

HWDSB

Parent Guide: Religious and Creed-based Accommodations



www.hwdsb.on.ca

MISSION

We empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world.

COMMITMENT

We are committed to learning, equity, engagement and innovation.

PRIORITIES

Positive Culture and Well-Being – We will build student and staff well-being through positive climate strategies and supportive relationships.

Student Learning and Achievement – We will improve student learning and achievement through effective instructional strategies.

Effective Communication – We will improve our communication through comprehensive strategies.

School Renewal – We will optimize opportunities to invest in improved school facilities.

Partnerships – We will strengthen our collaboration with new and existing community partners to enhance opportunities for students.

HWDSB is committed to working with families to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations for students.





Purpose of this Booklet

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) acknowledges the religious and creed beliefs and practices of its students, staff and community. HWDSB is committed to working with our students, families and communities to create equitable and inclusive schools and learning spaces that promote acceptance and protect the religious and creed freedoms of all individuals.

This booklet has been developed to help parents, guardians and caregivers further understand religious and creed-based accommodations at HWDSB. This booklet is intended only as a guide that families may wish to use. Families are always welcome to contact their school to discuss their child's education and accommodation for religious and creed beliefs.

Together, we can make school a safe, accepting and inclusive place for all students.

What are religious or creed-based accommodations?

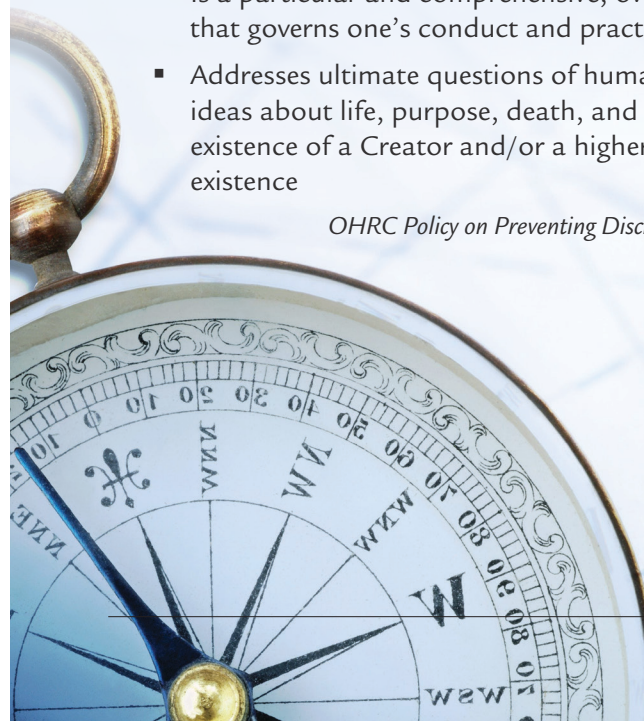
The Ontario Human Rights Code provides the right for individuals to be free from discrimination. To protect this right, schools may make accommodations when issues or concerns with school practices relate to a student's religious or creed-based beliefs. HWDSB is committed to working with families to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations for students.

What is creed?

Creed includes religion in the broadest sense. Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life. The Ontario Human Rights Policy provides the following characteristics as relevant when considering if a belief system is a creed:

- Is sincerely, freely and deeply held
- Is integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfillment
- Is a particular and comprehensive, overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices
- Addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a Creator and/or a higher or different order of existence

OHRC Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed, 2015



How can I help my child's school understand what my family needs?

School staff need help from students and families to fully understand their religious or creed-based needs. HWDSB is committed to providing an inclusive environment that is free of barriers based on religion and creed. Input from families is valued, and HWDSB encourages families to:

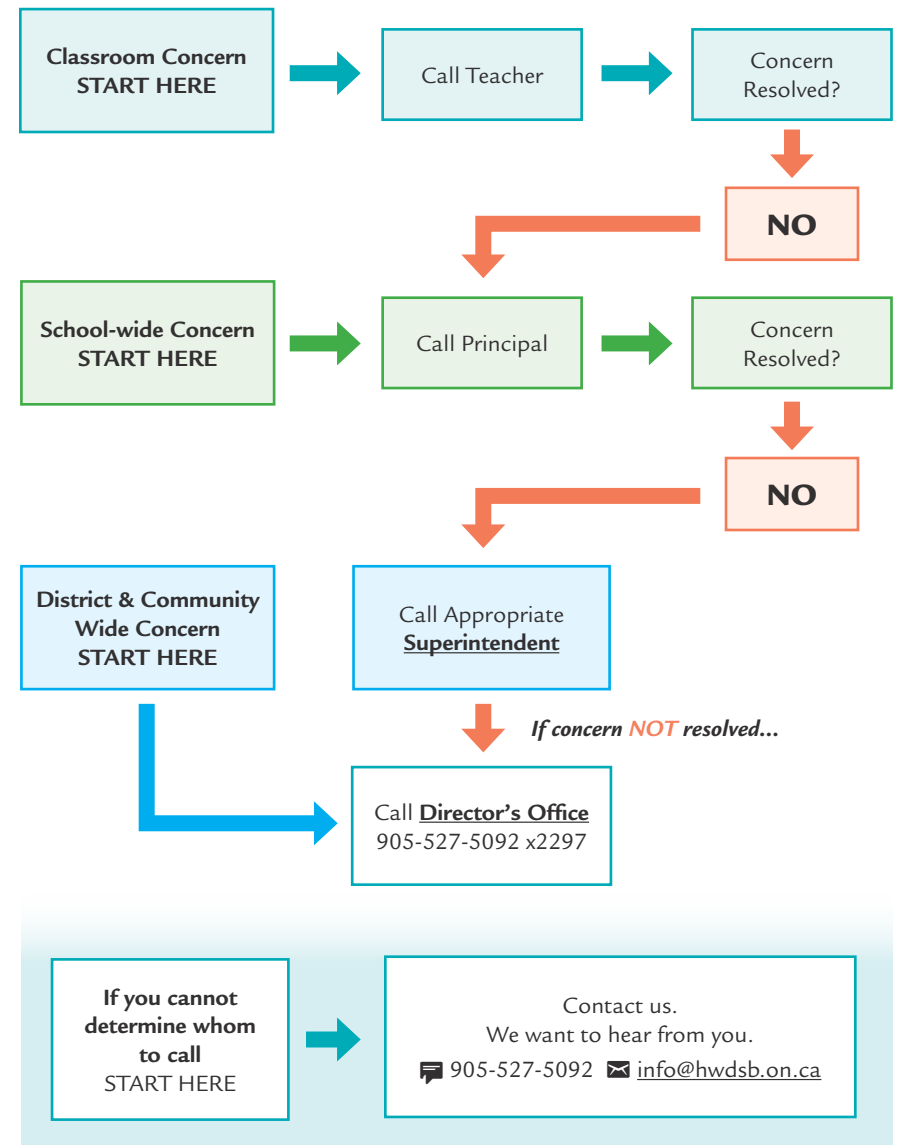
Be proactive. At the beginning of the school year:

- Call your child's school and talk to your child's teacher or principal about any religious or creed-based accommodations your child may need (e.g. absences from school for observations).
- Submit a list of dates and/or areas of concern to the school so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner.
- The school will keep a record of the conversation and will contact you the following year to update to the initial information you provided.

Be a partner. Working together, we want to ensure that all students have the best learning environment in which to succeed. Open and respectful conversation between the home and school can help to improve understanding and further promote the diversity and acceptance we value at HWDSB.

Be involved. Notify the school of any issues or concerns. As with other items, classroom concerns around religion or creed should first be brought to the attention of the teacher. If concerns are unresolved at the classroom level, feel free to contact your school principal so that a concern can be resolved together. To help you resolve your concern, visit bit.ly/concernsHWDSB

Addressing Concerns @HWDSB



Your **Trustee** can guide you through this process.

Find your Trustee and/or Superintendent by calling the Officer of Trustee Services at 905-527-5092 x2279, or go online to your school's website: www.hwdsb.on.ca/your-school-name/contact



Religious or Creed-Based Accommodations Worksheet

Our doors are always open, so please feel free to discuss your child's religious or creed-based accommodation needs with their teachers and school principal. The classroom and school accommodations below are shared as examples only.

Family requests for religious or creed-based accommodation should be made annually, as they are unique and considered on an individual, case-by-case basis. Through conversations with families, school staff will be better able to respond to specific needs.

Notes:

CLASSROOM

Accommodations for a Student

- ☐ Growth and Development (Sexual Health)
(This area varies by grade. Families will receive details on learning to be provided two weeks in advance. Classrooms will accommodate for reasons other than religion or creed.)*
- ☐ Physical Education
(Classrooms can make modifications during fasting.)
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Other (Please specify.)

SCHOOL

Accommodations for a Student

- ☐ Opening/Closing Exercises
- ☐ Holy Days
- ☐ In-School Prayer/Observances
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Diet and Fasting
- ☐ Dress and Modesty
 - ☐ Physical Education accommodation
 - ☐ Changeroom/shower accommodation
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Festivities (E.g. Halloween, Valentine's Day.)
- ☐ Other (Please specify.)

**See Appendix A, page 13 for a detailed list of the Growth and Development expectations by grade.*

Religious or Creed-Based Accommodations Worksheet (Continued)

Classroom Accommodations

☐ Assessments/Examinations

Example: My child will be absent on an exam/test date due to religious or creed-based observance. What alternatives are available?

Family Requests:

☐ Curriculum (e.g. Sexual Health)

Example: The following areas of the _____ curriculum may be a concern for our family.

Family Requests:

School Accommodations

☐ Dietary Requirements & Fasting

Example: My child may require adjustments to their daily schedule/activities due to fasting.

Family Requests:

☐ Dress & Modesty

Example: My child wears _____ (e.g., a kippah, hijab, kirpan, etc.) as part of their religious observance.

Family Requests:

☐ Holy Days or Creed-based Observances

Example: My child may be absent from school on the following Holy Days for participation in religious observances...

Family Requests:

☐ In-School Prayer/Creed-based Observances/Practices

Example: During the school day, my child requires a space to pray/carry out faith observances at the following times....

Family Requests:

☐ Opening/Closing Exercises

Example: My child needs to _____ during the singing of the national anthem.

Family Requests:

☐ Participation in Daily Activities

Example: My child needs to _____ each day at school.

Family Requests:

☐ Participation in School-wide activities

Example: My child would like to participate in _____ (e.g., dances, photo days, Welcome BBQ, graduation etc.) but the dates conflict with our religious or creed-based observances. Can the dates be adjusted?

Family Requests:

☐ Smudging

Example: My child begins the day with smudging.

Family Requests:

☐ Other Area(s) to Discuss

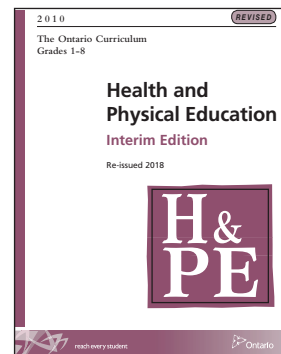


What if I am concerned about material being used in the classroom?

As with any concern about your child's learning, please discuss this with the classroom teacher and/or school principal. Learn more about the selection of learning resources and the process for challenging the appropriateness of learning resources at <https://bit.ly/2wd2vpl>.

When should I discuss my child's religious or creed-based accommodation needs with the school?

School staff are always open to discussions with families. We welcome these conversations and want to work with you to meet your child's needs. Families are welcome to bring a support person or advocate when they meet with school staff. We encourage families to be proactive and meet with the school staff as early as possible to discuss your child's specific religious or creed-based accommodation needs.



Growth and Development Strand of Health and Physical Education (Revised) – Interim Edition

Grade 1

OVERALL EXPECTATION

By the end of Grade 1, students will:

- identify the stages in development of humans (e.g., comparing physical changes from birth to childhood) and of other living things.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 1, students will:

- describe simple life cycles of plants and animals, including humans;
- recognize that rest, food, and exercise affect growth;
- identify the major parts of the body by their proper names

Grade 2

OVERALL EXPECTATION

By the end of Grade 2, students will:

- describe parts of the human body, the functions of these parts, and behaviours that contribute to good health.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 2, students will:

- distinguish the similarities and differences between themselves and others (e.g., in terms of body size or gender);

- describe how germs are transmitted and how this relates to personal hygiene (e.g., using tissues, washing hands before eating);
- identify the five senses and describe how each functions.

Grade 3

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 3, students will:

- describe the relationship among healthy eating practices, healthy active living, and healthy bodies;
- outline characteristics in the development and growth of humans from birth to childhood.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 3, students will:

- outline the basic human and animal reproductive processes (e.g., the union of egg and sperm);
- describe basic changes in growth and development from birth to childhood (e.g., changes to teeth, hair, feet, and height).

Grade 4

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 4, students will:

- explain the role of healthy eating practices, physical activity, and heredity as they relate to body shape and size;
- identify the physical, interpersonal, and emotional aspects of healthy human beings.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 4, students will:

- describe the four stages of human development (infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) and identify the physical, interpersonal, and emotional changes appropriate to their current stage;
- identify the characteristics of healthy relationships (e.g., showing consideration of others' feelings by avoiding negative communication);
- identify the challenges (e.g., conflicting opinions) and responsibilities in their relationships with family and friends

Grade 5

OVERALL EXPECTATION

By the end of Grade 5, students will:

- describe physical, emotional, and interpersonal changes associated with puberty

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 5, students will:

- identify strategies to deal positively with stress and pressures that result from relationships with family and friends;
- identify factors (e.g., trust, honesty, caring) that enhance healthy relationships with friends, family, and peers;
- describe the secondary physical changes at puberty (e.g., growth of body hair, changes in body shape); describe the processes of menstruation and spermatogenesis;
- describe the increasing importance of personal hygiene following puberty.

Grade 6

OVERALL EXPECTATION

By the end of Grade 6, students will:

- identify the major parts of the reproductive system and their functions and relate them to puberty.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 6, students will:

- relate the changes at puberty to the reproductive organs and their functions;
- apply a problem-solving/decision-making process to address issues related to friends, peers, and family relationships.

Grade 7

OVERALL EXPECTATION

By the end of Grade 7, students will:

- describe age-appropriate matters related to sexuality (e.g., the need to develop good interpersonal skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively with the opposite sex).

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 7, students will:

- explain the male and female reproductive systems as they relate to fertilization;
- distinguish between the facts and myths associated with menstruation, spermatogenesis, and fertilization;
- identify the methods of transmission and the symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and ways to prevent them;
- use effective communication skills (e.g., refusal skills, active listening) to deal with various relationships and situations;

- explain the term abstinence as it applies to healthy sexuality;
- identify sources of support with regard to issues related to healthy sexuality (e.g., parents/guardians, doctors).

Grade 8

OVERALL EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 8, students will:

- identify the physical, emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual aspects of healthy sexuality (e.g., respect for life, ethical questions in relationships, contraception);
- identify local support groups and community organizations (e.g., public health offices) that provide information or services related to health and well-being;
- apply living skills (e.g., decision-making, problem-solving, and refusal skills) to respond to matters related to sexuality, drug use, and healthy eating habits.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

By the end of Grade 8, students will:

- explain the importance of abstinence as a positive choice for adolescents;
- identify symptoms, methods of transmission, prevention, and high-risk behaviours related to common STDs, HIV, and AIDS;
- identify methods used to prevent pregnancy;
- apply living skills (e.g., decision-making, assertiveness, and refusal skills) in making informed decisions, and analyse the consequences of engaging in sexual activities and using drugs;
- identify sources of support (e.g., parents/guardians, doctors) related to healthy sexuality issues

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Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
20 Education Court
Hamilton, Ontario, L9A 0B9
www.hwdsb.on.ca

Learn more:

HWDSB Religious Accommodation Procedure:
www.hwdsb.on.ca/about/policies

Ontario Human Rights Code (Ontario Human Rights Commission):
www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code