

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:

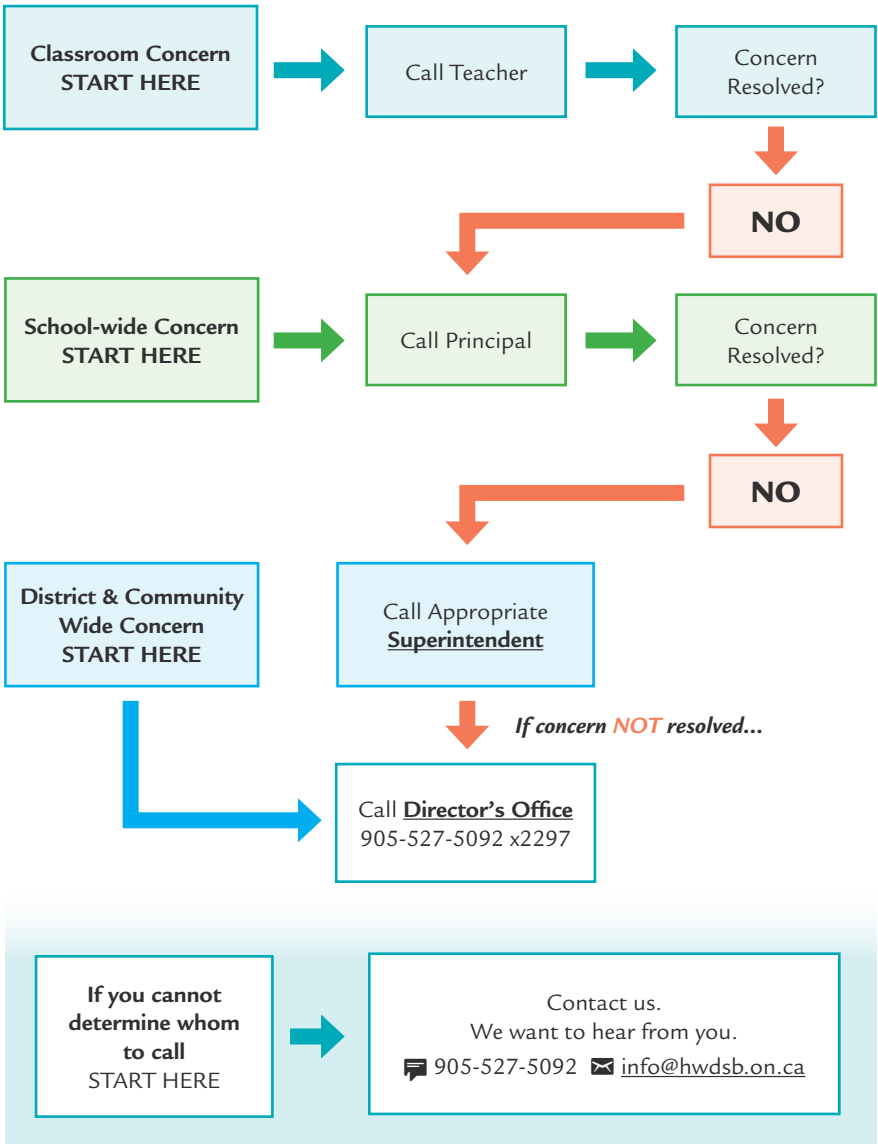
Be proactive. At the beginning of the school year:

- 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**](https://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/yourschoolname/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 a minimum of 20 days in advance. Classrooms will exempt 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 Human Development and Sexual Health 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, 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

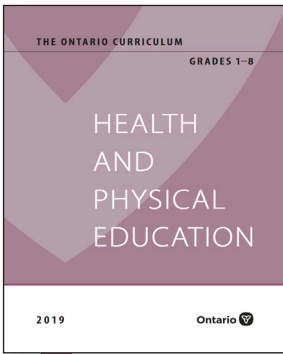


What if I am concerned about material being used in the classroom?

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.



Human Development and Sexual Health education by grade

Below are details on what students will learn about human development and sexual health (Grades 1-8) and why these concepts are being taught at certain age levels. (Source: <http://bit.ly/2NXBhwU>)

Grade 1

When children know how to care for and use the correct names of their body parts, they build understanding and respect for themselves and their bodies and can communicate clearly and ask for help in case of illness, injury or abuse. identify the stages in development of humans (e.g., comparing physical changes from birth to childhood) and of other living things.

Students will learn:

- to identify body parts, including genitalia, by their proper names
- to use positive language when describing their bodies
- about their senses and how they function
- basic good hygiene habits (for example, washing your hands, using tissues)

Grade 2

Helping children to understand that their bodies will change (for example, losing baby teeth) can help them: describe parts of the human body, the functions of these parts, and behaviours that contribute to good health.

- prepare for and adjust to those changes
- appreciate what their bodies are able to do and perceive them positively
- communicate about these changes with a trusted adult if they ever feel confused

Students will learn:

- the basic stages of human development (infancy, childhood, adolescence) and related body changes
- good hygiene habits for oral health (for example, brushing your teeth, flossing, visiting the dentist regularly)
- to appreciate what their bodies can do

Grade 3

To foster healthy relationships, students will learn what healthy relationships look like. Students also learn about what makes them unique and how to show respect for all.

Students will learn:

- about characteristics of healthy relationships and consent (for example, accepting differences, listening, stating and respecting personal boundaries, being respectful, being honest, communicating openly)
- describe ways to respond to bullying and other challenges (for example, peer pressure, being left out)
- about factors and habits that can affect physical and emotional development (for example, safe environment, caring adults, feeling like you belong, appreciating what your body can do and building a healthy body image, sleep, food, physical activity)
- how visible differences (for example, skin, hair and eye colour, clothing, physical ability) and invisible differences (for example, learning abilities, cultural values and beliefs, different types of families) make each person unique
- ways of showing respect for differences in others

Grade 4

Today, children enter puberty earlier: on average, girls enter puberty between the ages of 8 and 13 and boys enter puberty between the ages of 9 and 14. Learning about puberty before students may fully experience it helps prepare young people for changes in their bodies, emotions and social relationships.

Students will learn:

- the physical changes that happen during puberty, and the emotional and social impact these changes can have on a developing child
- how personal hygiene needs may change during puberty (for example, the increased importance of regular bathing)

Grade 5

By Grade 5, students have developed some self-awareness and coping skills, and have also learned critical thinking and reflective skills.

Puberty can be stressful and helping students to understand changes in their bodies can help them cope. Students will also continue to learn the importance of showing acceptance and respect for themselves and others, including those who may be entering puberty earlier or later than their peers.

Students will learn:

- about factors that may affect the development of a person's understanding of themselves and their personal identity, including their sexual orientation (for example, body image, self-acceptance)
- about the reproductive system, and how the body changes during puberty
- about the process of menstruation and sperm production
- to describe emotional and interpersonal stresses related to puberty

Grade 6

As children grow older and enter adolescence, understanding how they and their peers may be affected by the many changes they are experiencing helps them build a healthy sense of who they are.

By Grade 6, students have developed more self-awareness and coping skills, as well as critical thinking and reflective skills, to solve problems and examine issues. They will apply these skills to learning about stereotypes and assumptions.

By examining and challenging these stereotypes and assumptions, they continue to learn about respect for others, and build self-confidence to build a foundation for healthy relationships.

Students will learn:

- an understanding about the impacts of viewing sexually explicit media, including pornography
- the physical, social and emotional changes that may occur in adolescence (for example, body growth, skin changes, increasing influence of peers, increased intensity of feelings) and how students can build a healthy foundation for relationships
- to make decisions in their personal relationships that show respect for themselves and others, recognizing the importance of consent and clear communication
- how stereotypes — and assumptions about gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture and abilities — can affect how a person feels about themselves, their feelings of belonging and relationships with others
- appropriate ways to respond to and challenge assumptions, stereotypes, homophobia and racism

Grade 7

Students need information and skills to make sound decisions about their health and well-being before they face a situation where they may need that information.

Research has shown that teaching about sexual health and human development does not increase sexual behaviour and can actually prevent risky activity.

Students will learn:

- the importance of having a shared understanding with a partner about: reasons for delaying sexual activity until they are older, the concept of consent and how to communicate consent, and the need to clearly communicate and understand decisions about sexual activity in a healthy relationship
- to identify common sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs) and describe their symptoms
- how to prevent STBBIs and avoid becoming a parent before they

are ready, including delaying first intercourse and other sexual activities until they are older, and using condoms and other forms of protection consistently

- about the physical, emotional, social and psychological factors to consider when making sexual health decisions (for example, the risk of STBBIs or of becoming a parent before they are ready, emotional readiness, sexual orientation, moral and religious considerations, cultural teachings, and impact on other relationships)
- how relationships with others and sexual health may be affected by physical and emotional changes in puberty and adolescence

Grade 8

Students continue to build their understanding of factors that support positive, healthy choices, including building a deeper understanding and appreciation of themselves and their identity. Students are also exploring healthy ways to engage in evolving and new relationships.

Students will learn about:

- things that could affect someone's ability to make safe and healthy decisions about sexual activity
- sources of support with respect to sexual health (for example, parents, health professionals, in-school resources, local community groups and religious, spiritual, and cultural leaders)
- gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, and to identify factors that can help all young people to develop positive personal identities
- abstinence, contraception and consent in order to make safe and healthy decisions about sexual activity
- benefits, risks and drawbacks associated with relationships involving different degrees of sexual intimacy

Updated: August 16, 2019

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.



Purpose
& Commitment



Working
Together



Learning
& Growing

HWDSB

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