
PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS SUPPORT SERVICES

This document sets out the recommended procedures for meeting and providing religious accommodation requests from students, staff and stakeholders in the Peel District School Board.

In accordance with Board Policy 51 - Human Rights, and Board Policy 54 - Equity and Inclusive Education, the Board recognizes the religious diversity represented in its students, staff, parents and stakeholder communities and is committed to an inclusive approach in all its activities related to religious accommodation. The Peel Board acknowledges and respects an individual's right to practice or not practice a religion. Although religious observances are based on generally accepted practices of a faith group, the Board recognizes that there are variations amongst members of religious groups in their understanding, interpretation and practice of their religion.

The Peel Board has a duty to accommodate religious request(s) from students and staff, to the extent of undue hardship and in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. The Board is committed to removing any bias or system barriers to achieve equity and inclusion when faith request intersects with the areas of policies, programs, operations, practices and curricula. **Religious accommodation will be provided on a case by case basis, in the context of a public school board, and cannot replicate the experience or environment that an individual has in the home or a place of worship.** Religious Accommodation is not fixed, it is a process that is fluid and ongoing. Accommodation of religious beliefs and practices are best met through meaningful conversation and respectful relationships.

This Operating Procedure clarifies the Board's Religious Accommodation procedures and includes resources to support administrators. For background information, glossary of key terms and supports please see list at the end of this document. This document applies to all Peel Board locations and functions.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Inclusion is a core value of the Peel Board. The Board works to create a school system free from religious discrimination. However, this freedom is not absolute. The Board will limit practices and conduct in its schools/worksites which may put public safety, health, or the human rights and freedoms of others at risk. The Board will further limit practices and conduct that are in violation of other Board policies. The Board will not provide any accommodation for lessons that build a climate of inclusion and/or ensure safety of all students.

GENERAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Unless otherwise specified, parents, students and staff should request religious accommodation in writing in September or as soon as possible. The request should be specific and include the

context using the *Parent or Student Religious Accommodation Request Form*. Student/staff making a request should specify the religious requirements and the details of the area of the Board practice that needs to be accommodated. Emphasis will be placed by administrators on understanding the situation, context and practices that guide the request and the process of regular reviews of the accommodation, and learning impacts to students will be explained to parents.

School administrators or worksite managers will respond to the accommodation request in a timely manner. The process outlined in the two flow charts for students will guide implementation; and the collective agreements in consultation with the Human Resources Department will define the steps for staff.

Areas of Accommodation

When accommodation requests related to religious beliefs and practices arise in schools and/or worksites, suitable collaboration among school, student, family, religious community, staff and the Board is often needed in order to develop an appropriate accommodation. The Board respects the practice of diverse religious traditions within the system and individuals or groups who do not belong to an organized religion or practice a religion.

For many students and staff in Peel schools and worksites, there are two significant areas where accommodation may arise: A. Religious Practice B. Curriculum Expectations

A. Accommodation of Religious Practice

1. Observation of major holy days, ceremonies, commemorations and celebrations

Requests from students, parents and/or staff may be for a variety of reasons. The request may require some modification to the regular day, or a partial and/or full leave for the individual involved.

2. School opening and closing exercises

A student, parent or staff member's creed/religious beliefs may require accommodations for a part of or full school opening and closing exercise.

3. Prayer and rituals

A number of religions assign great significance to prayer and worship amongst its congregants. Some religions have expectations around prayer that is tied to specific days and times when it is/needs to be offered. This religious expectation is adhered to in varying forms by practicing members of the faith. Peel Board will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate requests from diverse students/staff and parents. Peel Board also acknowledges that prayer is a personal matter and is practiced differently by each individual.

The Board recognizes that there are some religious practices that require the separation of male/female gender during prayer accommodations. Religious requirements should guide the individual school arrangements in consultations with students/staff.

The Board expects students to offer prayers individually. The Board currently recognizes one exception to this accommodation – that for Friday noon prayer within Islam. Jummah (Friday noon) prayer requires practicing Muslims to offer the prayer in a congregation and in a specific format (a student leading or beginning the prayer followed by a lesson or sermon). Peel schools and worksites will accommodate this faith requirement when requested. Peel Board in collaboration with local diverse Islamic faith leaders has developed a mutually agreeable accommodation. This Friday prayer accommodation applies to Gr 6 to 12 students. The elementary students (Gr K-5) are not religiously obligated to offer the prayer. The Board will therefore not be required to offer it as accommodation.

The required prayer segment, which is the same each time it is read, will be offered in Arabic and the required sermon segment based on a Peel Character Attribute, will be offered in English. The Board in collaboration with faith leaders will develop a roster of sermons to be offered in Peel schools. This will be made available to schools as a resource.

The Peel Board will accommodate prayer requests – daily, weekly or otherwise as per negotiated individual accommodation. The process details around prayer are found in Board Policy 54 - Equity and Inclusive Education, section on Guidelines for Religious Accommodation Space and Board Policy 58 - Guidelines for Religious Clubs.

Staff prayer requests for accommodations will be met in consultation with Human Resources and with no or minimal impact to the job requirement as per collective agreements.

4. Dietary requirements

The Board will make every reasonable effort to be attentive to the diverse dietary requirements of its students, staff and parents (i.e. halal, kosher, vegan, vegetarian). This includes attending to issues related to the menus provided by the catering firms, offered snacks, catering for special occasions and community events. Breakfast and lunch programs in both secondary and elementary schools will consider these dietary requirements in their menu planning. Special attention will be given to overnight outdoor education activities as well as field trips that include a meal.

Please note: the food provided to accommodate one group (Halal, for example) is not an acceptable solution for all present.

5. Fasting

Many individuals fast as part of their religious practice. This may include abstaining from and/ or reducing food, drink; and engagement in other Board/school activities. The Peel Board will accommodate individual requests related to fasting. Fasting length can vary in duration and occurrences.

Student participation in fasts will vary by age, maturity, level of understanding and religious practice and schools should follow the direction of the parent, guardian or caregiver in arriving at accommodation.

6. *Religious attire*

The Board will recognize and accommodate the students/staff with regard to religious attire. The individual request should demonstrate the religious requirement for accommodation. Some religious attire that will be accommodated includes, but is not limited to:

- Hairstyles
- Headwear
- Wearing religious symbols
- Clothing
- Dressing for participation in Health and Physical Education and Extra-Curricular Activities

7. *Religious leave*

Students are excused from attendance at school if they are absent on a holy day approved by the Board, or a holy day observed by the religious denomination they belong to/identify with. (Education Act, Section 21:2(g))

Students are required to provide written religious leave notification from their parents/guardians. The notice should be made enough in advance to ensure any rescheduling of school/curriculum expectations (e.g. tests, assignments, exams, sports meets, competitions).

Staff absence due to religious observances will be consistent with the respective collective agreements where applicable, and the Board Policy 23 - Leaves of Absence. Staff requesting religious leave on days not on the Board approved list as per the Holy Days and Holidays Calendar, will apply for leave under the Exception to Religious Leave Guidelines through the Human Resources Department and through the Employee Relations Officers. A three week prior notice to the requested holy day leave is required.

- Information on Exceptions to Staff Approved Holy Days
- Exception Form to the Board Policy 23 - Leave of Absence

Schools will make every reasonable effort to be aware of and avoid scheduling on the significant religious observances of their students, staff and parent community when planning special school events and activities like concerts, exams, parent interviews, field trips, excursions, professional development days, special meetings etc. This also applies to worksites of the Peel Board, and includes system-wide special events, meetings of the elected Board and committees of the Board.

Schools will make the information on Board approved Holy Days and the related request process available to students, parents and staff through a variety of methods – student agendas, school newsletters, daily announcements, Holy Days and Holidays Calendar.

Considerations for religious practice accommodation: questions to guide administrators

The following questions will help guide administrators to process religious accommodation requests in an equitable and inclusive manner:

Religious Nature

What is the administrator's understanding of the religious nature of the request? If support is required, contact the Community Liaison Coordinator.

Full Withdrawal Request

Does the request impact any of the human rights protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code? Call the Community Liaison Coordinator for clarification.

Communication to Others

Who else needs to know about the decision to accommodate? Inform teacher(s). Complete the Administrator Form: Religious Accommodation Plan. Copy to parent; OSR

Supervision and Space Requirements

What are the considerations for supervision of students and space requirements if needed? See Guidelines for Space for Faith Accommodation.

B. Accommodation of Curriculum Expectations

1. Participation in daily activities and curriculum

When accommodation related to the school activity and/or curriculum content is requested, schools will identify an appropriate accommodation that is focused on participation and inclusion following the steps outlined in the Flow Charts and the conversation flows related to curriculum.

It is important to note that when an individual requests a curriculum accommodation, the reached agreement applies only to the individual student in question and not to all the students of that faith, the whole class or to classroom practices in general.

Considerations for curriculum accommodation: questions to guide administrators

The following questions will help guide administrators to process religious accommodation requests for curriculum expectations in an equitable and inclusive manner:

Religious Nature

What is the administrator's understanding of the religious nature of the request? If support is required, contact the Instructional Coordinator—Equity.

Full Withdrawal Request

Does the request impact any of the human rights protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code? See Religious Accommodation Request Flowchart - Curriculum Expectations.

Communication to Others

Who else needs to know about the decision to accommodate? Inform teacher(s). Complete the Administrator Form: Religious Accommodation Plan. Copy to parent; OSR.

Supervision and Space Requirements

What are the considerations for supervision of students and space requirements if needed? See Guidelines for Space for Faith Accommodation.

Assessment Implications

How will assessment, evaluation and reporting occur given the accommodations as full withdrawal?

Religious Accommodation limitations:

1. Board/School Functions and Places of Worship

The Board and schools will not use places of worship for any system events and functions out of respect for the many religions practiced by the student, staff and parent communities, and for those individuals who do not belong to any organized religion or choose to not identify with any religion.

2. Religious Clubs in Peel Schools

The formation of religious clubs in Peel schools is consistent with the Board Policy 58 - Extra- Curricular Activity and student requests will be supported in accordance with the guidelines outlined Leadership Development and School Support Services 25.

If needing accommodation, students who are members of a religious clubs are also required to apply, follow and meet the criteria for religious accommodation.

3. Involvement of Religious Leaders in Schools

The religious accommodation process recognizes the sincerely held beliefs and practices of individuals and families. Religious leaders can be consulted for the purposes of clarity. However the Board do not require religious leaders to legitimize beliefs and practices of students and families or be involved in the decision making process of a religious accommodation. In addition, religious leaders are not to guide, lead or preach when students observe prayers in schools.

REFERENCES

- Parent or Student Religious Accommodation Request Form
- Administrator Form: Religious Accommodation Plan
- Religious Accommodation Request Flowchart - Student
- Religious Accommodation Request Flowchart - Curriculum Expectations
- Glossary of Key Terms
- Faith Descriptions
- References and Support Materials

Education Act, Section 21:2(g)

Board Policy 23
Board Policy 51
Board Policy 54
Board Policy 58
Leadership Development and School Support Services 25

12 02 21
16 02 26 Revised
16 11 07 Revised

APPENDIX**Religious Accommodation Operating Procedure****Appendix A - Parent or Student Religious Accommodation Request Form**

The Peel District School Board values diversity and inclusion. It has policies and procedures to accommodate the diverse religious needs of students in schools. This form will help schools in addressing religious accommodation request(s). This form can be completed by: high school students, parents/guardians of high school students, parents/guardians of elementary students.

Instructions to Parent/High School Student:

Please complete the form at the start of the school year or as soon after as possible.

The completed form should be handed **into the school office**.

Name of person submitting: _____ (first) _____ (last)

Contact Information: Tel: _____ Email: _____

Date of submission: _____ (Day/Month/Year)

I am: Student Parent Guardian

Name of student(s) with current grade(s) to be accommodated:

Name: _____ Grade: _

Name: _____ Grade: _

Name: _____ Grade: _

School Name _____

Select all accommodation that apply:

Religious Practice

Clothing

Diet

Extra-curricular activity

Leave

Religious practice

Other _____

Curriculum Expectations

Classroom learning

Field Trip

Other _____

Describe the religious accommodation request(s) for each student on the form:

Please submit this form to the school office staff* *The school will call to follow up on your request

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Appendix B - Administrator Form: Religious Accommodation Plan

School Name:

Name of Principal:

Date Parent or Student Religious Accommodation Request Form received from high school student/parent/ guardian:

Name of high school student/parent/guardian making the request:

Name of student the request applies to: _____

Student #: _____

Grade: _____

Names of Attendees for face-to-face

meeting: _____

Administrator(s):

High school

student/parent(s)/guardian(s)

Date of face to face meeting: _____

Area of Accommodation:

- Observation of major holy days, ceremonies, commemorations, and celebrations
- School opening and closing exercises
- Prayer/rituals
- Dietary requirements
- Fasting
- Religious attire
- Scheduling for religious leaves
- Participation in daily activities and curriculum
- Other _____

Description of Religious Accommodation Provided by Parent/Guardian for Peel student

(Administrator to document here their understanding of the religious accommodation request the high school student/ parent/guardian has provided in person at meeting)

Summary of discussion with parent/guardian about possibilities for accommodation.
(Please follow sequence of flows to guide discussion about religious accommodation outlined in Religious Accommodation Operating Procedure, COMS8 (Considerations for religious practice/curriculum accommodation) and appendix C – Religious Accommodation Request Flowchart)

Summary of Accommodation(s) granted. (Please follow sequence of flows to guide discussion about religious accommodation outlined in Religious Accommodation Operating Procedure, COMS8 (Considerations for religious practice/curriculum accommodation) and appendix C – Religious Accommodation Request Flowchart)

Effective date of Accommodation(s): _____

High school student/parent/guardian is aware and comfortable of the implications of the Religious Accommodation

Signature of high school student/parent/guardian

Administrator is aware and comfortable of the implications of the Religious Accommodation

Signature of Principal

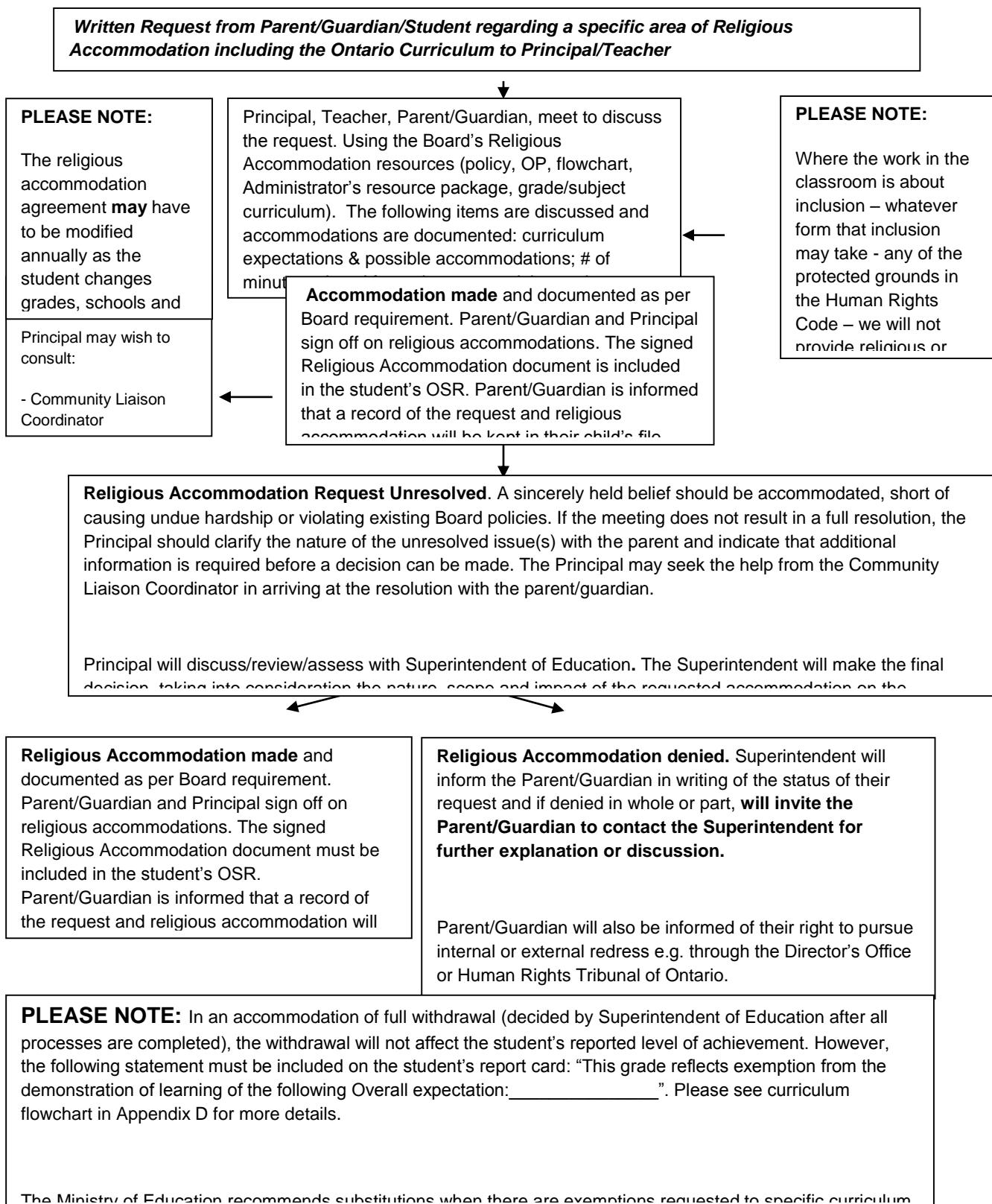
Distribution:

Copy to high school student/parent/guardian

Copy filed in Ontario Student Record

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Appendix C – Religious Accommodation Request Flowchart – Student



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Appendix D - Religious Accommodation Request Flowchart - Curriculum Expectations, Administrator Guided Conversation Flows and Next Steps



Step 1: Religious Accommodation of Curricular Expectations

Depending on the exact nature of the curricular religious accommodation request, an administrator shall initiate and guide the following process:

➤ Define and Differentiate

- Administrator, teacher and parent shall work together to identify the **Specific Expectation** that is eliciting the request for accommodation by deconstructing the expectation to identify explicitly the knowledge, skill or both that the student is expected to demonstrate.
- Administrator, teacher and parent shall explore ways the student can demonstrate the learning related to the Specific Expectation
 - Refer to the 'Seven Fundamental Principles' of assessment and evaluation from page 6 of [Growing Success](#), specifically: #1 ("teachers use practices and procedures that... are fair, transparent and equitable for all students"); and #4 ("teachers use practices that... are communicated clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or course and at other appropriate points throughout the school year or course")
 - Refer to page 17-23 of [Learning for All](#) for principles and processes of differentiation
- If a concern still exists with the Specific Expectation, administrator, parent and teacher shall explore ways the student can demonstrate learning of the **Overall Expectation** deemed to correspond most closely with the Specific Expectation.

➤ Seek further assistance

- From instructional leaders at school sites (Elementary and Secondary Administrators)
- From Curriculum & Instruction Support Services: Instructional Coordinator: Equity & Inclusive Education



Step 2: Religious Exemption as Full Withdrawal

No rel

- After conversation with administrator, teachers and parents, and the Superintendent for the school in question, **the Superintendent will determine that the student will receive a religious accommodation of full withdrawal**.
- While the withdrawal will not affect the student's reported level of achievement, the following statement will be included on the student's report card: "*This grade reflects exemption from the demonstration of learning of the following Overall Expectation:*"
- Please note that grades are determined based on student's most consistent, more recent demonstration of learning of Overall Expectations.
- If there is insufficient evidence of learning demonstrated due to exemption, a student should not be penalized for the absence of evidence of learning. Instead, teachers should attempt to surface learning by differentiating instruction and assessment and by triangulating evidence of learning through conversation, observation, product—or—by what students say, what students do, and what students create. (Re: triangulation see [Growing Success](#) page 34, 'Eliciting Information About Student Learning' and pages 27-36 more generally)

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Appendix E - Glossary of Key Terms

Accommodation

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances defines "accommodation" as a duty corresponding to the right to be free from discrimination. Peel board is committed to providing religious accommodation.

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, October 20, 1996, pg. 5)

Creed

Creed is interpreted by the Ontario Human Rights Commission's 1996 *Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances* as "religious creed" or "religion."

It is defined as a professed system and confession of faith, including both beliefs and observances of worship. 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.

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, October 20, 1996(A1)).

Faith Forward

Understanding and embracing the wide diversity of faiths and cultures represented by students and staff is the vision of the *Faith Forward* program and the Board's commitment to ensure inclusion and equity of all faiths.

The Board expects schools and worksites to not schedule special events, activities on Board approved significant holydays (printed in bold in the Holy Days and Holidays calendar) that may exclude observing staff and students from participating.

Undue Hardship

The duty to accommodate on a case by case basis, is limited to the extent by which it causes undue hardship. Accommodation will be provided to the point of undue hardship. "The burden of proving undue hardship lies with the person responsible for providing the accommodation. A determination regarding undue hardship will consider the following factors – costs, outside sources of funding, health and safety.

A determination that an accommodation will create undue hardship carries with it significant potential liability for the Board. Where a determination is made that an accommodation would create undue hardship, the Superintendent of Education will provide the person requesting accommodation written notice, including the reasons for the decision. The accommodation seeker shall be informed of his or her recourse by requesting an appeal of the decision to the Associate Director of Education or filing a complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

Where a determination has been made that an accommodation would cause undue hardship, the Board will proceed to implement the next best accommodation short of undue hardship and/or will consider phasing in the requested accommodation.

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Appendix F - Faith Descriptions*

Aboriginal spirituality:

Native cultures have practiced and maintained their spirituality over centuries through ceremonies, customs and traditions that are an integral part of their being. The Supreme Being, the creator, is a fundamental figure in their religious pursuits. Spirituality for Aboriginal people is closely linked to Nature and Mother Earth. In their quest for spirituality, they strive for balance and harmony in their lives. Their spiritual and cultural life is interconnected. Followers of Aboriginal spirituality celebrate seasonal festivals.

Bahá'í:

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892) founded the Bahá'í faith on the belief of the oneness of God, religion and humanity. Adherents value universal principals such as love, equality, social justice, honesty, kindness etc. while accepting social and scientific changes in their day-to-day lives. Followers of the faith take personal responsibility for their spiritual growth. The Bahá'í faith is governed by spiritual assemblies made up of nine or more members and does not have clergy to guide worship.

In the Bahá'í calendar, there are 19 months of 19 days each with four intercalary days (five in leap year). Each month represents an attribute of God. The first month starts with the New Year (March 21) and the last ends with 19 days of fasting. The Bahá'í day starts at sunset.

Buddhism:

Siddhartha Gautam, the first Buddha, founded Buddhism in the 6th century BCE in Northern India. Two major forms of Buddhism evolved as Buddhism spread across Asia. The Theravada (southern) tradition is found in Burma, Cambodia, India, Laos, Malaysia Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and parts of Vietnam. The Mahayana (northern) tradition is found in China, India, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Tibet and Vietnam. Buddhist teachings guide followers to attain liberation from rebirth through Dharma (Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path) and Karma (action with cause and effect). Buddhist calendars vary based on the diverse traditions of the adherents' school of thought.

Christianity:

Christians follow the life and teachings of Jesus, also called Christ. Christianity shares its roots and some religious texts with Judaism. Jesus was born a Jew. His followers spread Christianity after his death. It is the

world's largest religion. There are many denominations, traditions and churches within Christianity. Three main branches of the faith are Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant. Both the Old and New Testaments guide followers in their spiritual quest. Christians believe in one God, the Holy Trinity and divinity of Christ. Adherents follow either the Julian or Gregorian calendars.

Hinduism:

Hinduism also called Sanatana Dharma, is the world's oldest organized religion. It evolved over many centuries in the Indian subcontinent and has no single founder or scripture. Adherents believe in one omnipresent, omniscient God. Followers refer to a number of holy texts - Veda, Purana, Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata - and may worship many male and female manifestations of God either in a temple or at home. Hinduism's core beliefs include:

- Dharma (righteous practices)
- Karma (action with cause and effect)
- Moksha (liberation from cycle of rebirth)
- Atman (eternal soul)
- Ahimsa (non-violence)
- Bhakti (devotion)
- Jnana (knowledge for spiritual enlightenment)

The Hindu calendar - Vikram Samvat and Panchang - uses both lunar and solar calculations.

Islam:

Islam, meaning "peace" in Arabic, was revealed through the Prophet Muhammad. The message is recorded in the *Quran*, which is the holiest book for followers of Islam. Muslims believe in submission to one God (Allah), Muhammad as his messenger, angels of God, holy books revealed to mankind, other prophets (Adam to Jesus), the Day of Judgment and resurrection after death. Followers of the faith have five duties (Pillars of Islam) to perform.

- Declaration of faith
- Five prayers daily
- Fasting in the month of Ramadan
- Payment of Zakat (annual charity)
- Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) at least once during their lifetime

Sunni and Shia are the two main schools of Islam. All Muslims follow a code of behaviour that clearly lays out what is Halal (acceptable/permitted) and what is Haram (prohibited/unacceptable) in their daily lives. Islam follows a lunar – Hijri - calendar.

Jainism:

Jainism was founded on the teachings of 24 Tirthankaras (liberated and enlightened persons) of whom Vardhamana Mahavira was the last. The religion has its roots in the Indian sub-continent. Jain philosophy provides a way of life for adherents. Shvetamber and Digamber are the two divisions of Jainism. These two sects differ in some of their religious beliefs, interpretations of scripture and daily and ascetic practices. Jains believe in:

- Jiva (eternal soul)
- Ahimsa (non-violence)
- Veganism
- Aparigraha (non-acquisition)
- Karma (cause and effect action)
- Samsar (cycle of transmigration, birth and death)
- Anekantvada (multiplicity of views)
- Moksha (liberation from cycle of birth)

Jains fast regularly during the course of a year and also during many festivals and holy days. Jains follow the Vir Nirvan Smavat calendar with its roots in the Hindu calendar.

Judaism:

Judaism is a monotheistic faith. Followers believe that God entered into a covenant with Abraham, and it was later renewed with Moses and the Jewish people to reveal his laws and teachings through the Torah. The Jewish people practice these teachings in their worship and customs. The synagogue is their place of worship. Jews observe the Sabbath weekly, beginning at sunset on Friday and ending at sunset on Saturday. It is the time for spiritual reflection for adherents and they suspend work for the day. Followers of the faith may pray three times –morning, afternoon and night each day. Many Jews observe kashrut (or kosher) dietary rules. The Jewish faith is divided into groups depending on adherents' religious beliefs and practices. Some of these include Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist. The Jewish calendar is a combined lunar and solar calendar. The holy days may be celebrated either for a day or over two days based on adherent's religious beliefs.

Sikhism:

Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539). The religion was further developed and defined by nine gurus that came after him and has its roots in the Indian sub-continent. Holy scriptures called *Guru Granth Sahib* have guided adherents spiritually after the ten gurus. Sikhs believe in one Supreme Being. The key beliefs of Sikhism include:

- Oneness of humanity
- the release from birth-cycles through enlightenment
- worship, meditation and service
- rejection of caste system, rituals and idol-worship

Khalsa (baptized) Sikhs are required to follow Reht Maryada (the Sikh code of conduct) at all times. Reht Maryada includes both the religious and social practices for Sikhs.

Sikh calendar was modified in 1999 and has moved from lunar to tropical solar calculations. Some groups within the faith continue to use the previous calendar and therefore some holy-day celebrations may vary based on adherent's affiliation.

Wicca:

Wicca is a newly revived religion with roots in pre-Christian religious beliefs, traditions and practices of Europe. Wiccans worship the one Supreme Being and its two aspects - male and female equally. The faith also recognizes many other deities venerated from ancient times. Earth-centered practices and harmony with nature are important beliefs of the faith. Followers believe in Karma (actions with cause and effect) and reincarnation. Many Wiccans are members of covens (local Wicca groups). They gather for worship in sacred circles. Most rituals of the faith relating to life cycle and seasonal changes are held in a circle outdoors when possible. Wiccans celebrate eight Sabbats (seasonal celebrations) spaced 45 days apart during a year. Followers of the Wicca faith follow a yearly cycle of the sun in a fixed calendar.

Zoroastrianism:

Zarathushtra also called Zoroaster founded the faith in ancient Persia (Iran). Believers worship Ahura Mazda – the one God. Zoroastrians believe that an individual has a choice between good and evil in life. The path for perfecting oneself is through good thought, good speech and good actions. Fire is sacred to the faith and it is always kept burning in the temple and in followers' homes. Followers also believe in angels, heaven and hell, god and Satan, an immortal soul and the last judgment. Priesthood is hereditary in Zoroastrianism, and all religious ceremonies are led by priests. Both male and female followers are initiated into the faith through the Navjote ceremony. Initiated adherents have to follow dress codes of the faith. Shenshahi, Qadimi and Fasli are three major denominations and the three

calendars that followers of the Zoroastrian faith use.

***Prepared by Communications and Community Relations Support Services**

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Appendix G - References and Support Material

Ontario Human Rights Commission:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca>

Ontario Human Rights Code:

<http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19>

Education Act:

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e02#BK27>

Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances (1996), Ontario Human Rights Commission:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies/PolicyCreedAccomodEN>

Ministry of Education: Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009, 2014):

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.html>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

Opening and Closing Exercises in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (PPM 108), Ministry of Education:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/108.html>

Peel Board Human Rights Policy (#51)

Peel Board Equity and Inclusive Education Policy (#54)

Peel Board Extra-curricular Activity Policy (#58)

Peel Board Extra Curricular Guidelines for Religious Clubs

Peel Board Holy Days and Holidays Calendar, under “Faith Forward” section (revised yearly available through Communications and Community Relations Support Services)

Peel Board Leave of Absence Policy (#23)

Peel Board Reflections on World Religions booklet: (available through Communications and Community Relations Support Services)

Peel Board Student Clubs and Organizations operating procedure (LDSS25)

Peel Board Wearing of Kirpans operating procedure (LDSS9)

Peel Board Days of Commemoration and Celebrations operating procedure (LDSS10)