays

Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate religious or semi-religious holidays that have non-Christian religious origins or those that promote patriotic exercises or expressions of patriotism.

Birthdays

Jehovah's Witnesses respect the rights of others to celebrate birthdays, but do not share in such celebrations for religious reasons.

School Accommodation

Do not extend invitations or expect participation in festivities or social functions surrounding celebrations such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, New Year's Eve, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Halloween. Provide alternative activities if celebrations happen during class time and exemptions are requested.

Jehovah's Witnesses respect the rights of others to celebrate birthdays and holidays. Their right to not participate should also be respected. In the event of classroom birthday celebrations, provide alternative activities. If there are Jehovah's Witnesses in class, teachers are encouraged to be careful when choosing curriculum that focuses on birthday celebrations. Consultation with Witness parents/guardians in this area is advised.

Opening or Closing Exercises

Beliefs and Practices

Jehovah's Witnesses respect the country's flag and show this respect by obedience to the laws of the land. Yet, they do not share in patriotic exercises or expressions of patriotism, nor do they participate in any activities promoting nationalism. While others stand for the national

anthem, Jehovah's Witnesses remain seated. In the case of students who are Jehovah's Witness practitioners, if they are already standing when the anthem is played they will not necessarily sit down. If a group is expected to stand and sing, Witnesses may choose to stand out of respect, but not sing.

School Accommodation

Accommodate as per request. Follow Guidelines and Procedures, Section E2, page 12.

Health Issues

Beliefs and Practice

Jehovah's Witnesses actively seek medical care when needed, and accept the vast majority of treatments available today, with the exception of blood transfusions. They accept reliable non-blood medical therapies, which are increasingly recognized in the healthcare field. Each baptized mature minor Witness carries an Advance Medical Directive that provides emergency contact instructions. His or her conscientious decision, outlined in this document, should be respected. Younger children carry an Identity Card which similarly provides parental contact information and directives for emergency situations.

School Accommodation

In the event of serious injury during school trips and other activities, school staff should endeavour to contact the parents/guardians and provide emergency medical personnel with the medical directive instructions.

Curriculum Concerns

Music/Art/Drama

Witness youths do not participate in any kind of music and art instruction in connection with religious or patriotic holidays.

School Accommodation

Jehovah's Witnesses' right to not participate should be respected.

Human Sexuality – Healthy Active Living Education

Beliefs and Practices

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that teaching children about sexuality is the responsibility of parents/guardians. Some parents/guardians may request that their children be excused from human sexuality classes.

School Accommodation

For accommodation, follow Guidelines and Procedures, item E8, page 14.

(Developed in consultation with Public Affairs Department, Watch Tower Society of Canada)

CHRISTIANITY

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown from a small group of individuals from the New England region of the United States, who carefully studied the Bible in the mid-1800s based on the teachings of William Miller, to a worldwide community. In 1860, at Battle Creek, Michigan, the Adventists chose the name Seventh-day Adventist and in 1863, formally organized a church body.

Adventists base their faith in God as revealed through Jesus Christ and as shown through the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit. They believe the Bible is the sole rule of faith and practice, and that it is the unequivocal word of God. Seventh-day Adventists observe the Sabbath on Saturday as Jesus observed the seventh-day Sabbath while on earth. They demonstrate their belief and commitment to their faith through baptism (being immersed in water), following the example of Jesus.

The writings of Ellen G. White, one of the Church's

founders, are an aid to Bible interpretation. She also prescribed a dietary regimen of vegetarianism and abstention from tobacco and alcohol.

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual* and Seventh-day Adventist website: www.adventist.org)

Observation of the Sabbath

Beliefs and Practices

The Sabbath is a 24-hour unit of time that begins at sunset on Friday and concludes the following evening.

School Accommodation

Schools should accommodate Seventh-day Adventist students and staff in the scheduling of school requirements prior to and during the Sabbath, sunset Friday to Saturday. Weekend expectations should not include school activities on the Sabbath (e.g., work expectations or attending music festivals or camp).

Dietary Considerations

Seventh-day Adventists encourage a vegetarian lifestyle and in general do not eat animal products.

School Accommodation

Teachers and cafeteria staff must be aware of food restrictions wherever and whenever food is served. Availability of vegetarian options are advisable in school cafeterias, elementary school snacks, breakfast or lunch programs, as well as during overnight stays and school or Board events that involve a meal. Vegetarianism is not considered a test of faith, but is encouraged in the interest of better health. Where animal products are eaten, such is confined to:

- animals that chew the cud and have split hooves (e.g., cattle, sheep, goat, deer)
- fish with both fins and scales
- no pork and pork products

- no coffee, tea, and other caffeinated beverages

Curriculum Concerns

Halloween

Halloween is considered to be a pagan celebration that in the past included rituals with some ties to chasing away evil spirits.

School Accommodation

Some Seventh-day Adventist parents/guardians may request that their children be exempted from any activities related to Halloween. If exemptions are requested, provision of curricular alternatives is recommended.

(Developed in consultation with Giuseppe De Meo, Faith Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care; and Maurice Jordine, Chaplin, Hospital for Sick Children)

HINDUISM (HINDU DHARMA)

The term *Hinduism* is commonly used to describe the oldest continuous religion in the world. A more precise and widely used term for describing this belief system is *Sanatana Dharma* or *Hindu Dharma*. The Hindu Dharma has its origin in India. The followers of Hinduism are generally referred to as Hindus. The principal scriptures of Hindus are the Vedas. Because of the antiquity of Hinduism, as well as its inclusiveness and tolerance for diverse expressions and beliefs, an extensive array of philosophical doctrines and dogmas has evolved. This has resulted in the appearance of additional scriptural texts, such as the Upanishads, Puranas, Ramayana, and the Bhagavad Gita.

Hinduism can be considered as a monotheistic religion, where the monotheistic concept of God is considered as not one God, but only God. The Ultimate Reality is called Brahman. Hindus believe that the unmanifest Brahman has an apparent manifestation as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. They comprise the Hindu Trinity, where Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu is the Preserver, and Shiva is the Dissolver. Brahman also manifests as the world of multiplicity and plurality, and assumes divine physical forms (avatara) from time to time for the preservation of righteousness. Three prominent avatars are Rama, Krishna, and Buddha. The many propitiating and presiding Deities worshipped by many Hindus are considered as various aspects of Brahman, and not a substitute for the supreme impersonal Brahman.

There are many prominent concepts and tenets enshrined in Hinduism that have universal relevance and applications. Some of these are:

- the Immanency of Ishwara Avatara (Manifest Incarnations of God)

- the Theory of Punarjanma (Reincarnation)
- the Law of Karma (Action and Reaction)
- the Doctrine of Maya (Illusiveness of Nature)
- the Principle of Gunatraya (Three Gunas of Nature)
- the Proclamation of Varnashrama Dharma (Chaturvarga – Four Objectives of Life; Chaturashrama – Four Stages in Life; Chaturvarna – Four Caste Division)
- the Practice of Sadharana Dharma (Virtues of Purity, Austerity, Detachment Morality, and Non-Injury)
- the Observance of Sadhana Yoga (Karma Yoga – Yoga of Action; Bhakti Yoga – Yoga of Devotion; Jnana Yoga – Yoga of Knowledge)

Hindus use a variety of sacred symbols during worship. Some of these are the OM, Swastika, Trishul, Shivalingam, and Nataraja. Most Hindu rituals are performed in the presence of many of these symbols. *Moorties* (icons) of the various Deities are also used during worship. *Hawan* (fire offerings) is an integral component of all Hindu worship. During worship, devotees must be dressed appropriately, and the body is usually adorned with sacred religious symbols such as *Chandan* (red vermilion or sandal paste or ashes, applied to the forehead as a dot or any other symbolic shape).

Religious Accommodation for Hindus

For devout Hindu students, Sanatana Dharma is a way of life. For these followers, the secular nature of the public school system may present some difficulties. Hence, accommodations may need to be made to allow these students to pursue academic, athletic, and social endeavours at school while being in harmony with their faith.

Prayer and Worship

Beliefs and Practices

Devout Hindu students need to pay homage to Saraswati Devi (Deity of Knowledge and Learning) prior to starting their classes. This is usually done in the early morning before formal teaching and learning commences. The space used for worship is considered sacred and should be conducive to spiritual growth and development.

School Accommodation

If there is request for accommodation, an appropriate room/space could be made available to allow students and staff the privacy to perform morning prayer.

Observations of Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices

The dates for each of the following days of significance will vary from year to year because dates are calculated on the lunar and solar astronomical alignments.

• Diwali (Deepawali)

Diwali is one of the most widely celebrated Hindu festivals. It is commonly known as the Festival of Lights. Diwali has many meanings, the most important being the celebration of the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and happiness over suffering.

• Other Significant Holy Days

- Janam Ashtami (Birth of Lord Krishna)
- Ram Navan-Li (Birth of Lord Rama)
- Maha Shivaratri (Appearance of Bhagavan Shiva)
- Navarathri (Nine days of Fasting and Worship)
- Thai Pongal (Day of Thanksgiving)
- Holi (Spring Festival)

School Accommodation

Scheduling of all school and school-related activities should take Hindu holy days into account. In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams, and major tests, Hindu students need to be accommodated.

Navarathri Fasting

School Accommodation

Hindu students and staff may fast during the nine days of Navarathri, which occurs during the spring and autumn. During this time, students/staff will not eat or drink through the day.

Allow for a separate area (e.g., the library) for students so they can avoid the cafeteria during lunch breaks. Excuse students from strenuous physical activity during the fast. Avoid organization of late-night and food-related events (e.g., pizza or hot dog days, overnight school trips) if there are a large number of students in the school who observe the fast.

In addition to accommodating students, schools can use the opportunity to honour those who are taking on the responsibility of fasting. Staff and student awareness of fasting will help avoid misunderstandings.

Dietary Requirements

Beliefs and Practices

Many Hindus are strict vegetarians, and some are lacto-ovo (milk-egg) vegetarians. Meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products are not allowed in these diets.

School Accommodation

Teachers and cafeteria staff need to be aware of food restrictions. Special care must be taken to keep vegetarian and non-vegetarian food separate, and to ensure that the same spoons and serving utensils are not used to serve both

kinds of food. Food and snacks that have been prepared using animal by-products (e.g., lard, beef tallow) should be properly labelled and not served to vegetarian Hindu students. Teachers or schools may wish to adjust their snack, pizza/hot dog days, fun fair, or lunch programs to accommodate students who are vegetarians.

(Developed in consultation with Pandit Suraj Persad, Faith Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care; Pundit Roopnauth Sharma, President, Hindu Federation and Vice-President Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care; and Pundit Eshwar Doobay, Hindu Chaplain, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health)

Hindu Dress

Beliefs and Practices

Some Hindus cover their heads: males with either a *pagree* (turban) or a *kishtee* (religious cap), and females with an *ornhnee* (scarf). These may be permanently worn head covers, or worn only during special days of significance.

School Accommodation

If Hindu students request accommodation for head cover, see Religious Attire in “Guidelines,” Section E6, pp. 13-14.

Curriculum Concerns for Physical Education and Healthy Active Living Education

Beliefs and Practices

Privacy and modesty are important tenets of Hinduism.

School Accommodation

There could be the following requests for accommodation in gym classes:

- Separate classes for males and females
- Girls-only swim programs
- For some Brahmin Hindu boys, a preference for taking a shower individually in order to maintain privacy and modesty

Exemptions for sections of Healthy Active Living Education related to human sexuality may also be requested.

HUMANISM

Humanism is a naturalistic, scientific, secular philosophy of life. Humanists embrace core human values of respect, responsibility, compassion, and love. They look to nature and ongoing inquiry for the explanation of life, rather than to a divine or supernatural power. Humanism is an ethical stance that calls for a commitment to the betterment of humanity through the methods of science, democracy, and reason, without limitations imposed by political, ecclesiastical, or other dictates.

Humanist Principles and Core Values

Humanists live their lives in the belief that this is their only life. Therefore, they have a great responsibility to themselves, and to the others with whom they share this planet, to make it the best life possible. Humanists hold human happiness and gender parity with the highest regard. Therefore, they believe that the orderly progress of society demands that the views of others must be respected regardless of race, gender, social class, religion or creed so long as those views do not limit or intrude on the rights of others. Humanists support the full inclusion of all individuals through the separation of religious practices from the democratic institutions of state and governance.

Humanist Practices

Humanists have no established rituals or practices, but do recognize many rites of passage and historical events on an individual or ad hoc basis. For example, Humanists may celebrate birthdays or the coming of age of children; Humanists may choose to host a Celebration of Life at the death of a loved one, and some individuals may wish to publicly declare their decision to unite by means of an appropriate ceremony.

Holidays and Celebrations

Humanists do not have any holidays or celebrations unique to themselves. However Humanists

groups and individuals frequently observe special dates on the calendar such as the solstices. Others may wish to recognize, from time to time, the decisive role in the advancement of reason and scientific method represented by the work of Charles Darwin, Marie Curie, Bertrand Russell, and Dora Russell.

(Prepared in consultation with Gail McCabe, Ph.D., RSSW)

ISLAM

The Arabic word Islam literally means “surrender” or “submission”. This word was derived from the word “Salam” which means peace. Islam, as a faith, means total and sincere submission to God so that one can live in peace and tranquility. Peace (Salam in Arabic) is achieved through active obedience to the revealed commandments of God (who Muslims refer to as Allah).

The name Islam is universal in meaning. Islam is not named after a tribe of people or an individual. Islam is not a name chosen by human beings; it was divinely communicated from God. Islam is a global faith, not of the East or West. Islam is a complete way of life, implying a total submission to God. One who surrenders his or her will to God, voluntarily, is called a Muslim. It was not Muhammad, but Adam who first brought Islam to humanity. Then, each prophet and messenger came to exhort the people to a clear understanding of God’s commandments. They offered teachings relevant to that time, until God chose the final Prophet, Muhammad (571 CE) (upon whom be God’s peace and blessings), to come with the Last Testament referred to as the Quran.

Among the many teachings and traditions of Islam, the minimum practices required by a Muslim are called the Five Pillars of Islam, as follows:

- Affirmation, that there is no one worthy of worship but God, and Muhammad is the servant and messenger of God
- Prayers 5 times a day
- Charity
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan
- Pilgrimage (hajj)

Islam promotes teaching of tolerance from a humanist perspective, that is the right to life, dignity and respect for all human beings should be acknowledged.

(Source: Multifaith Information Manual)

Religious Accommodation for Islam

Daily Prayer

Beliefs and Practices

Prayer in Islam is required and must be performed at specific times, which change throughout the year, depending on the time of sunrise and sunset. Before prayer, Muslims are required to wash their faces, hands, head, and feet. Children are encouraged to begin praying at an early age, and prayer becomes compulsory at puberty. Prayer can be performed individually or in congregation, and men and women pray in separate areas within the same room. Women do not pray during menstruation.

Prayer times will vary according to the changing time of sunrise and sunset. Holy days are governed by the lunar calendar, and may move by as much as several months from year to year.

School Accommodation

There may be times during the year when prayer times conflict with the school schedule. Early afternoon prayer times often fall within the lunch period. Students can use all or part of their lunchtime for prayers. During Eastern Standard Time (November to March), noon prayer will fall within the school day.

When prayer obligations occur during class time, students should be allowed time for prayer. Teachers should be aware of the Muslim prayer schedule during exams and/or tests, class outings, and overnight outings.

Prayer takes an average of about 5–10 minutes. The school could provide a private designated area or a room for prayer. Where possible, a washroom within the school should be identified for washing before prayers (up to 10 minutes may be required for washing). A private washroom would be most appropriate.

Muslims pray five times a day:

- At dawn – fajr
- At noon – duhr/zuhr
- In the afternoon – asr
- At sunset – maghrib
- At night – isha

Each prayer must be performed within a certain period of time, and Muslims can offer each prayer at any time during that period. The period of time for one prayer ends when the period of time for

the next prayer begins. The period of time for each prayer varies slightly day to day.

Muslim students and staff will usually have to pray during school hours for the noon prayer, since the period allotted for that prayer will fall during school hours. However, this will only occur during the months we are not following Daylight Savings Time (November to March). On November 1, for example, Muslims have to perform noon prayer between 12:01 p.m. and 3:25 p.m. The time for afternoon prayer begins at 3:25 p.m. and ends at sunset.

Date	September Prayer Noon-p.m.	October Prayer Noon-p.m.	November Prayer Noon-p.m.	December Prayer Noon-p.m.	January Prayer Noon-p.m.	February Prayer Noon-p.m.	March Prayer Noon-p.m.	April Prayer Noon-p.m.	May Prayer Noon-p.m.	June Prayer Noon-p.m.	July Prayer Noon-p.m.	August Prayer Noon-p.m.
1	1:18 – 5:56	1:07 – 5:11	12:01 – 3:25	12:07 – 3:00	12:21 – 3:09	12:21 – 3:09	12:30 – 4:20	1:21 – 5:50	1:15 – 6:13	1:15 – 6:32	1:21 – 6:41	1:24 – 6:30
2	1:17 – 5:55	1:07 – 5:10	12:01 – 3:24	12:07 – 2:59	12:22 – 3:10	12:22 – 3:10	12:30 – 4:22	1:21 – 5:51	1:15 – 6:14	1:15 – 6:33	1:22 – 6:41	1:24 – 6:29
3	1:17 – 5:54	1:07 – 5:08	12:01 – 3:23	12:07 – 2:59	12:22 – 3:11	12:31 – 3:48	12:30 – 4:23	1:21 – 5:52	1:14 – 6:15	1:16 – 6:33	1:22 – 6:41	1:24 – 6:28
4	1:17 – 5:52	1:06 – 5:07	12:01 – 3:22	12:08 – 2:59	12:23 – 3:12	12:32 – 3:50	12:29 – 4:24	1:20 – 5:53	1:14 – 6:15	1:16 – 6:34	1:22 – 6:41	1:24 – 6:27
5	1:16 – 5:51	1:06 – 5:05	12:01 – 3:20	12:08 – 2:59	12:23 – 3:13	12:32 – 3:51	12:29 – 4:25	1:20 – 5:54	1:14 – 6:16	1:16 – 6:34	1:22 – 6:41	1:23 – 6:26
6	1:16 – 5:49	1:06 – 5:03	12:01 – 3:19	12:09 – 2:59	12:23 – 3:14	12:32 – 3:52	12:29 – 4:26	1:20 – 5:55	1:14 – 6:17	1:16 – 6:35	1:22 – 6:41	1:23 – 6:26
7	1:16 – 5:48	1:05 – 5:02	12:01 – 3:18	12:09 – 2:59	12:24 – 3:15	12:32 – 3:54	12:29 – 4:27	1:20 – 5:55	1:14 – 6:17	1:16 – 6:35	1:22 – 6:40	1:23 – 6:25
8	1:15 – 5:47	1:05 – 5:00	12:01 – 3:17	12:09 – 2:58	12:24 – 3:16	12:32 – 3:55	12:28 – 4:28	1:19 – 5:56	1:14 – 6:18	1:17 – 6:35	1:23 – 6:40	1:23 – 6:24
9	1:15 – 5:45	1:05 – 4:59	12:01 – 3:16	12:10 – 2:58	12:25 – 3:17	12:32 – 3:56	12:28 – 4:29	1:19 – 5:57	1:14 – 6:19	1:17 – 6:36	1:23 – 6:40	1:23 – 6:23
10	1:15 – 5:44	1:05 – 4:57	12:02 – 3:15	12:10 – 2:58	12:25 – 3:18	12:32 – 3:57	12:28 – 4:30	1:19 – 5:58	1:14 – 6:19	1:17 – 6:36	1:23 – 6:40	1:23 – 6:22
11	1:14 – 5:42	1:04 – 4:56	12:02 – 3:14	12:11 – 2:59	12:26 – 3:19	12:32 – 3:59	12:28 – 4:31	1:19 – 5:59	1:14 – 6:20	1:17 – 6:37	1:23 – 6:40	1:23 – 6:21
12	1:14 – 5:41	1:04 – 4:54	12:02 – 3:13	12:11 – 2:59	12:26 – 3:20	12:32 – 3:00	12:27 – 4:32	1:18 – 5:59	1:14 – 6:21	1:17 – 6:37	1:23 – 6:39	1:23 – 6:20
13	1:13 – 5:39	1:04 – 4:53	12:02 – 3:12	12:12 – 2:59	12:26 – 3:22	12:32 – 3:01	12:27 – 4:33	1:18 – 6:00	1:14 – 6:21	1:18 – 6:37	1:23 – 6:39	1:22 – 6:19
14	1:13 – 5:38	1:04 – 4:51	12:02 – 3:10	12:12 – 2:59	12:27 – 3:23	12:32 – 3:03	1:27 – 5:34	1:18 – 6:01	1:14 – 6:22	1:18 – 6:38	1:23 – 6:39	1:22 – 6:18
15	1:13 – 5:36	1:03 – 4:49	12:02 – 3:09	12:13 – 2:59	12:27 – 3:24	12:32 – 3:04	1:27 – 5:35	1:18 – 6:02	1:14 – 6:22	1:18 – 6:38	1:23 – 6:39	1:22 – 6:17
16	1:12 – 5:35	1:03 – 4:48	12:02 – 3:08	12:13 – 2:59	12:27 – 3:25	12:32 – 3:05	1:26 – 5:36	1:17 – 6:02	1:14 – 6:23	1:18 – 6:38	1:24 – 6:38	1:22 – 6:16
17	1:12 – 5:33	1:03 – 4:46	12:03 – 3:07	12:14 – 3:00	12:28 – 3:26	12:32 – 3:06	1:26 – 5:37	1:17 – 6:03	1:14 – 6:24	1:18 – 6:39	1:24 – 6:38	1:22 – 6:15
18	1:12 – 5:32	1:03 – 4:45	12:03 – 3:07	12:14 – 3:00	12:28 – 3:28	12:32 – 3:07	1:26 – 5:38	1:17 – 6:04	1:14 – 6:24	1:19 – 6:39	1:24 – 6:38	1:21 – 6:14
19	1:11 – 5:30	1:03 – 4:43	12:03 – 3:06	12:15 – 3:01	12:28 – 3:29	12:31 – 3:09	1:25 – 5:39	1:17 – 6:05	1:14 – 6:25	1:19 – 6:39	1:24 – 6:37	1:21 – 6:13
20	1:11 – 5:29	1:02 – 4:42	12:03 – 3:05	12:15 – 3:01	12:29 – 3:30	12:31 – 3:10	1:25 – 5:40	1:16 – 6:05	1:14 – 6:26	1:19 – 6:39	1:24 – 6:37	1:21 – 6:12
21	1:11 – 5:27	1:02 – 4:41	12:03 – 3:04	12:16 – 3:01	12:29 – 3:31	12:31 – 3:11	1:25 – 5:41	1:16 – 6:06	1:14 – 6:26	1:19 – 6:40	1:24 – 6:36	1:21 – 6:11
22	1:10 – 5:25	1:02 – 4:39	12:04 – 3:04	12:16 – 3:02	12:30 – 3:33	12:31 – 3:12	1:24 – 5:42	1:16 – 6:07	1:14 – 6:27	1:19 – 6:40	1:24 – 6:36	1:21 – 6:10
23	1:10 – 5:24	1:02 – 4:38	12:04 – 3:03	12:17 – 3:02	12:29 – 3:34	12:31 – 3:14	1:24 – 5:43	1:16 – 6:08	1:14 – 6:27	1:20 – 6:40	1:24 – 6:35	1:20 – 6:09
24	1:10 – 5:22	1:02 – 4:36	12:04 – 3:02	12:17 – 3:03	12:30 – 3:35	12:31 – 3:15	1:24 – 5:44	1:16 – 6:08	1:14 – 6:28	1:20 – 6:40	1:24 – 6:35	1:20 – 6:08
25	1:09 – 5:21	1:02 – 4:35	12:05 – 3:02	12:18 – 3:04	12:30 – 3:37	12:31 – 3:16	1:24 – 5:44	1:16 – 6:09	1:14 – 6:28	1:20 – 6:40	1:24 – 6:34	1:20 – 6:05
26	1:09 – 5:19	1:01 – 4:33	12:05 – 3:01	12:18 – 3:04	12:30 – 3:38	12:31 – 3:17	1:23 – 5:44	1:15 – 6:10	1:15 – 6:29	1:20 – 6:40	1:24 – 6:34	1:19 – 6:04
27	1:09 – 5:18	1:01 – 4:32	12:05 – 3:01	12:19 – 3:05	12:30 – 3:39	12:30 – 3:18	1:23 – 5:45	1:15 – 6:10	1:15 – 6:30	1:21 – 6:41	1:24 – 6:33	1:19 – 6:03
28	1:08 – 5:16	1:01 – 4:31	12:06 – 3:01	12:19 – 3:06	12:31 – 3:40	12:30 – 3:19	1:23 – 5:46	1:15 – 6:11	1:15 – 6:30	1:21 – 6:41	1:24 – 6:32	1:19 – 6:02
29	1:08 – 5:14	1:01 – 4:29	12:06 – 3:00	12:20 – 3:06	12:31 – 3:42	12:30 – 3:20	1:22 – 5:47	1:15 – 6:12	1:15 – 6:31	1:21 – 6:41	1:24 – 6:32	1:18 – 6:00
30	1:08 – 5:13	1:01 – 4:28	12:06 – 3:56	12:20 – 3:07	12:31 – 3:43		1:22 – 5:49	1:15 – 6:12	1:15 – 6:31	1:21 – 6:41	1:24 – 6:31	1:18 – 5:59
31		1:01 – 4:27		12:21 – 3:08	12:31 – 3:44		1:22 – 4:50		1:15 – 6:32		1:24 – 6:31	1:18 – 5:58

The following prayer timetable, adapted from the Perpetual Prayer Timetable for Durham and Vicinity, lists the beginning times of the noon and afternoon prayers for the whole year. Please note that this timetable does not reflect time changes as provincially/federally legislated. This timetable should help schools assist students and staff when they request prayer accommodation for noon and afternoon prayer.

Friday Congregational Prayer

Beliefs and Practices

Friday is the Muslim weekly holy day. Congregational prayer on Fridays is required after puberty. This afternoon service consists of a sermon and prayer. The entire service can take 15–45 minutes. The service is congregational, and its performance in a mosque is preferred. The scheduled period of time for Friday Congregational Prayer is consistent throughout the year, but may vary from mosque to mosque.

School Accommodation

Students should be allowed to attend Friday afternoon prayer services. Where possible, schools should allocate space for congregational prayer. Thirty to forty-five minutes should be allotted for students performing Friday prayer in the school. If students are praying in a nearby mosque, they should be allowed a maximum of one hour.

Observations of Islamic Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices

There are several days in the Islamic calendar with special religious significance, but the major celebrations common to all Muslims are the two Eids. The first Eid (Eid-ul-Fitr) is celebrated the day after the end of the month of Ramadan. The month of Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic Calendar. The second Eid (Eid-ul-Adha) is celebrated on the tenth day of the twelfth Islamic month. The festivities include congregational prayer and gatherings with family and friends.

School Accommodation

Muslim students and staff are to be excused from attendance from school for these holy days:

- Eid-ul-Fitr: one day off (some families follow the tradition of celebrating for three days)
- Eid-ul-Adha: one day off (some families follow the tradition of celebrating for four days)
- Ashura: one day off (for Shia Muslims)

Scheduling of all school and school-related activities should take Islamic holy days into account. In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams, and major tests, Muslim students should be accommodated.

ISLAMIC HOLY DAYS					
(For additional approximate dates for these selected Holy Days, please refer to the Interfaith Calendar at www.interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm .)					
Dates are Approximate	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
First Day of Ramadan	August 11	August 1	July 20	July 9	June 28
Eid-ul-Fitr	September 10	August 31	August 19	August 8	July 29
Eid-ul-Adha	November 16	November 6	October 26	October 15	September 23
Ashura	December 16	December 5	November 24	November 13	October 23

Pilgrimage (Hajj)

Beliefs and Practices

Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is compulsory for every Muslim who can afford it and is able to go.

School Accommodation

Students, whose families are travelling to Mecca, should be accommodated. Consideration should also be given to accommodating staff for this pilgrimage.

Fasting during Ramadan

Beliefs and Practices

The month of Ramadan lasts for 29 or 30 days, depending on the lunar calendar. During Ramadan, Muslims do not eat or drink from the break of dawn to sunset. Ramadan is a continued period of enhanced commitment to self-restraint,

and a time to focus on moral conduct. Fasting is required when children reach the age of puberty. However, younger children are encouraged by their parents/guardians to participate in the fast so they may become accustomed to the practice. Women and girls who are menstruating are exempt from fasting. Certain persons may be exempt from fasting for health or medical reasons.

Dietary Restrictions

Beliefs and Practices

Muslims are careful about the food they consume and how it is prepared. Muslim dietary law prohibits consumption of alcohol, pork, and any pork by-product or derivatives. Standards, called *halal*, regulate the slaughter and preparation of meat and poultry.

Some objectionable food items include pepperoni, pork hot dogs, bacon; gelatin-based candies and desserts; animal shortening in breads, puddings, crackers, cookies; rennet and pepsin in cheese. Vegetable shortening is acceptable.

School Accommodation

School snack and lunch items containing ingredients derived from pork must be clearly identified, both in elementary and secondary schools. Vegetarian and halal food is appropriate for Muslim students. In general, school and cafeteria staff should be aware of food restrictions and carefully plan appropriate menus, snacks, and other food. Consideration should be given to food served on “pizza day,” “hot dog day,” or at annual school fairs.

For more information on accommodating dietary restrictions, see the following listing:

Male/Female Interactions

Beliefs and Practices

Gender relations in the Islamic community are predicated upon social distance between members of the opposite sex. After puberty, Islam does

not allow any kind of casual touching or privacy between unrelated people of the opposite sex.

School Accommodation

It would be best to allow the individual in question to be the one to determine his or her degree of comfort with gender-related issues. For some students and their families, shaking hands, touching, or any other close physical contact between members of the opposite sex should be avoided (e.g., shaking hands with students of the opposite sex in graduation ceremonies or when greeting parents/guardians). When having one-to-one meetings with students or parents/guardians of the opposite sex, doors should be left open. Some students may feel more comfortable if accompanied by a friend. In group work or in paired assignments, some students may not be comfortable sitting next to members of the opposite sex.

Islamic Dress

Beliefs and Practices

Islam prescribes that both men and women behave and dress modestly. Muslims believe that an emphasis on modesty encourages society to value individuals for their wisdom, skills, and contribution to the community, rather than for their physical characteristics. Although the Islamic dress code is required once a student reaches puberty, many Muslim parents/guardians seek to instill modest habits in their children from a much earlier age.

Hijab

The hijab is commonly referred to as a “veil” or head cover, which characterizes the appearance of many Muslim women. It also refers more generally to the loose-fitting, non-revealing clothes worn by Muslim women. The wearing of hijab is primarily an Islamic requirement and is seen within Islam as a symbol of identity and modesty. Another way to understand the importance of the hijab is by recognizing that there are different cultural constructions of the concept of “nakedness.” For Muslim women and girls,

the amount of their body that they feel comfortable showing in public is governed by a different sense of what it means to be “naked” (e.g, showing even their arms or legs would make them feel naked).

Niqab

Some women extend the concept of nakedness to include covering their faces with a niqab.

Kufi

Males may also choose to wear a head covering called a kufi.

School Accommodation

Although the Islamic dress code is required once a student reaches puberty, many Muslim parents/guardians seek to instill modest habits in their children from a much earlier age. Students who wear Islamic dress may be subject to social pressure; the wearing of a head and/or face covering may lead to teasing by other students. Muslim students should feel supported, and there should be a climate of acceptance of Islamic dress. The student body should be aware of the consequences of harassing students because of their religious dress.

It is important to understand that while some non-Muslims may consider Islamic dress to be restrictive, Muslim women who wear it see it as a way to be noted for their character and intellect, rather than for their bodies.

School Curriculum

Islam encourages the study of meaningful and useful areas of human knowledge, but there are certain areas or aspects of the school curriculum where families may request accommodation, since they may find them to be in conflict with their religious requirements.

Physical Education

Beliefs and Practices

In Islam, physical education for both males and

females is highly valued. The primary issues of concern to Muslim parents/guardians with regard to physical education centres on the Islamic dress code and male/female interaction. It is important to preserve and maintain the importance of Islamic dress requirements in physical education.

Males

The area from the navel to the knee must be covered. The covering should be loose so as not to define the contours of the body, and should be of an opaque material so that the body cannot be seen through it.

Females

The whole body, except the face and hands (and feet according to some scholars), should be covered with clothing that is loose and opaque, as described above.

School Accommodation

Schools should ensure that Muslim parents/guardians know and understand the Physical Education curriculum so that they can come to an informed decision about co-educational activities, as well as about acceptable attire for gym, swimming, and spectator sports. Muslim families should also understand what the alternatives are to compulsory high school credits.

Showers and Change Rooms

Muslims are not permitted to undress or shower in front of members of the same or opposite sex, so communal change rooms and showers are a source of much consternation and distress for many Muslim students and their families. Facilities should be made available for those students who require privacy. Males should be allowed to wear shorts or appropriate covering in showers if there is no access to private showers. Females should be allowed to wear appropriate covering if there is no access to private showers.

Gym and Sports

For males, a track suit or jogging pants with a T-shirt should be worn. If shorts are worn, they should be of the Bermuda type, reaching the knees.

For females, loose jogging pants and long sleeved baggy T-shirt or top should be worn, as well as head covering.

Swimming

Western swimsuits are not acceptable. A combination of jogging suit pants/spandex leggings with leotard of T-shirt, plus a swimming cap, may be acceptable.

Swimsuits that are acceptable to Islam are available.

Supervision

For some students, after puberty, there could be requests for supervision by instructors of the same sex, in swimming and other Physical Education activities.

Co-ed Classes and Spectator Sports

There may also be concern about members of the opposite sex being spectators of Physical Education activities. Some Muslim families may request same-sex Physical Education classes or exemptions after puberty. See Appendix 6, pp. 77-78 for exemption procedures.

Human Sexuality – Healthy Active Living Education

Beliefs and Practices

In Islam, the teaching of sexuality is strictly regulated and also predicated upon principles of modesty and issues of separation of males and females. Sex education is grounded in Islamic teachings—just the manner of articulating differs.

School Accommodation

Modesty may preclude students in co-ed classrooms from participating in discussions or asking ques-

tions about some aspects of sexuality. The explicit nature of pictures and videos sometimes used in the teaching of health and sexuality units may be considered inappropriate by some parents/guardians, especially if introduced in elementary classes. It is advisable to inform parents/guardians of the content of the curriculum prior to teaching the units.

Where possible, classroom should be gender-segregated to discuss sensitive issues. Exemptions may need to be provided with alternative programming, if requested by parents/guardians.

Trips and Camping Out

Beliefs and Practices

Islam allows the absence of children away from home for legitimate reasons, such as field trips, camping, or track meets. In some cases, there may be requests that a family member accompany females after puberty. This applies to all trips—day, overnight, or camping.

School Accommodation

Allow parents/guardians reasonable time to review detailed information about the purpose and nature of trips and camping-out activities. For overnight and camping excursions, the provision of separate sleeping facilities for males and females should be communicated and explained to parents/guardians. Meals, snacks, and drinks must consider Muslim dietary restrictions (halal). School-accommodation suggestions for male/female interactions should be followed. Provide alternative activities in the areas of dancing and music, when necessary.

Social Events and School Dances

Beliefs and Practices

Social events and school dances constitute an area of great concern to many Muslim families. Gender relations in the Islamic community are predicated upon social distance between unrelated people of the opposite sex.

School Accommodation

Consideration should be given to the timing of the event within the school day. Students should be given valuable alternative activities if a dance happens during the school day.

Music

Beliefs and Practices

Music is not in itself forbidden; it all depends on the type of music, its use, its instruments, and the persons involved. The use of string and wind instruments is prohibited. The only sanctioned musical instruments are certain percussion instruments, specifically the baseless drum, which are usually limited to weddings and religious celebrations. Songs and lyrics cannot conflict with Islamic teachings and morals.

School Accommodation

There is a wide spectrum of views related to music. There are some Muslims who find music incompatible with their Islamic orientation. These parents/guardians may wish their children to be exempted from any participation in the music curriculum. See *Appendix 6, pp. 77-78 for exemption procedures.*

Avoid teaching units that are solely tonally music based; rhythm-focused music is an alternative. Singing, clapping, and snapping fingers are Islamically viable alternatives that would allow students to demonstrate rhythm and the performing and creating requirements of the curriculum.

Students' use of computerized and/or digital music programs may be permitted, as it involves playing neither wind nor string instruments.

Appropriateness of song lyrics should be taken into account, and religious exemptions provided, when necessary. For example, unaccompanied songs about the purpose of human life, the well-being of society, and the appreciation of nature could be acceptable to families requesting accommodation.

Dance

Beliefs and Practices

Concerns about music and male/female interactions do not allow for dance education for students. Dancing is allowed, if it is not vulgar. There should be no co-ed dancing. Some Muslim parents/guardians may request their children exempted. It was important to note that there may be students who will consider it a sin to take part in any of these activities.

School Accommodation

Requests from Muslim parents/guardians to withdraw their children from dance activities should be accommodated and an agreement reached about viable alternatives.

Visual Arts

Beliefs and Practices

Certain traditions within Islam do not allow for the depiction, portrayal, or representation of human beings and animals. This is seen as replicating the creation of God, and therefore an unacceptable Islamic practice. However, there is a long and renowned artistic tradition within Islam. Islamic art is characterized by calligraphy and intricate geometric patterns and floral art forms, which have been traditionally used to decorate buildings, rooms, and objects.

School Accommodation

Teachers can adjust curriculum and create alternatives for study and practice. For example, assignments in line pattern, colour, and texture can be substituted. In art appreciation, the development of calligraphy, tile design, and architecture in Muslim cultures can be substituted.

Special attention should be paid to assessment and placement practices that require students to draw human and animal pictures. Muslim children may object to or have limited or no experience drawing human and animal pictures.

(Developed in consultation with Muslim community organizations, the Ontario Multifaith Council, and the Islamic Council of Imams–Canada: Abdul Hai Patel, Director, Interfaith Relations, Canadian Council of Imams; and Habeeb Alli, Secretary, Canadian Council of Imams, Pickering Islamic Centre, Masjid Aisha (Whitby) and Islamic Centre of Oshawa.)

JAINISM

An ancient religion, Jainism was founded by several Jinas—men who have conquered the endless cycles of life and enlightenment—such as Lord Mahavir. Many more Jinas will exist in the future.

Jainism is a system of thought and a way of life, whose basic beliefs rest upon five “pillars”:

- Ahinsa: Non-violence, ranging from an act of simple kindness to a comprehensive outlook of universal fraternity. Intolerance is violence that violates the other person’s right.
- Asteya: Non-stealing means not taking anything that does not belong to us, or which is not given to us by its owner.
- Aparamarsh: Non-acquisition (non-hoarding), or setting limits to one’s desires so that one does not deny others. This means not accumulating wealth, possessions, power, etc., beyond the minimum that is absolutely essential.
- Satya: Truth includes honesty to oneself and to others in all interactions and relationships.
- Brahmacharya: Celibacy or chaste living refers to curtailing sexual activity. The idea is to learn to control our desires and our mind.

Prayer and Worship

Beliefs and Practices

Worship prayers are done individually in the mornings (Chaitya Vandan) for about 30 minutes, and the one done in the evening or night (Pratikram) is for 48 minutes.

School Accommodation

Accommodation will be needed for students attending overnight camps. Worship is done after a bath, in clean clothes, at a clean, quiet place on a rug or mat. Teachers should be aware of the length of each prayer time to ensure students have enough time to pray before breakfast and dinner.

Dietary Requirements

Beliefs and Practices

The Jain motto is “Live and Let Live” by being kind to all. This principle extends to all living beings, including humans, animals, and even plants. Hence, Jains are mostly vegetarians. Some do not eat root vegetables and some are vegan or lacto-ovo vegetarians. Meat, fish, eggs, wine, honey, butter, and cheese (unless rennet-free or of a specific variety) are not acceptable. Animal by-products or items with non-vegetarian ingredients are not consumed. During the holy days of Paryushan (eight days) and Daslakshana (ten days), green leafy vegetables and root vegetables grown under the ground, like potatoes and onions, are also not consumed.

School Accommodation

Cafeterias (for students and staff) should be aware of such food restrictions. Providing alternative vegetarian food options is suggested. Special care should be taken to keep vegetarian and non-vegetarian food separate, and not to use the same utensils (e.g., spoons, knives) for both. A Jain child or youth who is vegetarian at home may not be able to join school parties if vegetarian food is not made available. Participation in projects related to Easter celebrations or Thanksgiving, where eggs and turkey are important, may be inappropriate for Jain students.

Fasting

Beliefs and Practices

Practicing Jains may observe fasting on full/half-moon days, as per the lunar calendar, and during the holy days, including Paryushan and Daslakshana Parva.

School Accommodation

Heavy exercises should be avoided when students are fasting during holy days. In addition to accommodating students, schools can use the opportunity to honour students who are taking on the responsibility of fasting. Staff and student awareness

of fasting will help avoid misunderstandings. Holy Days and Celebrations

Jain festivals are sober and pious and are based on the lunar calendar. Dates may not be the same as the Western calendar every year.

Important Holy Days

- Mahavir Janma Kalyanak (Tirthankar Mahavir's Birthday)
Celebrated as an Ahinsa (Non-Violence) Day. On this day, the community gathers at the temple, and the life and teachings of Mahavir, 24th and Last Tirthankar, are explained in the form of worship, or pooja.
- Paryushan Parva (for Svetambers, eight days) and Daslakshana Parva (for Digambers, ten days)
Each holy day consists of eight days of meditation-penance, when special confession-type services are done. The last day of both festivals is important and observed as the Samvantsari, the Forgiveness Day. Most Jains fast during these holy days.
- Mahavir Nirvan (Salvation) Kalyanak
Celebrated on the same day as Diwali (the Festival of Lights).

Other Holy Days

- Gnan Panchami
The day of knowledge, observed with pooja (ritualistic offering) to pay homage to Saraswati Devi, the deity of knowledge and learning.
- Guru Purnima
The day of reverence to Guru-Teacher.
- Maun-agiyaras
The Day of Silence.

School Accommodation

Students/staff are to be excused from attendance

from school for important holy days. Scheduling of all school and school-related activities should take important holy days into account. In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams, and major tests, students should be accommodated.

Dress Requirements, Religious Attire

Beliefs and Practices

It may be noted that *Tilak* or *Chandlo* (dot/symbol/design) on the forehead after visiting the temple is retained for the day and should be considered acceptable. It is common to wear pendants with religious symbols and designs.

School Accommodation

Consideration to students using *Tilak* or *Chandlo* after temple is recommended.

School Curriculum – Physical Education

Beliefs and Practices

It is hoped that schools breed an atmosphere of acceptance and ensure that students are not bullied, teased, or harassed due to the spirit of non-violence principle of Jain students. Decency in behaviour toward others is an important customary practice observed, especially when selecting physical activities and athletics.

School Accommodation

Whenever and wherever possible, boys and girls should sit or stand separately.

(Developed in consultation with Mr. Prakash Mody, Jain Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care)

JUDAISM

Jews believe that God chose Abraham to introduce the concept of monotheism, thus establishing an individual covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their families on to further spiritual teachings that would be later identified with Jewish theology. The nature of this individual covenant was transformed to one of a national orientation, when the Jewish people collectively received the Torah at Mount Sinai. According to Jewish tradition, this occurred after Moses led the people to freedom from slavery in Egypt.

(Source: Multifaith Information Manual)

Daily Prayer

Beliefs and Practices

Jews pray three times daily—in the evening, morning, and afternoon. Many Jews try to pray in a minyan, which is a public quorum that enables the saying of specific prayers. Morning prayers may be said from the time the sun comes up until approximately mid-morning. Afternoon prayers are said from shortly after midday until the sun sets.

School Accommodation

When requested, schools should accommodate students and staff before and after school time so that they may attend morning and afternoon services, especially during November, December, and January, when there are fewer hours of daylight.

Bereavement Rituals

Beliefs and Practices

Jewish law formally considers the bereaved to be those who have lost any of the following close relatives: father, mother, spouse, son, daughter, brother, sister.

During the seven days following the burial, the bereaved sits Shiva in the home of the deceased. During this time, the mourner emerges into a new frame of mind, talks about his or her loss, and accepts comfort from friends. The mourner will not be in school, and will welcome visitors to the Shiva house. For 11

months from the death of a close relative, the bereaved is obligated to recite the Kaddish prayer in memory of the departed. Kaddish is said each morning and evening in a quorum of ten persons and is part of the daily prayer obligation.

School Accommodation

Students and staff who are sitting Shiva should be accommodated. Schools should accommodate students and staff before and after school time so that they may attend morning and afternoon services, especially during November, December, and January, when there are fewer hours of daylight.

Preparation for the Sabbath and Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices

Jewish holy days start the previous evening at dusk and end after sunset. Preparation for the holy day is seen as an integral part of its observance. During Eastern Standard Time, especially during days when the sun sets early, getting ready for Shabbat (the Sabbath) is greatly complicated by the lack of adequate preparation time. Similarly, the holy day of Passover requires immense advance preparation.

School Accommodation

Schools should accommodate Jewish students and staff in the scheduling of before- and after-school requirements prior to holy days and the Jewish Sabbath. Note that Jewish holy days begin the prior evening.

Shabbat (The Sabbath)

The Jewish Sabbath begins Friday at dusk and concludes Saturday after nightfall each week. Many activities undertaken on this day accentuate the fact that Shabbat is to be devoted to one's spiritual needs.

School Accommodation

Weekend expectations should not include school activities on the Jewish Sabbath (e.g., work expectations or attending music festivals or camps).

All the Jewish holy days follow the lunar calendar.

Rosh Hashanah (The Jewish New Year)

Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) usually falls in the month of September, but can on occasion fall at the beginning of October. This is a major holy day, and most Jewish students and staff will not attend school on these two days.

School Accommodation

Staff and students should be accommodated on Rosh HaShana.

Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement)

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year and is spent fasting and immersed in prayer. Although girls from the age of 12 and boys from the age of 13 are required to fast, children begin at a younger age to practise fasting for part of Yom Kippur.

School Accommodation

Staff and students should be accommodated on Yom Kippur.

Passover (The Season of Our Freedom)

Passover lasts for eight days and recalls the miraculous exodus of Israel from slavery in Egypt. It is also a commemoration of the birth of the Jewish people as a separate nation distinct from the other nations of the world. All leaven product and by-products are forbidden for the duration of this holiday, and many Jews use special utensils and cookware during Passover.

School Accommodation

Most Jews will not be in school on the first day of Passover, and observant Jews will be also be absent on the second and last two days of Passover. School staff should be aware that many Jews will bring their own food for snack time or school events.

The following holy days may also require accommodation for some staff and students.

Sukkot (Tabernacles)

Sukkot comes five days after Yom Kippur and com-

memorates how Jews lived in temporary dwellings during the 40 years in the desert after leaving Egypt. Jews celebrate this holy day by leaving the comfortable confines of their homes and dwelling in makeshift, temporary structures called Sukkot (Tabernacles).

Shimini Atzeret (The Eighth Day of Solemn Assembly)

Simchat Torah (The Joy of Receiving the Torah)

Simchat Torah celebrates the joy of receiving the Torah from God. On this day, the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings is completed and begun again to symbolize the unending cycle of Torah study.

Shavuot (The Season of the Giving of the Torah)

This holiday commemorates the receiving of the Torah from God at Mount Sinai.

Tisha B'Av

On this day, Jews remember the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, as well as other tragedies which have befallen the Jewish people. Observant Jews will fast on this day.

School Accommodation

Observant staff and students may need to be accommodated on Sukkot, Shimini Atzeret, Simchat Torah, Shavuot, and Tisha B'Av.

Minor Fast Days

There are a number of “minor” fast days on the Jewish calendar, where one can attend school and be involved in normal activities. These fasts begin at sunrise and end at nightfall.

School Accommodation

School administration and staff ought to be aware and sensitive to the fact that some Jewish students and staff may be experiencing the hardships associated with fasting.

Minor fast days include:

- 10th Day of Tevet

- 17th of Tammuz
- 3rd of Tishrei (The Fast of Gedaliah)
- 13th of Adar (Fast of Esther)
- 14th of Nisan (Fast of the Firstborn)

The following Jewish holy days do not require accommodation:

Hanukkah/Chanukah (The Festival of Dedication or Festival of Lights)

This commemoration goes back to the time when the Greek-Syrians, who ruled over the entire Middle East region, sought to prevent the Jews from observing their religion. In a series of battles, led by Judah the Maccabee and his brothers, the Jews emerged victorious and re established Jew-

ish observance in the land.

Purim (The Feast of Lots)

Purim commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people who lived in the Persian Empire from the anti-Semitic prime minister Haman, who plotted to annihilate the Jewish population.

Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day)

Yom HaShoah is a time of communal reflection, sadness, and loss as we remember the six million Jews who were murdered by Hitler and the Nazis between 1939 and 1945.

Yom HaAtzmaut (Israeli Independence Day)

Yom HaAtzmaut celebrates the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948.

	5771 2010-2011	5772 2011-2012	5773 2012-2013	5774 2013-2014
Rosh Hashanah	Thurs., Sept. 9 Fri., Sept. 10	Thurs., Sept. 29 Fri., Sept. 30	Mon., Sept. 17 Tues., Sept. 18	Sept. 24–25
Yom Kippur	Sat., Sept. 18	Sat., Oct. 8	Wed., Sept. 26	October 4
Sukkot	Thurs., Sept. 23 Fri., Sept. 24	Thurs., Oct. 13 Fri., Oct. 14	Mon., Oct. 1 Tues., Oct. 2	October 9 October 10
Shemini Atzeret	Thurs., Sept. 30	Thurs., Oct. 20	Mon., Oct. 8	October 16
Simchat Torah	Fri., Oct. 1	Fri., Oct. 21	Tues., Oct. 9	October 17
Passover	Tues., Apr. 19 Wed., Apr. 20 Mon., Apr. 25 Tues., Apr. 26	Sat., Apr. 7 Sun., Apr. 8 Fri., Apr. 13 Sat., Apr. 14	Tues., Mar. 26 Wed., Mar. 27 Mon., Apr. 1 Tues., Apr. 2	April 4 April 5 April 10 April 11
Shavout	Wed., June 8 Thurs., June 9	Sun., May 27 Mon., May 28	Wed., May 15 Thurs., May 16	May 24 May 25

Dietary Requirements

Beliefs and Practices

The Hebrew word kosher means that a given food is permitted and acceptable. All fresh fruits and vegetables are kosher. The Jewish dietary regulations begin when dealing with foods that derive from animals, fish, or fowl.

Animals

Kosher is any mammal with split hoofs that chews its cud. Not kosher are pigs.

Fish/Seafood

Kosher are fish that have fins and scales. Not kosher are catfish and seafood such as lobster, shrimp, crab, squid. Amphibians (e.g., frogs, tur-

bles) are also not kosher.

Fowl

Kosher are chicken, goose, and duck. Not kosher are fowl specifically listed in the Torah.

Separation of Dairy and Meat

It is not permitted to mix milk with meat foods, to cook milk and meat together, or to serve them together at the same time.

Kosher rules are complex, as they also involve a specific approach to food preparation and processing.

School Accommodations

Staff and students who observe the Jewish Dietary Laws and only eat food certified as kosher will not consume food prepared in the absence of rabbinic supervision. If possible, teachers or schools may wish to make available packaged kosher snacks that have reliable certification markings visible on the item’s packaging. Teachers or schools may wish to adjust their snack, pizza/hot dog days, fun fair, or lunch programs to accommodate students who keep kosher. This general chart outlines some of the foods to be aware of.

FOOD	CONCERN	ALTERNATIVE	AVAILABILITY
Crackers	A small number of crackers are made with animal shortening (lard).	Kosher food products require rabbinic certification to be considered kosher. This is determined by the presence of one of these symbols on the product label: COR MK U. In the absence of rabbinic certification, the product is not kosher.	Supermarkets
Cookies	A small number of cookies are made with animal shortening (lard).		Supermarkets
Cheese	Most cheese is made with rennet and pepsin, which are animal by-products.		Some supermarkets and available on order.
Pizza	Some pizza outlets use cheese that is made with rennet and pepsin, which are animal by-products.		Kosher outlets.
Beef and poultry	Meat and poultry must be slaughtered in a certain way.	Consider veggie hot dogs and burgers and other vegetarian substitutes.	Vegetarian substitutes are available at all supermarkets.
Pork or pork by products	Pork is forbidden. Some food is made with pork by-products.	No pork or pork by-products are acceptable.	
Combination of milk and meat products	Milk and meat products are not eaten together.	Ensure adequate alternatives to milk beverages. Don't automatically add cheese to hamburger or meat to pizza.	
Gelatin-based desserts and candies	Jell-O wine Starbursts, gummy bears, gums, gumdrops, and similar desserts and candies contain gelatin, an animal by-product.	Choose other candies and desserts.	Supermarkets

Gender Relations

Beliefs and Practices

Jewish tradition and custom prohibit direct physical contact between men and women who are not related. How this is interpreted will depend on one's level of religious observance. Formal contact, such as a handshake, may be seen by some as a form of greeting. However, others may include a handshake in the prohibition of physical contact.

School Accommodation

It is important to be aware that some Jews will observe this tradition. It would be best to allow the individual in question to be the one to determine his or her degree of comfort with gender-related issues.

Dress Requirements

Beliefs and Practices

Jewish tradition requires men and women to dress modestly. This can be interpreted in different ways, depending on one's level of observance. For those who are very observant, males will wear only long pants when in public, and females will only wear clothing that doesn't reveal the shape of their bodies.

Jewish males keep their head covered; however, there is no prescribed covering. Over time, specific head coverings were developed in different parts of the world. Jewish males may choose to wear a specific kind of covering, such as a *kippah* (also known as a *yarmulke*). Even a baseball cap is acceptable.

School Accommodation

Sensitivity to this issue is necessary. It may be an issue of concern during physical education. There may be cases that will require an exemption from gym uniforms that do not meet traditional dress codes. It is hoped that schools breed an atmosphere of tolerance and ensure that students are not teased or harassed due to this visible sign of their beliefs. Jewish students should feel support-

ed and there should be a climate of acceptance of their dress. The student body should be aware of the consequences of harassing students because of their religious dress.

Curriculum Concerns

Music

School choirs are sometimes taught classical works that come from Christian prayer services.

School Accommodation

School staff should be sensitive to the religious roots of some music and accommodate students if they express a concern in this area.

Regarding concerns about other areas of the curriculum, see Section [E8, page 14](#).

(Developed in consultation with Rabbi Ronald Weiss, Faith Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care)

RASTAFARI

The Rastafari faith and culture as a way of life is deeply entrenched in many world communities. Though the Rastafari religion may seem to be a twentieth-century development, some of their practices and principles are as ancient as the way of the Nazarite of Biblical times. The religion's beliefs are based on the Bible and on many African beliefs and traditions. Rastafari embrace the divinity of their ancestors and owe their allegiance to the throne of David, of the line of Solomon, of which throne the 225th king was Haile Selassie 1st. Rastafari do not believe in nationalism or patriotism. In fact, they claim no attachment to any "ism." Their reverence is to their King and only to their King.

Many Rastafari practices are also embedded within the tradition of Ethiopian Orthodoxy. Historically, African peoples in the New World have traced memories of an African homeland through the trauma of slavery and through ideologies of struggle and resistance. The Rastafari fashion their vision of an ancestral homeland through a complex of ideas and symbols known as Ethiopianism, which has informed concepts of nationhood, independence, and political uplift since the late sixteenth century. The belief in Ethiopia as a promised land is derived from references in the Bible to African peoples as Ethiopians, and it has expressed the political, cultural, and spiritual aspirations of Africans in the Caribbean and North America for over three centuries. From the last quarter of the eighteenth century to the present, Ethiopianism has at various times provided for the Rastafari a basis for a common sense of destiny and identification among African peoples in the North American colonies, the Caribbean, Europe, and the African continent.

The Rastafari have a faith and culture based, among other beliefs, on an Africentric reading of the Bible, communal values, a strict vegetarian code known as I-tal, use of herbs for medicinal

and ritual purposes, and a calendar devoted to the celebration of Ethiopian holy days. Holy Days

Many Rastafari celebrations of faith, more particularly for the Nyahbinghi tradition, happen over a period of seven days and seven nights. There are Rastafarians who observe the calendar of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The following is a list of dates that are important to Rastafari internationally.

- January 7: Ethiopian Christmas
- April 21–25: Celebrating the Passover
- May 25: African Liberation Day
- June 11: Battle of Adowa
- July 23: Haile Selassie's Birthday
- August 1: Emancipation Day
- August 17: Marcus Garvey's Birthday
- September 11: Ethiopian New Year
- November 2: Coronation Day

Rastafari also honour and celebrate other holidays acknowledged and celebrated by the African diaspora.

Opening and Closing Exercises

Beliefs and Practices

Rastafari do not embrace nationalism or patriotism. There may be requests for exemptions from having to sing "O Canada" or "God Save the Queen."

Dietary Requirements

Beliefs and Practices

Rastafari of the orthodox Nyahbinghi tradition follow strict vegetarian principles. Their diet is called *I-tal*. *I-tal* food is special food that never touches chemicals or that is natural and not from cans. The food is cooked, but served in the rawest form possible; without salts, preservatives, or condiments. No form of beef, fish, or eggs, nor their by-products are eaten. Those Rastafari

who do eat beef also do not eat pork (considered scavengers of the earth) or derivatives. Fish is *I-tal* food, but lobster, crabs, and shrimp (considered scavengers of the sea) are not allowed. The fish allowed is small (no more than 12 inches long). Tea and herbal drinks are permitted. Coffee, milk, soft drinks, and liquor are considered unnatural and are not allowed.

Rastafari require a supportive and spiritually comfortable environment for eating.

School Accommodation

Many Rastafari parents/guardians are concerned that alternative diets, such as theirs, are not considered in school cafeteria programs. Strict vegetarian options are recommended. Rastafari students dietary needs should be considered with regards to out-of-school activities that require students to be away from home for more than a day. Outdoor facilities need to ensure appropriate dietary alternatives. There may be Rastafari students/staff who request the possibility of cooking their own meals in these situations.

Dress

Beliefs and Practices

Rastafari focus on modesty and cleanliness as opposed to clothing for fashion. Choices of adornment show a respect for that which is natural, simple, and practical. Red, gold, and green, representing the rainbow land of Ethiopia and throne of God from the Scriptures Ezekiel, Ch. 1, are important symbolic colours.

Rastafari grow their hair untouched and uncut as a vow or covenant with their creator. Children and adults cannot cut their hair. The vow is similar to the Nazarite vow made by the ancient Biblical prophets (“They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in the flesh.” Leviticus 21:5). Hair is never cut nor combed (worn in

“dreadlocks”). Facial hair is never cut either. Head covering is necessary to protect the locks. Head coverings include cloth wraps, knitted tams, or shawls.

Rastafari do not object to their children wearing a school-mandated uniform as long as the uniform in its physical and or metaphysical functioning does not offend or impinge on the rights and principles of the faith.

Rastafari should be permitted the right to cultural norms of formality (e.g., the right to wear an African outfit in lieu of a suit and tie to formal occasions of the Board). Small tokens, emblems, buttons, badges, and shawls depicting symbolic colours of relevance to the culture should be allowed to be worn.

School Accommodation

Schools with no-hat policies should be aware of Rastafari needs to cover dreadlocks. A letter from parents/guardians or elders regarding this need for accommodation is advisable to avoid misunderstandings.

School Curriculum: Family Studies

Beliefs and Practices

When the body bleeds, it is going through a stage of purification and should be in a state of withdrawal. Females do not worship during menstruation, and they abstain from cooking.

School Accommodation

Rastafari females may request to be allowed to refrain from cooking activities in Family Studies during their menstrual period.

(Developed in consultation with Ras Ishaka Williams, TDSB)

SIKHISM

The founder of the Sikh religion was Guru Nanak, born in 1469. He preached a message of love, peace, equality, respect and understanding. Guru Nanak passed on leadership of this new religion to nine successive gurus. The final living guru, Guru Gobind Singh, died in 1708.

During his lifetime, Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa order (meaning “The Pure”), soldier-saints. The Khalsa uphold the highest Sikh virtues of commitment, dedication, and social consciousness. The Khalsa are men and women who have undergone the Sikh baptism ceremony, strictly follow the Sikh Code of Conduct and Conventions, and wear the prescribed five physical articles of the faith.

Sikhs believe in direct linkage with God, with no intermediary needed. There is no such class as priesthood in Sikhism. However, the one who performs the daily service at a Sikh place of worship is called the *granthi*, the custodian. Sikhs only have custodians of the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy scripture). Any Sikh is free to read the Guru Granth Sahib in the *gurdwara* (a Sikh temple) or in their home. People of all religions are welcome to the *gurdwara*. A free community kitchen can be found at every *gurdwara*, which serves meals to all people, regardless of their faith. Sikhs believe in equality of humankind and respect for all faiths.

Prayer and Worship

Beliefs and Practices

Sikhs generally pray early in the morning and twice at night. The morning prayer may take as long as 50 minutes, has three segments, and is usually done just before dawn or breakfast. It consists of reciting specific verses from Guru Granth Sahib. The evening prayer is said just before supper and may take up to 20 minutes. The last prayer of the day takes about five minutes and is offered just before bedtime. Whenever possible,

it is best to say the morning and evening prayers in congregation. The last prayer is generally done individually.

School Accommodation

Accommodation will be needed for students attending overnight camps. A clean, quiet room is needed for worship. Worshippers normally sit on a rug or a mat and, before worshipping, there should be time for washing. Teachers should be aware of the length of each prayer time to ensure that students have enough time to pray before breakfast and supper.

Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices

Sikhs observe all of their holy days. In Canada, some Sikh students or staff may be absent from school or work on the following days.

Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh

Guru Gobind Singh Ji was the tenth and last of the living gurus of the Sikhs. He lived from 1666 to 1708. Divine spiritual light in human form was carried from the first guru through nine successive gurus. After his death, “guruship” was passed on to the eternal guru, Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy scripture. This day generally occurs in early January.

Vaisakhi Day

This day celebrates the founding of the Khalsa order (Sikh religion) in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Many Sikhs choose to be baptized into the Khalsa order on this day. On this day in 1699, male Khalsa Sikhs were given the middle name “Singh” (lion), and female Khalsa Sikhs were given the middle name “Kaur” (princess). It is the most important holy day of the year for Sikhs. This day is generally on April 13 or 14.

Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji

This holy day honours the birthday of Guru Nanak

Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh faith, who lived from 1469 to 1539. This day generally occurs in November.

Maghi

Maghi commemorates the battle fought on behalf of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, in which 40 Sikhs, led by a women devotee, Mai Bhago, died.

Hola Mohalla

This holy day takes place at the end of winter and welcomes the new season with sports and athletic activities.

Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji

On this holy day, Sikhs remember those who have suffered for their faith and the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth guru, who sacrificed his life for religious expression. Guru Arjan Dev Ji built the Golden Temple at Amristar, India, and compiled the Adi Granth, the Sikh scriptures. The Golden Temple is the nucleus of Sikhism, the equivalent of the Vatican for Roman Catholics and Mecca for Muslims.

Parkash

Parkash celebrates the introduction of the Adi Granth to the Golden Temple.

Investiture of Guru Granth Sahib (Eternal)

This holy day celebrates the passing on of the guruship from ten living gurus to the eternal guru, Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book.

Bandi Chhor Divas

This holy day celebrates the release of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind Ji, and 52 other religious prisoners of various faiths from jail, and the guru's subsequent journey to the holy city of Amritsar. This day coincides with the Hindu festival of Diwali.

Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji sacrificed his life for freedom of religious expression and freedom, and in

the protest against forced conversion of Hindus to another faith.

School Accommodation

Scheduling of all school and school-related activities should take Sikh holy days into account. In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams, and major tests, Sikh students should be accommodated.

Dress Requirements, Religious Attire

Beliefs and Practices

Men and women who have been initiated (baptized) into the Khalsa order (baptized Sikhs) uphold the five articles of faith, commonly referred to as the 5 Ks: Kesh, Kangha, Kirpan, Kara, Kash.

Baptized Sikhs wear the five Ks as symbols of their freedom, commitment, and identity. Initiation into Khalsa is a very personal decision and can happen at any age, depending on the individual's readiness and knowledge of the faith. The family plays an important part in the decision, and family members may be initiated at different ages.

Kesh

Kesh is the uncut hair of a Sikh and is a symbol of spirituality, commitment to life, and obedience to God's will. Sikhs do not ever cut their hair. Men's hair is always protected by a turban, which women may also wear. A Sikh (male or female) may wear a head covering that can include any of the following: a *dastar* (turban), *patka*, *rumal* (top knot with handkerchief) or *chunni* (headscarf). The turban itself is a five- to seven-metre piece of cotton cloth.

School Accommodation

The turban is an essential adjunct to the uncut hair of a Sikh. It is an identity symbol for all Sikhs, even those who are not yet Khalsa Sikhs. The wearing of a turban or patka may lead to teasing by other students. The knocking off of the turban is a great affront to the Sikh religion and is a personal insult

to the wearer. All students should understand the serious consequences of harassing students because of their religious dress.

Sikh students/staff should be allowed to wear the turban or a patka. School uniforms and/or no-hat policies should be modified to accommodate Sikhs. Sikh students will usually replace the turban with a patka when participating in organized sports or for swimming. Accommodations for wearing/protecting of a turban and/or a patka in Physical Education, swimming, and organized sports should be made.

Kangha

The *kangha* (a wooden comb) is a symbol of physical cleanliness, orderliness, discipline, and commitment to life. A Sikh is required to keep uncut hair clean and to comb it twice a day. The kangha is tied into the knot of hair and is concealed in the turban or patka.

School Accommodation

See the accommodations under Kesh.

Kirpan

The *kirpan* (a ceremonial small sword) is a symbol of courage, self-sacrifice, and defence of the weak and righteousness. Wearing the kirpan is a requirement of being a Khalsa Sikh. This ceremonial knife symbolizes each individual's duty toward other human beings, particularly the poor and oppressed, and is worn on the person. This is not a weapon, and strict rules prohibit its use as such. It is never to be removed from its sheath. For safety reasons, two or three clasps hold the kirpan securely in the sheath. Only a baptized Khalsa Sikh is required to wear a kirpan.

School Accommodation

Schools will accommodate Khalsa Sikh students and staff who wear a kirpan under the following conditions:

- At the beginning of the school year or upon registration, the student and parents/ guardians must report to the school administration that they are Khalsa Sikhs and wear the five articles of faith.
- The kirpan is small (six to seven inches).
- The kirpan will be sufficiently secure to render removal difficult.
- The kirpan should not be worn visibly, but under the wearer's clothing.
- There is notification in writing to the principal by parents/guardians and student and, where possible, from the gurdwara (place of worship), confirming that the student requesting accommodation is a Khalsa Sikh.
- Students under 18 must be accompanied by parents/guardians when discussing the rules regarding the wearing of the kirpan.

The principal and student, in consultation with the parent/guardian, will discuss program modifications to ensure that there will not be any situations where the wearing of a kirpan could inadvertently cause physical harm to the wearer or to another individual in the school.

The procedure for kirpan accommodation has been developed from existing policies of the former Public School Boards of Metropolitan Toronto, and in consultation with the Safe Schools Committee, Metropolitan Toronto Police, and the Ontario Multifaith Council's Sikh representative.

Kara

The *kara* (a steel bracelet worn on the right wrist) is a symbol of commitment to God and eternity. The bracelet has no beginning or end, just as God has no beginning or end.

School Accommodation

No religious accommodations are needed.

Kach

Kach (a specially designed undergarment) is a symbol of chastity and modesty.

School Accommodation There may be need for accommodation in Physical Education uniforms. Some students may want to wear their *kach* under their gym shorts.

(Developed in consultation with Harsharan Singh and Mohinder Singh, Faith representatives from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care)

CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST

Christian Science dates to the 1860s in Massachusetts, when Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) began to teach and practise spiritual healing successfully, based on her intensive study of the Bible and Jesus' healing ministry. In *Rudimental Divine Science*, she defined Christian Science as: "The law of God, the law of good, interpreting and demonstrating the divine Principle and rule of universal harmony." In 1875, she published the basic teachings of Christian Science in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In 1879, she founded the First Church of Christ, Scientist. Since then, 60 000 testimonies of healing, experienced by adherents and others, have been published in the church's periodicals. These have been of virtually every illness, many diagnosed as incurable or terminal. Christian Science also teaches the healing of moral problems and addictions.

Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, page 496:

"The following is a brief exposition of the important points, or religious tenets, of Christian Science:

1. As adherents of Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal Life.
2. We acknowledge and adore one supreme and infinite God. We acknowledge His Son, one Christ; the Holy Ghost or divine Comforter; and man in God's image and likeness.
3. We acknowledge God's forgiveness of sin in the destruction of sin and the spiritual understanding that casts out evil as unreal. But the belief in sin is punished so long as the belief lasts.
4. We acknowledge Jesus' atonement as the evidence of divine, efficacious Love, unfolding man's unity with God through Christ Jesus the Way-shower; and we acknowledge

that man is saved through Christ, through Truth, Life, and Love, as demonstrated by the Galilean Prophet in healing the sick and overcoming sin and death.

5. We acknowledge that the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal Life, even the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter.
6. And we solemnly promise to watch, and pray for that Mind to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus; to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; and to be merciful, just and pure."

Health Care/Immunizations

Beliefs and Practices

While spiritual healing is central to the practice of Christian Science, adherents comply with all federal and provincial laws governing quarantine, the reporting of contagious disease, and mandated vaccinations. In addition, Christian Science parents/guardians recognize that teachers and especially principals must "give assiduous attention to the health and comfort of the pupils" (*Education Act, s. 265(j)*). Within the framework of Canadian and Ontarian law, Christian Science parents/guardians make healthcare decisions regarding their children, with no intervention from the Church."

School Accommodation

Where religious accommodations provide for exemption from immunizations (such as the *Ontario Immunization of School Pupils Act*), Christian Scientists typically exercise this option.

Parents or legal guardians should inform the principal, upon registration, if they choose care for their child that would differ from the care ordinarily provided. When this is done, if a Christian Science student becomes ill or incapacitated while at

school or on a school supervised field trip, the teacher(s) responsible for the child will know what steps the parents/guardians wish to be taken.

Some Christian Science parents/guardians may request, as well, exemptions from classes in human sexuality, disease awareness, human biology, and other health-related courses. They may also request to have their children excused from school-sponsored medical-intervention programs.

(Developed in consultation with Lyle Young, Christian Science Committee on Publication for Ontario, and representative of the Ontario Congregations of the Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science) on the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care)

ZOROASTRIANISM

Zoroastrianism was founded by Prophet Zarathustra sometime in the period 1700–1500 BCE. The religion originated in North Central Asia in the region of the Aral Sea, close to the present-day Tajikistan. It is believed to be the first monotheistic faith in the history of humankind and the first-revealed religion in the world. It is a universal religion that recognizes Ahura Mazda (Lord Wise) as the godhead.

Zarathustra teaches active participation of humankind in life through thinking with a Good Mind and choosing the path of Truth and Benevolence through good words and deeds. This is the central element in the Prophet's concept of free will. The highest ideal for humankind is to emulate the values of Amesha Spentas (Bounteous Immortals): thinking through Good Mind, and choosing the path of Truth and Righteousness, which are the emanations of Ahura Mazda.

The religion is dedicated to creations of nature—heavenly bodies, earth, water, plants, animals, and man—all believed to be sacred and worth caring for. The fundamental concepts enshrined in the Zoroastrian faith is the freedom to think with Vohu Manah, the Good Mind, endowed by the creator, and living through Truth and Righteousness embodied in the concept of Asha. This can help bring Divine Rule and Prosperity and Harmony in the corporeal world through Peace

Prayer and Worship

A devout Zoroastrian is expected to say his or her prayers five times a day. School will need to make accommodation to provide a secluded location for a Zoroastrian child who wishes to fulfill his or her spiritual devotion to the Creator.

For devotional practice, the head of a Zoroastrian should be covered with a scarf or a cap. The school should make appropriate accommodations to permit this. Some students may choose to have the cap on all the time as part of their dress code.

Every young Zoroastrian between the ages of 7 and 15 is invested through the Navjote (initiation) ritual, with an undergarment called *sudreh* (the pure path) and a *girdle* (cord) woven out of 72 woolen threads known as *kusti*. During the devotional prayers, as well as after gym-class

showers, a devout Zarathushti (Zoroastrian) unties and reties the girdle (*kusti*) through the recital of Holy Mantra. Tolerance and respect should be exercised by those who are not familiar with such ritual practice.

Holy Days

As Zoroastrians follow a diverse system of two major calendars (Shenshai and Fasli), the date of the observance of the holy days could vary. Usually, Naurooz, the Zoroastrian New Year, starts March 21 of the year (Fasli calendar). The same by Shenshai reckoning is around August 20. The latter, however, does not have a leap year day calculation within.

The birthdate of Prophet Zarathustra is celebrated on March 26, five days after the New Year by Zoroastrian Fasli calendar. The same Shenshai calendar is five days after the respective New Year day.

(Prepared in consultation with the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario)

Appendix 2:

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

This Calendar of Religious Holy Days is adapted from The Ontario Public Service Holy Days Policy, which was developed through consultation with leaders and representatives of religions that complied with section 20 of the *Marriage Act*.

Schools and workplaces may wish to use this listing of Religious Holy Days as a general guide to the observances of members of their diverse school com-

munities. It is provided for information only. Dates are not provided, and while the names of the observances will remain the same, the dates for solar and other calendars will change from year to year.

Schools and workplaces are reminded to follow collective agreements and Terms and Conditions for the granting of requests for leave from members of staff.

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION	HOLY DAYS
Anglican	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Antiochian Orthodox Christian	Good Friday Easter Sunday Pentecost Christmas
Apostolic Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Armenian Church in Canada	Christmas Good Friday Easter (Note: Remaining religious observances follow Gregorian Calendar.)
Associated Gospel	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Bahá'í (Dates are same every year)	Bahá'í New Year Naw Ruz First Day of the Festival of Ridvan Ninth Day of the Festival of Ridvan Twelfth Day Festival of Ridvan The Declaration of the Báb The Ascension of the Bahá'u'lláh The Martyrdom of the Báb The Birth of the Báb The Birth of Bahá'u'lláh
Baptist	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox	Christmas Epiphany Annunciation Good Friday Easter Ascension Dormition

<p>Buddhist: Buddhist (Tibetan)</p> <p>Buddhist (Tengye Ling Tibetan)</p> <p>Buddhist (Hinayana)</p> <p>Buddhist (Mayahana) (Note: In the Western world, festivals are generally celebrated on the Sunday nearest the actual date.)</p>	<p>Tibetan New Year Day of Offering (First Full Moon Day of Tibetan New Year) The Buddha's Enlightenment (Saga Dawa) His Holiness Dalai Lama's Birthday Chokor Korway Ducchen (1st Turning of the Wheel of Dharma)</p> <p>Tibetan New Year (Losar) Day of Miracles Buddha's Birth (Wesak) Buddha's Death (Parinivana) Buddha's Enlightenment (Mahayana) His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's Birthday Buddha's Descent from Tushita Heaven</p> <p>Chinese New Year Spring Ohigon Kwan Yan Day Saka New Year Buddha's Birth (Wesak) Dharma Day (Termination of Rainy Observances) Wassana (Full Moon Day) Ullambana (Mayahana) Fall Ohigon Parinirvana Founder's Day Kathina (Theravada) Mert Shamp Day</p> <p>Chinese New Year Buddha's Enlightenment (Mahayana) Buddha's Birthday (Wesak) (Mahayana) Buddha's Birthday (Therevadin)</p>
<p>Catholic: Polish Catholic</p> <p>Roman Catholic</p> <p>Ukrainian Catholic (Note: The Ukrainian Catholic Church uses two calendars: Gregorian (new) Calendar and Julian (old) Calendar. Ukrainian Catholics could follow either calendar. However, the accepted norm is for a person to follow one calendar at one time, not both.)</p>	<p>No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada</p> <p>No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada</p> <p>Julian (Old Calendar) Christmas (Nativity) Epiphany (Theophany) Annunciation Good Friday Easter (Resurrection) Ascension Pentecost Sts. Peter and Paul Dormition Gregorian (New Calendar) Epiphany (Theophany) Annunciation</p>

	<p>Good Friday Easter (Resurrection) Ascension Pentecost Sts. Peter and Paul Dormition Christmas (Nativity)</p>
Christadelphian	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Christian and Missionary Alliance	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Christian Assembly of Taiwan	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Christian Churches (includes Disciples of Christ and Christian Church)	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Christ of Latter Day Saints	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Christian Reformed Church of North America	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Church of Scientology	Birthday of Founder, L. Ron Hubbard
Church of the Nazarene	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Church of United Brethren of Christ	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Egyptian (Coptic) Orthodox	<p>Christmas Baptism of Christ Good Friday Easter St. Mark's Feast (Patron Saint) Pentecost Coptic New Year</p>
Ethiopian Orthodox	<p>Ethiopian Christmas Epiphany Feast of Cana of Galilee Good Friday Easter Ethiopian New Year Founding of the True Cross</p>
Evangelical Baptist	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays. However, churches elect members to attend Fellowship Convention Day (first Wednesday in November) and Ontario Fellowship Day (first Tuesday in May). Members, if elected to attend, may request time off.
Evangelical Fellowship	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Evangelical Lutheran	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
<p>Greek Orthodox (Note: Dates given Gregorian Calendar; some members may choose Julian Calendar.)</p>	<p>Epiphany Day Annunciation Orthodox Good Friday Orthodox Easter Ascension Day Pentecost Dormition Holy Cross Day Christmas</p>

<p>Hindu (Note: Specific dates may vary from year to year, based on the solar or lunar calendars. Dates can also vary, depending of the time differential between Canada and India.)</p>	<p>Putruda Ekadashi Lohri (Punjab) Makara Sankranti and Thai Pongal Vasanta Panchami or Saraswati Puja (North India) Mahashivaratri (appearance of Bagavan Shiva) Rama Navarni Vaisahki (Tamil New Year) Guru Purnima Raksha Bandham (North India) Sri Krishna Jayanti Janmasthanami Vinayaka Chaturthi for Lord Ganesha Durga Puja (Mahastmi) Vijaya Dasami/ Dassehra Karva Chouth Diwali/Kali Puja</p>
<p>Humanist Church, Canadian Humanist Association</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Islam: (Note: Muslim holidays are based on Lunar Calendar, and observances may vary by a day before or after from dates given, depending on the community.)</p> <p>Islam (Ahmadiyya Movement) Every Friday, 12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – congregational prayers</p> <p>Islam (Dawoodi Bohora)</p> <p>Islam (Shia) Every Friday, 12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – congregational prayers</p>	<p>Jum'at-ul-Wida (the last Friday of the month of Ramadan 1420 al-Hijri) Eid-ul-Fitr (one day at the end of the month of fasting – Ramadan) Eid-ul-Adha (Festival of Sacrifices) Next Day of the Pilgrimage (Hajj)</p> <p>Eid-ul-Fitr (1st after Ramadan) Day of Hajj (Day at Ararat) Eid-ul-Adha First of Muharram (New Year) Ashura Mawlid-un-Nabi Mi'raj al-Naby Nisf Sha'ban First of Ramadan Lailat-ul-Qadr Jum'at-ul-Wida</p> <p>Laylat-ul-Qadr Jum'at-ul-Wida Eid-ul-Fitr (1st after Ramadan) Day of Hajj Eid-ul-Adha Eid-e-Ghadir First of Muharram (New Year's Day) Ashura Mawlid-un-Nabi Mawlid Imam Zaman</p>

<p>Islam (Sunni) Every Friday, 12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – congregational prayers</p> <p>Islam (Ismaili) Every Friday, 12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – congregational prayers</p>	<p>Eid-ul-Adha (one day and accommodations for those taking the pilgrimage to Mecca) Eid-ul-Fitr (one day at the end of Ramadan)</p> <p>Eid-e-Navroz Eid-ul-Adha Eid-eMilad Imamat – Birth of Ima (July 11, unless falls within month of Mourning, then may vary) Laylat-ul-Qadr Eid-ul-Fitr (1st after Ramadan)</p>
<p>Jain Society of Toronto</p>	<p>Mahavira Jayanti Akshaya Tertiya Paryushana Parva (Shvetambara sect – eight days) Samvatsari and Daslakshana (Digambara sect) Ananta Chaturdasi Ksmavani (Forgiveness Day) Mahavira Nirvana (Diwali) Gnan Panchmi (Day of Knowledge) Lokashah Jayanti Maun Ajjiyaras</p>
<p>Jehovah's Witnesses (Note: Members participate in the Annual District International Assembly for three or four days and two Annual Circuit Assemblies. Dates are scheduled locally. While these are not religious holidays, they require accommodation.)</p>	<p>Memorial of Christ's death (follows the Jewish Calendar)</p>
<p>Judaism: Judaism (Conservative) (Note: Sabbath starts Friday sundown. All holy days start sundown the night preceding the holiday.)</p> <p>Judaism (Orthodox)</p> <p>Judaism (Reform) (Note: Sabbath starts Friday sundown. All holy days start sundown the night preceding the holiday.)</p>	<p>Pesach/Passover (1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th days) Shavuot/Pentecost (two days) Rosh Hashanah/New Year (two days) Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (one day) Succot (Tabernacles)</p> <p>Pesach/Passover (1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th days) Shavuot/Pentecost (two days) Rosh Hashanah/New Year (two days) Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (one day) Succot (Tabernacles) Simchat Torah</p> <p>Purim Pesach/Passover (1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th days) Shavuot/Pentecost (two days) Rosh Hashanah/New Year (two days) Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (one day) Succot (Tabernacles) Hanukkah</p>
<p>Lutheran</p>	<p>No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada</p>

Macedonian Orthodox	Christmas Day Good Friday Easter Sunday Easter Monday Pentecost Holy Trinity Theophany – Baptism of Our Lord St. Clements of Oris – Patron Day
Mennonite	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Methodist Churches	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Missionary Church	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Native Peoples (Note: Each band may have unique spiritual observances which are not religious holy days, but that may require accommodation.)	National Day of Solidarity for Native Peoples
New Apostolic	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
New Dawn Moravian Church	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Pentecostal	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Presbyterian	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Quakers	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Reform Church of Canada	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Romanian Orthodox	Information not available at time of publication
Russian Orthodox Church of America	Christmas Epiphany Meeting of Our Lord Annunciation Orthodox Good Friday Orthodox Easter Orthodox Easter Monday Ascension Day Pentecost Transfiguration Dormition Nativity of the Mother of God Holy Cross Day Presentation of the Virgin
Salvation Army	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Serbian Orthodox Slava- Patron Saint Day, one day per year; a religious observance between priest and parishioners. Most common are: St. Nicholas, Dec. 19; St. John the Baptist, Jan. 20; St. Sava, Jan. 27; St. George, May 6; St. Michael Archangel, Nov. 21	Christmas Eve Christmas Serbian New Year Epiphany St. Sava Good Friday Easter Sunday (Pascha) Easter Monday Pentecost

Seventh-day Adventist	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Sikh	<p> Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Maghi Hola Mohalla Baisakhi Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Parkash Diwali Installation of Holy Scriptures as Guru Granth Sahib Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh </p>
Spiritualist Church of Canada	Information not available at time of publication
Ukrainian Orthodox	<p> Christmas New Year Feast of Epiphany Good Friday Easter Monday </p>
Unitarian	As defined by the individual or family. Unitarian Universal supports the individuals right to choose their own spiritual truth. These dates should be confirmed in September of each year (reference cuc.ca).
United Church	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
Wesleyan	No religious holiday requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays in Canada
<p>Wicca (Note: Evening observances commence at sundown. Solstice observances commence at sunrise. Dates are the same every year.)</p>	<p> Imbolc Spring (Vernal) Equinox Beltain (May Eve and May Day) Summer Solstice Lamas Autumnal Equinox Samhain Yuel (Winter Solstice) </p>
Worldwide Church of God	<p> Lord's Supper First Day of Unleavened Bread Celebration of Jesus Resurrection Last Day of Unleavened Bread Day of Pentecost Feast of Trumpets Day of Atonement First Day of the Festival of Tabernacles Last Day of the Festival Celebration of Jesus' Birth </p>
<p>Zoroastrian (Note: Dates will change, as Zoroastrians follow a 365-day calendar without leap year day.) F: Fasli – seasonal S: Shehshahi – Royal</p>	<p> Jashan-e-Sadeh (F) Jamshidi Norooz (New Year) (F and S) Birthday of Prophet Asho Zarhost's(F) Farvardegan (F) Asho Zarathost's Death Anniversary (S) Norooz (S) Farvardian (S) Mehergan (F) Asho Zarathost's Death Anniversay (F) </p>

Appendix 3: **INTERFAITH EDUCATION RESOURCES**



Ontario Multifaith Council

Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care (OMCSRC)
208 – 789 Don Mills Road
Toronto, ON M3C 1T5
Phone: 416-422-1490
Toll free: 1-888-837-0923
Fax: 416-422-4359
Website: www.omc.ca
Email: omcsrc@omc.ca

The Multifaith Library

Phone: 416-422-1490, ext. 207
Toll free: 1-888-837-0923
Website: www.library.omc.ca
Email: thelibrary@omc.ca



Interfaith Calendar

Website: www.interfaithcalendar.org



Scarboro Missions Interfaith Dialogue

2685 Kingston Road
Scarborough, ON M1M 1M4
Website: www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/index.php

Appendix 4:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

	QUESTION TOPIC
<p>Sincerely held belief basis by which religious accommodations decisions are guided</p>	<p>Q. What does <i>sincerely held belief</i> mean—and who determines whether a sincerely held belief is worthy of an accommodation for observance?</p> <p>A. A <i>sincerely held belief</i> is a defining criterion for <i>creed</i> according to the <i>Ontario Human Rights Policy Guidelines on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances</i>, as stated below:</p> <p>Creed is interpreted to mean “religious creed” or “religion.” It is defined as a professed system and confession of faith, including both beliefs and observances or worship. A belief in a God or gods, or a single supreme being or deity is not a requisite.</p> <p>Religion is broadly accepted by the Commission to include, for example, non-deistic bodies of faith, such as the spiritual faiths/practices of aboriginal cultures, as well as bona fide newer religions (assessed on a case-by-case basis). The existence of religious beliefs and practices are both necessary and sufficient to the meaning of creed, if the beliefs and practices are sincerely held and/or observed.</p> <p>“Creed” is defined subjectively. The Code protects personal religious beliefs, practices or observances, even if they are not essential elements of the creed, provided they are sincerely held.</p> <p>Because it is the Commission’s position that every person has the right to be free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour that is based on religion or creed or which arises because the person who is the target of the behaviour does not share the same faith, requests for an accommodation of practices and/or observances provided that they are derived from sincerely held beliefs are protected by the <i>Ontario Human Rights Code</i>.</p> <p>—<i>Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements Practices, and Observances, Definitions: Creed, p. 4.</i></p>
<p>1. Request for Accommodation by DDSB Staff/Students</p>	<p>Q. Is the DDSB obligated to accommodate staff who are Pagans (Wiccan) and are requesting a day to acknowledge a Pagan day of significance?</p> <p>A. Yes, because they fall within the interpretation of “creed” by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, as stated above.</p>

	<p>Q. What should an administrator do when a faith group lacks a source for institutional verification of an individual’s religious practice and therefore a request for an accommodation cannot always be confirmed?</p> <p>A. The administrator may contact the DDSB Operations Superintendent, Area Superintendent or Officer with Equity in their portfolio, the Ontario Multi-faith Council, and/or request that the student provide a contact for his or her faith organization so that the school and system can become more adequately informed about the religion’s beliefs, practices, and observances.</p>
	<p>Q. What questions should be asked of the applicant who requests a religious holy day leave?</p> <p>A. Please see below.</p> <p>In an effort to facilitate responses to requests by employees for leave on the holidays of their faith/creed/religion that require that they abstain from working in order to spend the day in observances or celebrations, the DDSB has created a list of such religious holidays for a large number of religions, sects, creeds, and faiths. A number of sources have been used to compile this list, including the Multifaith Council and the advice of religious leaders.</p> <p>However, the DDSB acknowledges that, despite best efforts to compile a comprehensive list, it is not exhaustive, and there may be religious holidays that have not been included on the list.</p> <p>Where employees request leave to observe a religious holiday that is not on the list, employees will be requested to request the leave using the DDSB intranet form under leaves to assist the DDSB in considering the employee’s request.</p> <p>In lieu of filling out this form, employees may provide a letter from their faith leader, which verifies the religious holiday and the requirement of the particular faith/religion/sect/creed that members must refrain from work on the day in question. A letter of verification of this type is helpful in assessing the request for leave, but is not required.</p> <p><i>II. Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your faith/religion/sect/creed? • Where is your place of worship located? • What is the holiday and what is the significance in your faith/religion/sect/creed of the day for which you are asking a leave of absence? • Do your religious beliefs require you to refrain from working on this day? • Have you asked the DDSB for leave to observe this day in the past? If not, why not?

2. Religious Practice
A. Prayer

Q. What resources may we use to start the school day over the announcements (e.g., public secular reading, prayer, multifaith prayers, “Lord’s Prayer,” prayers from a rotating roster of faiths)?

Resources:

- Program/Policy Memorandum (PPM) No. 108 (1989)
www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/108.html
- Opening or Closing Exercises for Public Schools in Ontario
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/resource/ecu93105.pdf

A. *Program/Policy Memorandum No. 108*

Issued under the authority of the Deputy Minister of Education

Date of Issue: January 12, 1989

Effective: Until revoked or modified

**Subject: OPENING OR CLOSING EXERCISES IN PUBLIC
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Application: Chairpersons of Boards of Education

Directors of Education of Boards of Education

Principals of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

I. Background

The decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal, dated September 23, 1988, struck down subsection 28 (1) of Regulation 262 concerning religious exercises in public elementary schools. This subsection, and the decision of the Court relating to it, did not apply to schools operated by separate school boards.

The spirit of the decision of the Court of Appeal was essentially that one religion must not be given a position of primacy and that the content of opening or closing exercises must reflect the multicultural realities and traditions of Ontario society. Subsequent to the Court ruling, an interim policy, dated September 28, 1988, was established, whereby opening or closing exercises were made optional for school boards. In schools where such exercises were to be held, however, “O Canada” and content that reflected the spirit of the ruling of the Court of Appeal were required. This interim policy was intended to remain in effect only until policy considerations were finalized and amendments to Regulation 262 were adopted.

II. Amendments to Regulation 262

A copy of the amendments to Regulation 262 relating to opening or closing exercises accompanies this memorandum. The amendments provide for a new section 4. Subsections 28(1), (2), and (3), and subsections 29(1), (2), and (3), as well as other references to “religious exercises” in sections 28 and 29, are deleted.

The following points summarize the content of the new section 4:

1. All public elementary and secondary schools in Ontario must be opened or closed each day with the national anthem. “God Save the Queen” may be included.
2. The inclusion of any content beyond “O Canada” in opening or closing exercises is to be optional for public school boards.
3. Where public school boards resolve to include, in the opening or closing exercises in their schools, anything in addition to the content set out in item 1 above, it must be composed of either or both of the following:
 - a. one or more readings that impart social, moral, or spiritual values and that are representative of our multicultural society. Readings may be chosen from both scriptural writings, including prayers, and secular writings;
 - b. a period of silence.
4. Parents who object to part or all of the exercises may apply to the principal to have their children exempted. Pupils who are adults may also exercise such a right.

III. Implementation

When implementing the amendments listed above, school boards should take particular note of the following:

1. *Purposes*

The purposes of opening or closing exercises are patriotic and educational. Such exercises are intended to nurture allegiance to Canada and to contribute to the social, moral, and spiritual development of the pupils. Contributing to the social, moral, and spiritual development of pupils includes reinforcing the positive societal values that, in general, Canadians hold and regard as essential to the well-being of our society. These values transcend cultures and faiths, reinforce democratic rights and responsibilities, and are based on a fundamental belief in the worth of all persons.

2. *Readings*

Readings selected for opening or closing exercises must fulfill educational purposes. Since the social, moral, and spiritual development of Canadians has roots in many religious and philosophical traditions, readings must be drawn from a variety of scriptural and secular sources representative of our multicultural society. Prayers, including the “Lord’s Prayer”, may be included, but only as readings.

3. The collective recitation of a specific reading from a particular religious tradition can no longer be permitted, as such a practice is not in accordance with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

	<p>4. <i>Period of Silence</i></p> <p>A period of silence is intended to be used for such activities as personal reflection or individual silent prayer.</p>
	<p>Q. Do any religious prayers have a role to play in public secular schools?</p> <p>A. Readings selected for opening or closing exercises must fulfill educational purposes. Since the social, moral, and spiritual development of Canadians has roots in many religious and philosophical traditions, readings must be drawn from a variety of scriptural and secular sources representative of our multi-cultural society. Prayers, including the “Lord’s Prayer,” may be included, but only as readings.</p>
	<p>Q. Can any religious prayer of one faith tradition that starts the day be inclusive?</p> <p>A. Readings selected for opening or closing exercises must fulfill educational purposes. Since the social, moral, and spiritual development of Canadians has roots in many religious and philosophical traditions, readings must be drawn from a variety of scriptural and secular sources representative of our multi-cultural society. Prayers, including the “Lord’s Prayer,” may be included, but only as readings.</p> <p>The collective recitation of a specific reading from a particular religious tradition is not permitted; as such, a practice is not in accordance with the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i>.</p>
	<p>Q. What should inclusive schools include in December/January practices?</p> <p>A. The months of December and January bring the intersection of faith and curricular considerations. Our school communities (teachers, students, parents/guardians/caregivers, support staff, associated community organizations) may find the following two goals helpful when collectively determining December/January activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the enhancement of the school’s inclusive environment • the development of activities that are of curricular merit <p>When planning any school activity to welcome the wide variety of faith practices that occur during the school year, refer to :</p> <p>Program/Policy Memorandum No. 112, Ontario Ministry of Education, Education About Religion in the Public Elementary and Secondary Schools regarding the role of faith in Ontario public secular schools (Revoked September 2009) Replaced with: R.R.O 1990, REGULATION 298 –OPERATIONS OF SCHOOLS – GENERAL SECTIONS 27-29 RELIGION IN SCHOOLS (www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900298_e.htm)</p>

	<p>When planning school activities to welcome the wide variety of faith practices that occur from late October to January, consider the following questions:</p> <p><i>Questions to Consider about Holidays</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the school’s curriculum structured so that an opportunity is provided “for the study of different religions and religious beliefs in Canada and the world, without giving primacy to, without indoctrination in, any particular religion or religious belief”? (Regulation 262 of Revised Regulations of Ontario, 1980, <i>Education Act</i>) 2. Are the objectives and curricular expectations that correlate to the teaching and learning about holy days such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Diwali, and of holding a holiday concert or community event, clearly identified and articulated for all members of the school community? 3. Are the feelings and rights of non-Christians respected during the season through a balanced and inclusive recognition of religious holy days and holidays of multiple faiths? 4. Are the feelings and rights of Christians respected during the season through a balanced and inclusive recognition of religious holy days and holidays in a balanced and inclusive context of multiple faiths? 5. Do students learn about the most meaningful days of different faiths or only about the days that are seen as parallel to Christian holidays? For example, do students learn about Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur or about Hanukkah? 6. Are activities developmentally suitable for children including those who are exceptional and differently abled? 7. Are activities related to the lives of parents and children of the school community? 8. Does the school community’s activities demonstrate sensitivity to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the alienating pressures of holiday commercialism on children and families’ lower socio-economic status? b) the feeling of exclusion experienced by non-Christian students during the Christmas season?
<p>B. Accommodation for Prayer in School (Islam)</p>	<p>Q. What is the protocol for establishing prayer times within the school that is mindful of the changing time parameters as the day length lengthens and shortens?</p> <p>A. Where provided, as in the case of the Perpetual Prayer Time Calendar (pp. 25– 26), designated times may not always accurately reflect the resetting of Daylight Saving Time and clocks. At some points of the year, there may be sufficient time after the school day for the student to return home to fulfill</p>

	<p>noon prayer obligations within the prescribed time frame. In the months between November and March, students may require accommodation (see also pages 25–26) for prayer.</p>
<p>3. Accommodations for School Dress</p>	<p>Q. What obligations/responsibilities/duties do school staff have to parents/guardians regarding the implementation of what parents and guardians desire as appropriate dress for their children (e.g., a child’s clothing conforms to the school’s code, but does not comply with modesty requirements of the parents/guardians).</p> <p>A. School administrators and teachers should not be placed in the position of monitoring a child’s compliance with a religious obligation, and enforcing such practices as performing daily prayers or wearing a head covering is not the responsibility of the school.</p>
	<p>Q. May a teacher wear a niqab when in the classroom with her students?</p> <p>A. Upon the request from an individual teacher for accommodation, the following might be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wearing of a niqab can detract from the teacher’s performance of professional duties because face-to-face communication is an effective way of teaching young learners. • The wearing of a niqab can hinder clear perception of the teacher’s words/instruction. <p>(Prepared in consultation with Imam Abdul Hai Patel, Ontario Multifaith Council)</p>
	<p>Q. May a Muslim student wearing a hijab be requested to remove the hijab from technical class and laboratories for safety reasons?</p> <p>A. No. The student’s wearing of the hijab should be respected. School administrators, parents/guardians/caregivers, teacher, and student should have an informed discussion of specific circumstances when and why the hijab may pose safety concerns for the student and others when working with lab equipment and materials. Should occasions arise when a hijab’s unsecured scarf/clothing ends may pose challenges to the student’s ease of movement while handling of equipment or materials, or when peripheral vision is obscured, it should be clarified that safety concerns are most important in the technical class and/or laboratory. A number of resolutions that are respectful of the student’s religious practices and meet the school’s requirement for safety (e.g., securing scarf ends so that individual mobility is unrestricted) are possible.</p> <p>Secondary schools with science and tech labs should have clear safety guidelines that are part of the curriculum for all courses. School-based Science Safety Contracts are a suggested practice.</p> <p>(Please see <i>Be/Stay Safe</i>, Science Teachers Association of Ontario (STAO), 2006.)</p>

Q. How is a swastika, a Hindu symbol commonly used in art and decoration that represents good fortune, luck, and well-being, different from the Nazis Party's use of a swastika, which can be generally perceived as a symbol for racial/ethnocultural/religious-based hate?

A. The swastika is a cross with four arms of equal length, with the ends of each arm bent at a right angle. Sometimes dots are added between each arm. Its name comes from the Sanskrit word svasti (sv, well; asti, is), meaning good fortune, luck, and well-being.

The swastika is most commonly used as a charm to bring good fortune (in which case the arms are bent clockwise), but it has a variety of religious meanings as well. The swastika is an ancient symbol found worldwide, but it is especially common in India. It can be seen in the art of the Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, Celts, Native Americans, and Persians, as well as Hindus, Jains and Buddhists.

The right-hand swastika in Hinduism is one of the 108 symbols of the god Vishnu, as well as a symbol of the sun and of the sun god, Surya, while the left-hand (counter-clockwise) swastika represents Kali and magic. The symbol imitates in the rotation of its arms the course taken daily by the sun,

which appears in the Northern Hemisphere to pass from east, then south, to west. (It is also a symbol of the sun among Native Americans.)

The left-hand swastika (called a sauvastika) in Hinduism usually represents the terrifying goddess Kali, night, and magic. However, this form of the swastika is not "evil" and it is the form most commonly used in Buddhism.

The Buddhist swastika is almost always clockwise, while the swastika adopted by the Nazis (many of whom had occult interests) is counter-clockwise.

In Buddhism, the swastika signifies auspiciousness and good fortune, as well as the Buddha's footprints and the Buddha's heart. The swastika is said to contain the whole mind of the Buddha and can often be found imprinted on the chest, feet, or palms of Buddha images. It is also the first of the 65 auspicious symbols on the footprint of the Buddha.

The swastika has also often been used to mark the beginning of Buddhist texts. In China and Japan, the Buddhist swastika was seen as a symbol of plurality, eternity, abundance, prosperity, and long life.

The swastika is used as an auspicious mark on Buddhist temples and is especially common in Korea. It can often be seen on the decorative borders

	<p>around paintings, altar cloths, and banners. In Tibetan Buddhism, it is also used as a clothing decoration.</p> <p>The auspicious symbol of the swastika is very commonly used in Hindu art, architecture, and decoration. It can be seen on temples, houses, doorways, clothing, cars, and even cakes. It is usually a major part of the decoration for festivals and special ceremonies like weddings.</p> <p>The Nazis adopted the swastika because it was understood as an Aryan symbol indicating racial purity and superiority. (The Nazis propagated a historical theory in which the early Aryans of India were white invaders.) There may also be a connection with the swastika's magical connections, for Hitler and other Nazi leaders were keenly interested in the occult.</p> <p>(Source: Religion Facts: Swastika Symbol in Buddhism. www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/symbols/swastika.htm)</p>
<p>4. Accommodation for school activities</p>	<p>Q. Can a student request an accommodation from exams to participate in a religious camp or course?</p> <p>A. No. Although the DDSB will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation to individual members of a religious group who state that the Board's operations or requirements interfere with their ability to exercise their religious beliefs and practices, attendance of a camp or course is voluntary and not required practice by the religion/faith. Subsequent discussions between school administrator and parent/guardian/caregiver might also include the organizers and/or faith leaders of the camp or course to make inquiries about the scheduling of the camp so as to prevent future conflicting demands on the student's time. (See also Section E8, page 9.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are required to present a written notice from their parents/guardians, specifying the religious holy days on which they will be absent from school. This notice should be made enough in advance (preferably at the beginning of the school year) to ensure that scheduling for major evaluations, e.g., tests, assignments, examinations, takes the holy days into consideration. Student handbooks, parent newsletters, and school announcements should include information about religious holy days procedures. • Schools must make every reasonable effort to be aware of the religious observances of their staff, students, and community when planning special school activities; examination schedules, school concerts, parent/guardian interview dates, field trips, and other events.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of an absence for religious holy day reasons, major tests or exams should be rescheduled for the student. <p>—<i>Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements Practices, and Observances, p. 9.</i></p>
	<p>Q. Can a student request an accommodation from exams to participate in a religious camp or course, attendance at which his or her church indicates is mandatory?</p> <p>A. Yes. After confirming that the learner’s attendance is a religious/faith requirement, subsequent discussions between school administrator and parent/guardian/caregiver might include the organizers and/or faith leaders of the camp/course to make inquiries about the scheduling of the camp so as to prevent future conflicting demands on the student’s time (see also Section E8, page 9).</p>
	<p>Q. Can a student request accommodation from a school performance if a musical selection concerns a holy day that is not his or hers?</p> <p>A. Yes. A student’s parents/guardians/caregivers can request accommodation (see also Section E8: Participation in Daily Activities and Curriculum, page 9).</p> <p>When accommodation is requested related to the contents of a curriculum in which there is a demonstrated conflict with a religious requirement, the school should have an informed discussion with parents/guardians and students.</p> <p>The school should make it clear during the discussion that its role is to protect students and staff from harassment and discrimination that arise because of the religious practices that set individuals apart and conflict with school routines and activities. Therefore, if curriculum directly conflicts with these practices, the school can consider accommodation. It cannot, however, accommodate religious values and beliefs that conflict with Board policies.</p> <p>It is important to note that when an individual requests an accommodation related to the curriculum, the accommodation applies to that individual in question and not to the whole class or to classroom practices in general.</p>
	<p>Q. Would an accommodation be granted to a secondary student on an exam day if he or she is over 18 and requests accommodation for his or her confirmation as either a member or religious leader of a faith organization which is unknown to the school administrator?</p> <p>A. Yes. However, administrators should implement the procedures outlined in Section E1, page 6, under the subheading “Students.”</p> <p>Students are required to present a written notice from their parents/guardians,</p>

	<p>specifying the religious holy days on which they will be absent from school. This notice should be made enough in advance (preferably at the beginning of the school year) to ensure that scheduling for major evaluations (e.g., tests, assignments, examinations) takes the holy days into consideration.</p> <p>In the case of an absence for religious holy day reasons, major tests or exams should be rescheduled for the student.</p>
<p>5. Assessment and Evaluation A. Music</p>	<p>Q. In cases in which parents/guardians/caregivers request religious accommodation necessitating varying degrees of exemption of their child from an elementary program (e.g., in instrumental music), what process/protocol is used to complete the assessment and evaluation of the child for the class?</p> <p>A. When parents/guardians/caregivers request full exemption after discussion with school administrators, administrators will ensure that curricular expectations that can be attempted and achieved by the student within the subject area be assessed, evaluated, and reported. Administrators should clearly advise parents/guardians/caregivers that the resulting grade reporting (report card) may appear differently as a result of the request for accommodation from specific expectations. Learners' reports cannot state that accommodations for religious requirements, practices, or observances were requested.</p>
	<p>Q. Who supervises students who have been exempted from programs for faith accommodation?</p> <p>A. B.1 Accommodation Based on Request The Durham District School Board will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation to individual members of a religious group who state that the Board's operations or requirements interfere with their ability to exercise their religious beliefs and practices. The Board will balance its decision to accommodate on several factors, such as undue hardship, including: the cost of the accommodation to the Board; health and safety risks to the person requesting accommodation and to others; and the effect of accommodation on the Board's ability to fulfill its duties under Board policies and the <i>Education Act</i>.</p>
	<p>Q. If parents/guardians/caregivers request complete exemption of a child's participation in a class after a meeting with school administrators, should the school contact the family's spiritual leader in consultation to clarify practices and beliefs?</p> <p>A. The school administrator and parents/guardians/caregivers may contact the family's spiritual leader to clarify and add to suggested resolutions.</p>

<p>B. Physical Education and Health</p>	<p>Q. When should the viability of a credit based on accumulated hours of course-work be the basis by which an accommodation request is considered?</p> <p>A. When accommodation is requested related to the contents of a curriculum in which there is a demonstrated conflict with a religious requirement, the school should have an informed discussion with parents/guardians and students.</p> <p>The school should make it clear during the discussion that its role is to protect students and staff from harassment and discrimination that arises because of the practices of their religion that set them apart in some way and conflict with school routines and activities. Therefore, if curriculum directly conflicts with these practices, the school can consider accommodation. It cannot, however, accommodate religious values and beliefs that conflict with Board policies.</p> <p>It is important to note that when an individual requests an accommodation related to the curriculum, the accommodation applies to that individual in question and not to the whole class or to classroom practices in general.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education recommends substitutions when there are exemptions requested related to specific curriculums. (OSS, Grades 9–12, Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999, 3.2)</p> <p>In general, these Guidelines and Procedures recommend an informed, common-sense approach to questions of religion and curriculum. There will be questions that can be solved by an open discussion between the teacher and the student.</p> <p>F. Limitations to Religious Accommodation</p> <p>Religious accommodation in the Durham District School Board is carried out in the larger context of the secular public education system. While the Board works to create a school system free from religious discrimination, this freedom is not absolute. The Board will limit practices or conduct in its schools which may put public safety, health, or the human rights and freedoms of others at risk. As well, the Board will limit practices or conduct in its schools that are in violation of other Board policies.</p> <p>—<i>Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements Practices, and Observances, p. 10.</i></p>
	<p>Q. What should happen when a request for faith accommodation conflicts with safety and security procedures?</p> <p>A. F. Limitations to Religious Accommodation</p> <p>Religious accommodation in the Durham District School Board is carried out in the larger context of the secular public education system. While the Board works to create a school system free from religious discrimination, this</p>

	<p>freedom is not absolute. The Board will limit practices or conduct in its schools which may put public safety, health, or the human rights and freedoms of others at risk. As well, the Board will limit practices or conduct in its schools that are in violation of other Board policies.</p> <p>—<i>Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements Practices, and Observances, p. 10</i></p>
	<p>Q. What criteria are used to determine safety of dress for Physical Education activities when modesty is an issue?</p> <p>A. Safety of dress criteria for each individual physical activity and sport are established by the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association’s annual guideline, which in turn updates DDSB Safety Guidelines. Upon receipt of an individual student’s/family’s request for accommodation, school administrators, parents/guardians/caregivers, teacher, and student should have an informed discussion of specific circumstances when and why articles of clothing may pose safety concerns for the student and others in specific activities. Should occasions arise when unsecured clothing may pose challenges to the student’s ease of movement while handling of equipment or materials, it should be clarified that safety concerns are most important. A number of resolutions that are respectful of the student’s religious practices and meet the school’s requirement for safety (e.g., wearing sport-appropriate hijabs that provide the individual student with full mobility) is possible.</p> <p>Secondary schools with compulsory credit physical education courses should have clear safety guidelines that are part of the curriculum.</p>
	<p>Q. Can a student be exempt from sex education?</p> <p>A. Yes, if his or her parents/guardians/caregivers submit a request.</p> <p>A student can be accommodated from attending sex education if the curriculum comes from the Growth and Development component of the Healthy Living Strand of the Ontario Ministry of Education Guidelines and if his or her parents/guardians/caregivers request accommodation .</p>
<p>6. Controversial and Sensitive Issues/Human Rights Education</p>	<p>Q. Is it disrespectful to have copies of various holy books for students to study from?</p> <p>A. No. Copies of the religious texts in English and/or French are to be studied in appropriate courses. It is therefore expected that the texts would be made available for all learners.</p>

Appendix 5:

CASE SCENARIOS

These case scenarios are intended to illustrate the application/implementation of the concepts and principles established in the DDSB *Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Procedures*, 2010, which emphasize the importance of first requesting additional information from parents/guardians/caregivers, employees, and their respective faith communities. Nonetheless, these scenarios cannot take into account all considerations that school administrators can include in their decision making about the granting of accommodations and curricular exemptions requested on an individual case-by-case basis.

A second set of considerations emphasized in these case scenarios are the requirements of Ontario Ministry of Education curricular expectations for the learners in the subject content areas, and the degree to which learning outcomes for students in specific subject areas is affected.

Preliminary Considerations for Curriculum Accommodation Requests

- Has the request for accommodation been made in writing by the parent/guardian/ caregiver?
- If the family's request has been made of a learner's classroom teacher, has the teacher referred the request to the school administrators?
- Has the school administrator met with the parents/guardians/caregivers to discuss and clarify specific times/circumstances to which the request for accommodations apply (e.g., from what curriculum expectations and/or teaching/learning strategies is it necessary to exempt the learner)?
- Does the request for accommodation conflict with any other Board policies (e.g., Safe Schools, Human Rights, Equity, Excursions)?
- To what degree are learning outcomes for students in specific subject areas affected (e.g., what specific Ministry of Education curriculum expectations for the learner may be compromised)? If any outcomes are affected, has the administrator clearly communicated these changes to learning outcomes to the parents/guardians/ caregivers (e.g., what will appear/not appear on a learner's report card)?

Preliminary Considerations for Accommodation Requests for Leaves of Absence:

- What is your faith/religion/sect/creed?
- Where is your place of worship located?
- What is the holiday and what is the significance in your faith/religion/sect/creed of the day for which you are asking a leave of absence?
- Do your religious beliefs require you to refrain from working on this day?
- Have you asked the DDSB for leave to observe this day in the past? If not, why not?

Case Scenario 1: Accommodation for Modesty and Curricular Subject Areas

The father of a Grade 11 female Muslim student has requested that his daughter wear a manteau (a long overcoat which conceals the arms and legs) over a loose-fitting sweatshirt and pants for participation in female-only Physical Education activities that take place outside the school (e.g., in the school athletic yards). He has also requested that for modesty purposes, and while she participates in physical activities inside the school gyms, that his daughter participate in female-only groupings with the doors of the gym secured and locked to prevent male passersby from intruding upon the girl's modesty.

CONSIDERATIONS	
	Safety
A.	<p>Is there any aspect of the accommodation request that conflicts with Board policies regarding Equity, Human Rights, Safety, Excursions, etc.?</p> <p>Yes. The parent's/guardian's request includes "the doors of the gym secured and locked to prevent male passersby from intruding upon the girl's modesty."</p>
B.	Curricular Expectations
i.	<p>Do any aspects of the request for accommodation exceed the areas of religious accommodation as identified in the <i>DDSB Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Procedures, and Observances</i>?</p> <p>No. The <i>DDSB Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Procedures, and Observances</i> identifies that beliefs and practices pertaining to Islamic dress are to be accommodated, including the wearing of hijab (of which the manteau is part), niqab, and kufi.</p>
ii.	<p>Does any aspect of the request for accommodation prevent the student from achieving curricular expectations as identified by the Ontario Ministry of Education's curricular guidelines for Senior Physical Education and Health courses?</p> <p>Yes. The <i>DDSB Safety Guidelines for Physical Education Activities</i>, derived from the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association Guidelines, identifies the types of clothing students can and cannot wear to guarantee their safety. There are some activities in which this student would be unable to participate because the looseness of the clothing may be unsafe for her.</p>
C.	Undue Hardship
	<p>Is there any aspect of the accommodation request that conflicts with Board policies regarding Equity, Human Rights, Safety, Excursion, etc.?</p> <p>No.</p>
D.	Determination
	<p>The parent's/guardian's request should not be granted because it conflicts with the Safety Policies of the DDSB. The administrator should suggest to the parent/guardian and child that if she could participate in indoor gymnasium activities without locked doors, the request can be accommodated. The administrator should also advise the parent/guardian that the wearing of the manteau would limit the activities in which the child can participate safely.</p>

Case Scenario 2: Accommodation for Religious Beliefs/Values and Curricular Subject Area (Music)

A Grade 3 student's parents have requested that their child be completely exempted from a new Itinerant Music: Recorder program starting in September. The elementary school's new instrumental music program schedules all Grade 3 students to participate under the direction of an Itinerant Music: Recorder teacher while the regular Grade 3 teachers during their preparation period.

CONSIDERATIONS	
Safety	
A.	Is there any aspect of the accommodation request that conflicts with Board policies regarding Equity, Human Rights, Safety, Excursions, etc.?
	No.
B. Curricular Expectations	
i.	Do any aspects of the request for accommodation exceed the areas of religious accommodation as identified in the <i>DDSB Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Procedures, and Observances</i> ?
	No. The <i>DDSB Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Procedures, and Observances</i> identifies that some issues in the playing of musical instruments may be accommodated. Although music is not in itself forbidden, Islamic beliefs and practices look at the type of music, its use, its instruments, and the persons involved. The use of string and wind instruments is prohibited. However, percussion instruments are allowed, as well as computerized music forms.
ii.	Does any aspect of the request for accommodation prevent the student from achieving curricular expectations as identified by the Ontario Ministry of Education's curricular guidelines for Elementary Music?
	Yes. The exemption of the student from learning and playing the recorder affects the assessment and evaluation of the student in terms of the Ministry of Education's curricular guidelines for Elementary Arts: Grade 3 Music Overall Expectations, which are: Overall Expectations By the end of Grade 3, students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the basic elements of music specified for this grade through listening to, performing, and creating music; • create and perform music, using a variety of sound sources; • use correctly the vocabulary and musical terminology associated with specific expectations for this grade;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and perform music from various cultures and historical periods; • communicate their response to music in ways appropriate for this grade (e.g., through visual arts, drama, creative movement, language). <p>Specific Expectations</p> <p><i>Knowledge of Elements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the beat, rhythm, melodic contour (or shape), dynamics, and tempo in familiar pieces of music. <p>However, because some practitioners of Islamic beliefs permit percussion instruments and/or computerized music forms, it is very possible to meet Overall Expectations if the child is permitted to play a percussion instrument, which meets most of the Specific Expectations:</p> <p><i>Knowledge of Elements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate understanding of the difference between the terms <i>beat</i> and <i>rhythm</i> (e.g. indicate the beat in a piece of music while others perform the rhythmic patterns); • identify the beat, rhythm, melodic contour (or shape), dynamics, and tempo in familiar pieces of music; • recognize that sounds and silences of different durations may be represented by symbols; • identify the instruments within the percussion family of orchestral instruments (e.g., drums, wood blocks, piano).
C.	Undue Hardship	
	Does any aspect of the request for accommodation cause undue hardship at the DDSB?	Yes. If the student is to be exempted from the Music Program: Recorder, the Itinerant Music Instructor would need to create an alternative music program for the student. Because Itinerant Music Instructors' work agreements differ from those of permanent teaching staff, this would not be possible, a Grade 3 teacher would need to be recalled from his or her preparation period.
D.	Determination	
	The administrator should suggest to the parent/guardian that perhaps the child does not need to be exempted from the program if he or she could participate in the music program and play a percussion instrument.	

Appendix 6:

FORMS AND PROCEDURES

Wherever possible, when a student or family voices an objection to curriculum based on their religion or creed, there should be a meeting with the parents (or student if s/he is at least 18 years old) and teacher and/or administrator to gather more information about the nature of the objection. Very often, small adjustments and modifications can be made to the way that the curriculum is delivered so that it respectfully addresses and accommodates the family's concern. (See Appendix 5, pp. 73-76 for sample scenarios). In such cases no exemption is necessary. Complete exemptions need only be considered when there is no accommodation that is acceptable to the family and they want the student exempted from the curriculum altogether. Where applicable, the family should always be informed about and understand what the alternatives are to compulsory high school credits.

When a curricular exemption is granted as a religious accommodation, the exemption needs to be official and the area Administrative Officer should be notified of the exemption. We suggest that the school forward a letter to the parents confirming that it is going to provide the exemption as per their request, and put a copy of this letter in the document file of the OSR. Religious reasons would be cited as the purpose for the exemption. This formalizes the process and also allows the child to continue to be exempt in future years or if they were to move to another school. On the report card, an appropriate comment would be put indicating that the student was exempted for religious reasons.



DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
 400 Taunton Road East, Whitby, Ontario L1R 2K6
 Telephone: (905) 666-5500 Fax: (905) 666-6478 Toronto Line: (905) 686-2711 Toll Free: 1-800-265-3968

REQUEST TO SUBSTITUTE FOR COMPULSORY CREDITS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

_____ date _____
 school _____

_____ grade _____ student ID _____
 student's name _____

In accordance with **Section 3.2 of Ontario Secondary Schools, Program and Diploma Requirements - 1999**, I am requesting the following compulsory credit substitution.

COMPULSORY CREDIT

SUBSTITUTE CREDIT

I believe this is in my best educational interests for the reasons stated in the space provided below:

_____ student signature

COMPLETE IF STUDENT IS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 YEARS

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):
 I/We approve of the requested credit substitution: _____
 parent/guardian's signature

FOR ADMINISTRATION USE

This request is approved or this request is denied ,
 for the reasons stated in the space below.

_____ date _____ signature of principal

Form 21/2009



GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances