

**Implementation of
Bill 13 and Respecting Differences
In The Huron Perth Catholic District School Board**

Bill 13, the *Accepting Schools Act*, was passed by the Ontario Legislature on June 5, 2012.

1. Have the Ontario Catholic Trustees supported school boards with the implementation of Bill 13?

Yes. The Ontario Catholic School Trustees have produced two resources in collaboration with their Catholic partners:

- ***Respecting Differences*** – a resource for Catholic schools in the Province of Ontario - regarding the establishment and running of activities or organizations promoting equity and respect for students.
- ***Administrative Guidelines for Student Groups in Catholic Schools*** – complements the initial parameters of Respecting Differences groups while helping Catholic boards and principals with procedures when students request that anti bullying groups be formed including those called GSA's.

2. How does Bill 13 affect Catholic schools?

The Bill contains many positive components regarding student safety and bullying-prevention that supports the Christ centred environment in our Catholic Schools.

3. Are there mandatory requirements included in the Bill?

Yes. This legislation includes mandatory requirements , upon the request of at least one student, of activities and clubs promoting understanding and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities including the name gay-straight alliance if requested, in all publicly-funded secondary schools (public and Catholic).

4. Are Catholic school boards opposed to promoting understanding and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in our Catholic Schools?

No. The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board is committed to in maintaining safe and orderly Christ-centred learning environments in our Catholic schools that are inclusive and accepting of all students -- of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability.

5. Are Catholic school boards in favour of the use of the term “Gay Straight Alliance” (GSA) for clubs and organizations promoting greater respect and understanding for people of all sexual orientations and gender identifications?

No. In his open letter of May 28, 2012, His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins, Archbishop of Toronto and President of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, questioned why provincial legislation was necessary to make this particular name mandatory in Catholic schools which have different but effective methods of addressing bullying and providing personal support for all students.

6. Did the provincial government revise the bill to accommodate Cardinal Collins' concern?
No. The legislation passed, unchanged, one week after Cardinal Collins released his open letter of concern.
7. Will Catholic school principals comply with provincial legislation and permit the existence of Gay-Straight Alliances if a student(s) requests this?
Yes. It is the intent of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and the Huron Perth Catholic School Board to be compliant with the law.
8. Will the emergence of clubs or organizations promoting greater respect and understanding for people of all sexual orientations and gender identifications, including those named Gay-Straight Alliances, jeopardize the denominational rights of our Catholic schools?
No. The emergence of such clubs does not remove the right and responsibility of the principal to ensure the appropriateness of materials used in the school. The *Respecting Differences* resource as well as the administrative guidelines for student groups in Catholic schools provides guidelines for ensuring that student-led groups reflect Catholic values.
9. Who will facilitate and supervise such student clubs, should they emerge in our Catholic schools?
Our Catholic school principals will facilitate and supervise the clubs (*Administrative Guidelines for Student Groups in Catholic Schools*).
10. Will principals and school staffs be trained and supported to implement Bill 13 and *Respecting Differences* in our Catholic Schools?
Yes.
- **In-service, discussion, and beginning implementation of *Respecting Differences* has occurred amongst our secondary school principals, vice-principals, guidance counselors, and chaplaincy leaders. This process began in January 2012, and continues.**
 - **This fall all principals and vice principals (elementary and secondary), guidance counselors, chaplaincy leaders, and members of the teaching staff will participate in two days of training on Bill 13 and *Respecting Differences*. This training is facilitated by staff (clergy and laity) from the Diocese of London.**
11. Will Bill 13 be fully implemented?
Yes. Continued implementation of Bill 13 will take place in the 2012-2013 school year.

BOARD MISSION STATEMENT

We are a Catholic School Board. We serve our students, working with the home, parish and school community to:

- *Nurture a Christ-centred environment;*
- *Provide student-focused learning opportunities;*
- *Support the growth of the whole person.*