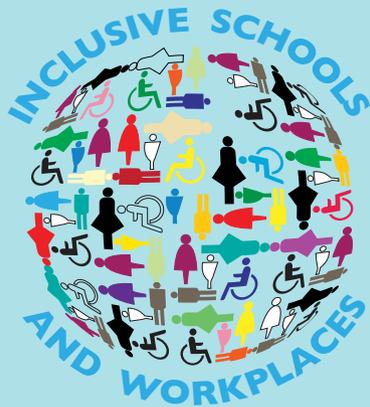


PROGRAM ACCOMMODATIONS FOR FAITH PURPOSES

A GUIDELINE FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS



A LIVING DOCUMENT

Why a Living Document?

York is a dynamic region of rapid growth and change. As a “living document”, YRDSB’s Program Accommodations for Faith Purposes will be updated to reflect the growing diversity of our schools and communities as well as respond to the shifting needs of our system.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: Introduction.....	1-8
Section 2: Board Procedure #261.8.....	9-10
Section 3: Descriptions of Religious Requirements, Practices and Observances.....	11-49
Section 4: Holy Days by Faith	50-60

PROGRAM ACCOMMODATIONS FOR FAITH PURPOSES

© 2014 York Region District School Board

Reproduction of this document for use by staff in the York Region District School Board is encouraged. For anyone other than York Region District School Board staff, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any other means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the York Region District School Board. This permission must be requested and obtained in writing from:

York Region District School Board

The Education Centre - Aurora
60 Wellington Street West, Box 40
Aurora, ON
L4G 3H2

Every reasonable precaution has been taken to trace the owners of copyrighted material and to make due acknowledgement. Any omission will gladly be rectified in future printings.

This “living document” continues to be reviewed for equity and inclusivity.

For more information please call the office of Inclusive School and Community Services, (905)884-2046, ext. 252, (416)969-7170, ext. 2409 or email: joan.lachhman@yrdsb.ca

YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

MISSION

To advance student achievement and well-being through public education, which motivates learners, fosters inclusion, inspires innovation and builds community.

VISION

To be a leader in public education by empowering all students to become engaged and caring citizens of the world.

VALUES

Our School Board operates based on a set of values which guides our actions:

Inclusivity

We demonstrate equity and inclusivity in all that we do. We demand an environment in which all students, staff, parents, and our community feel valued and have a sense of belonging. We expect empathy, mutual respect and understanding to be demonstrated in our words and actions.

Relationships

We value positive, meaningful relationships with students, staff, parents, and our community. We value diversity of opinion, sincere dialogue and community engagement.

Innovation

We continuously strive to provide the best educational programs for all students. We empower staff and students to take initiative and to be innovative leaders.

Engagement

We encourage active participation in all learning and activities by creating an environment that engages students, staff, parents, and our community.

Responsibility

We are individually and collectively responsible for creating the best possible school community to support the achievement and well-being of all individuals. We are responsible for the delivery of effective and sustainable educational programs and stewardship of Board resources.

Optimism

We approach all situations with optimism. We cultivate confidence and resiliency in all students and staff.

“Religious pluralism poses many opportunities in any multicultural society, especially one as diverse as ours. Although the law is developing rapidly in this area, an informed spirit of tolerance 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)

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



York Region is one of the most diverse areas in Canada, a diversity that is reflected in our schools and workplaces. Our rich composition makes this region one of the most vibrant in Canada.

Each year at the York Region District School Board, we welcome students, staff and families of different religious backgrounds into our many learning and working communities. We respect and celebrate the various faiths, cultures and backgrounds that are represented in our schools, communities and workplaces.

Through our programs, practices and people, we will honour our commitment to the principles of equity, inclusiveness and diversity. We respect the right of individuals to observe religious or spiritual beliefs and practices, and the importance of responding to requests for accommodation in a manner that is respectful, appropriate and inclusive.

Our Board is committed to developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to remove learning and working barriers for all students and staff. This guide is designed to support that commitment by building understanding about the many faith groups and traditions represented in our diverse communities and ensuring that accommodation requests are responded to appropriately.

It is my sincere hope that this document provides useful and meaningful guidelines in making program accommodations for faith purposes.

Louise Sirisko
Director of Education

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction.....	1
A. Legislative and Policy Context	2
B. Definitions.....	3
C. Areas of Accommodation	4
D. General Guidelines and Procedure for Religious Accommodation	5-8
E. Limitations to Religious Accommodation	8

INTRODUCTION

The York Region District School Board (YRDSB) values the uniqueness and diversity of its students and communities and understands that people from diverse religious communities need to work and study in safe and respectful environments.

In a region as dynamic and diverse as York Region, 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 as it requires constant integration and evaluation of new knowledge and new approaches. Ultimately, YRDSB believes the process of accommodation and partnership with members of its community will help to build an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

Program Accommodations for Faith Purposes establishes guidelines and procedures for religious accommodation in YRDSB, 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.

Respect for religious diversity is a shared responsibility. YRDSB 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 students and their families to help schools highlight and share information to support further understanding.

Religious accommodation is a term grounded in the Ontario Human rights code and found in our Board Procedure 261.8, *Equity and Inclusivity: Religious Accommodation*. Program accommodations refers to the many ways that we can provide support and differentiate our programs based on the needs of our students.

While these guidelines recommend courses of action and expectations for those who work in or are associated with the YRDSB, the best strategies for achieving an inclusive learning and working environment is a pro-active educational system. It is essential that the curriculum, teaching methods, and management practices of the YRDSB 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.

A. Legislative and Policy Context

All school boards exist within a broader context of law and public policy that protect and defend human rights. YRDSB has developed a number of policy statements that both reinforce federal and provincial legislation and help to 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. In addition, this policy ensures shared and committed leadership, inclusive curriculum and assessment practices, school community relationships, religious accommodation, school climate, prevention of discrimination and harassment, professional learning, accountability and transparency.

YRDSB recognizes and is committed to the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion as outlined in **Policy # 240.0 - Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment, Policy #261.0 - Equity and Inclusive Education, Policy #668.0 – Caring and Safe Schools, and their related procedures.**

Board Policy # 240.0 - Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment

Board Policy #261.0 Equity and Inclusivity: Document Integration Project Format

- Board Procedure #261.1 Equity and Inclusivity: Board Policies, Procedures, Programs, Guidelines and Practices
- Board Procedure #261.2 Equity and Inclusivity: Shared and Committed Leadership
- Board Procedure #261.3 Equity and Inclusivity: School Community Relationships
- Board Procedure #261.4 Equity and Inclusivity: Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices
- Board Procedure #261.5 Equity and Inclusivity: School and Workplace Climate and Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment
- Board Procedure #261.6 Equity and Inclusivity: Professional Learning
- Board Procedure #261.7 Equity and Inclusivity: Accountability and Transparency
- Board Procedure #261.8 Equity and Inclusivity: Religious Accommodation

Board Policy #668.0 Safe, Caring and Supportive Schools: Document Integration Format

- Board Procedure #668.0 Safe, Caring and Supportive Schools
- Board Procedure #668.1 Suspensions
- Board Procedure #668.2 Expulsions
- Board Procedure #668.3 Inappropriate Behaviour and Bullying Prevention and Intervention
- Board Procedure #668.4 Violence Threat Risk Assessment
- Board Procedure #668.5 Student Progressive Discipline
- Board Procedure #668.6, Emergency Preparedness
- Board Procedure #668.7, Code of Student Conduct

A.1 Accommodation Based on Request

YRDSB 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 YRDSB will balance its decision to accommodate considering 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.

A.2 Unresolved Requests

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

B. Definitions

B.1 Accommodation

According to the Ontario Human Rights Code, “organizations are required to prevent and remove barriers and provide accommodation to the point of undue hardship. The principle of accommodation arises most frequently in the context of creed, family status, sex (pregnancy), and disability, as well as age and gender identity. Organizations, including their officers, managers, supervisors, and union representatives, have a shared obligation to design for inclusion of persons identified by Code grounds, as well as to remove barriers and provide accommodation.” (Ontario Human Rights Commission Developing Human Rights Policies and Procedures, Jan. 2008, p. 25)

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 accommodate’. 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)

This means the ‘duty to accommodate’ becomes an obligation when 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.

B.2 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 practices 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 practice 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)

C. Areas of Accommodation

For many students and staff in York Region public schools, there are a number of situations in which the practice of their religion will result in requests for accommodations on the part of the school and/or the Board. These situations may include:

- Religious holidays and celebrations
- School opening or closing exercises
- Prayer
- Dietary requirements
- Fasting
- Religious attire
- Modesty requirements
- 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. Administrators and teachers are 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 positions of monitoring a child's compliance with a religious obligation.

D. Common Considerations for Religious Accommodations

The following are general guidelines and procedures to be followed when considering accommodations. These general statements do not name specific religions but simply refer to common areas of consideration.

D.1 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 provide for the accommodation of employees regarding faith day requests.

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.

Staff

The person requesting the leave should advise the supervisor 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. Staff must refer to [Policy 517.0 - Request for Faith Days](#).

Students

Students are required to present written notification from their parents/guardians 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 religious 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. Schools must refer to the [Scheduling of Events on Faith Days](#).

In the case of an absence for religious holy day(s) major tests or exams should be rescheduled for the student.

A list of Holy Days by Faith is provided in Section 4.

D.2 Opening and Closing Exercises

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

Opening and Closing Exercises, and exemptions 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 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.”

D.3 Prayer

Schools 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 and the student or staff member.

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

D.4 Dietary Requirements

Schools and workplaces should be attentive to the dietary restrictions of individuals and the various religious groups. Consideration should be made to cafeteria menus, 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.

D.5 Fasting

Schools and workplaces should accommodate 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).

D.6 Religious Attire

Schools should accommodate students with regard to religious attire.

Religious attire may include, but is not limited to:

- male and female head coverings
- crucifixes, Stars of David
- items of ceremonial dress

Harassment about religious attire is one of the most common types of harassment. Staff must respond appropriately if harassment and discrimination based on religious attire occurs.

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 Section 3).

D.7 Modesty Requirements

Some religious communities observe strict modesty in attire. This can become a matter of concern when the students are asked to wear the athletic 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.

D.8 Participation in Daily Activities and Curriculum

When accommodation is requested in relation to the contents of a curriculum, the school should have an informed discussion with parents/guardians and students.

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. Accommodations, which may include full withdrawal, are supported through a differentiated instructional model.

The Ministry of Education recommends substitutions when there are exemptions requested related to specific curriculum requirements. (*OSS, 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.

D.9 Classroom Materials

When accommodation is requested in relation to the contents of materials used in learning activities, teachers and parents should have informed discussions about what alternative materials would be permissible. Where possible, substitutions should be made. (An example of this would be replacing crayons made with animal byproducts with crayons made from solely vegetable sources).

E. Limitations to Religious Accommodations

Religious accommodations in the YRDSB are 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.

SECTION 2:
BOARD PROCEDURE #261.8
EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY:
RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

BOARD POLICY #261.0, EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

BOARD PROCEDURE #261.8 EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY:
RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION



Board Procedure #261.8

Equity and Inclusivity: Religious Accommodation

This procedure outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of all staff in ensuring that religious accommodation is provided to students and staff. Religious accommodation provisions are designed to promote respectful working and learning environments. Such accommodations are carried out in the broader context of a secular public education system.

Responsibilities

The Director of Education shall:

- allocate staff resources to support the *Equity and Inclusivity: Religious Accommodations* procedure.

Superintendents shall:

- include, implement and monitor the *Equity and Inclusivity: Religious Accommodation* procedure and [Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances](#) guideline in daily operations and planning processes;
- support school administrators in understanding and addressing questions regarding religious accommodation in accordance with all Board policies, procedures and guidelines;
- address questions regarding religious accommodation in a timely and appropriate manner, and in accordance with all Board policies, procedures and guidelines;
- ensure that all staff are aware of and adhere to the [Scheduling of Events on Faith Days](#) communication; and
- ensure that all schools, workplaces and community members are aware of the [Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances](#) guideline.

Principals, Managers and Supervisors shall:

- communicate the *Equity and Inclusivity: Religious Accommodation* procedure with parents/guardians, students, staff and members of the community using [Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances](#) guideline as a support to responding to requests;
- ensure that staff review and comply with the [Scheduling of Events on Faith Days](#) communication;
- communicate the [Request for Faith Days](#) procedure to staff;
- accept and monitor staff requests for absences from work for the observance of faith days in accordance with the [Requests for Faith Days](#) procedure and with collective agreements, where applicable; and
- ensure that responses to religious accommodation requests follow the [Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances](#) guideline and are documented in writing.

Teachers shall:

- provide information to parents/guardians about the process for requesting religious accommodation in a timely and respectful manner;
- seek parent input and clarification about religious accommodation requests to provide appropriate programming accommodations in a timely and respectful manner;
- respond to religious accommodation requests in consultation with the principal; and
- provide appropriate programming accommodations in a timely and respectful manner using the [Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances](#) guideline.

Students, Parents and Community Members shall:

- make requests for religious accommodation in accordance with the *Equity and Inclusivity: Religious Accommodation* procedure and the *Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances* guideline; and
- make every reasonable effort to understand and respect religious accommodation requirements.

Human Resource Services shall:

- communicate the *Request for Faith Days* procedure to all staff; and
- share the staff list of approved faith day requests with principals.

Curriculum and Instructional Services, Leadership Development and Student Services shall:

- produce supporting documents and develop curriculum resources that are inclusive and accessible to assist with in-class accommodations;
- support schools, departments and staff through professional learning opportunities and training;
- work collaboratively with various academic institutions, community organizations and Board staff in the development of inclusive and accessible resources and support materials; and
- ensure that all regionally developed curriculum materials and resources are bias free, reviewed regularly and represent the dynamics of the Board's multi-faceted communities by ensuring that all students see themselves represented fairly within all aspects of the curriculum.

All staff shall:

- abide by *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* and the *Board's Equity and Inclusivity* policy and procedures;
- address all requests for religious accommodation in a safe, timely and appropriate manner;
- engage in equity education training required for their role as well as specific learning to uphold the protections enshrined in the Ontario Human Rights Code;
- submit requests for leave for the observance of faith days in accordance with the *Request for Faith Days* procedure; and
- request religious accommodation through their principal, manager or supervisor.

Related Procedures

Procedure #261.1, Equity and Inclusivity: Board Policies, Procedures, Programs, Guidelines and Practices

Procedure #261.2, Equity and Inclusivity: Shared and Committed Leadership

Procedure #261.3, Equity and Inclusivity: School Community Relationships

Procedure #261.4, Equity and Inclusivity: Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices

Procedure #261.5, Equity and Inclusivity: School and Workplace Climate and Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment

Procedure #261.6, Equity and Inclusivity: Professional Learning

Procedure #261.7, Equity and Inclusivity: Accountability and Transparency

Department

Inclusive School and Community Services

Procedure History

Working Document February 2013

It is the expectation of the York Region District School Board that all employees, students and persons invited to or visiting Board property; or partaking/volunteering in Board or school-sponsored events and activities will respect the policies and procedures of the Board. The term "parents" refers to both biological/adoptive parents and guardians in all Board policies and procedures.

SECTION 3:

DESCRIPTIONS OF RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS, PRACTICES AND OBSERVANCES

Aboriginal World View/Native Spirituality	12-13
Bahá'í	14-15
Buddhism	16
Christianity	17-20
Hinduism (Hindu Dharma)	21-23
Humanism.....	24
Islam	25-35
Jainism.....	36-38
Judaism.....	39-43
Rastafari.....	44-45
Sikhism.....	46-49
Zoroastrianism	50

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 (OMCSRC) to provide guidance regarding religious accommodations. The description of each religion outlines aspects of the religion that may require accommodation on the part of the YRDSB. The YRDSB's role 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.

These descriptions are intended to inform and extend understanding. These basic descriptions cover practices and observances of religions that may lead adherents to ask for accommodation from the Board. These are not full explanations of the religion, but are intended to resource Board staff in their discussions and planning for religious accommodations.

Individuals in all religions make personal decisions about the practice of their faith. For some, no accommodation from YRDSB is needed to freely practice 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. The descriptions that follow do not necessarily describe the beliefs and practices of all those who follow the religion under discussion.

For information consult *The Multifaith Information Manual*, Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care, 2000; or contact the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care (OMCSRC), 3570 Victoria Park Avenue, Suite 207, Toronto, Ontario, M2H- 3S2, Telephone: 416-422-1490, Email: omcsrc@omc.on.ca, Website: www.omc.on.ca.

We recognize that this list is not exhaustive. As a “living document” we welcome input in updating the contents within.

ABORIGINAL WORLD VIEW/NATIVE SPIRITUALITY

A world view refers to the principles, values, traditions, and customs 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 Indigenous peoples comprise many nations, they have many world views. However, there are commonalities noted in most indigenous 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 Indigenous 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 highly regarded.

Sacred Circle Concept

The Circle teachings come from a First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) perspective. It is a holistic framework for teaching and assisting development and growth of the whole person including; spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental realms. In educating the whole child, all four areas must be balanced. Many First Nations have teachings around the medicine wheel as the circle of life, balance and how all things are related. There may be some variations of the teachings based on each community and the teachings are vast. The Four Directions, The Stages of Life, and The Seven Grandfather Teachings also sit in this wheel.

Seven Grandfather Teachings- For a Good Life

These gifts of knowledge were given to help people live a good life and to respect the Creator, the Earth and each other.

Wisdom: To have wisdom is to know the difference between good and bad and to know the result of your actions.

Love: To truly love is to care for others unconditionally, knowing when people are weak is when they need it most.

Respect: To have honour for all of Creation. You must give respect if you wish to be respected.

Bravery: To be brave is to do something right even if you know it is going to hurt you.

Honesty: Always be honest in word and in action. Be honest first with yourself, and you will more easily be able to be honest with others.

Humility: You are equal to others, but you are not better.

Truth: To learn the truth, to live with truth, and to walk with truth, to speak truth.

Traditional Medicines: The Four Original Gifts

- Tobacco:** sits in the Eastern doorway as the first medicine and has the gift of communicating. It is to be used with respect in ceremonies and not for commercial use.
- Sage:** sits in the Southern doorway and is often used for cleansing or releasing negative energy.
- Cedar:** sits in the Western doorway and has many medicinal uses and is used for protection.
- Sweetgrass:** sits in the Northern doorway and is viewed as the hair of Mother Earth. It is also used for purification.

All these teachings vary by the Nation or community.

Smudge:

The smudging ceremony is used to center oneself by cleansing mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually using some of the traditional medicines. It is generally Sage or Sweetgrass that is burned or a mix of medicines. Smudging may occur prior to a meeting, event or ceremony by smudging the room or individual members. Smudging is not practiced by the Inuit.

Educators should also note that contemporary Aboriginal communities have a range of spiritual beliefs including Christianity. It would be an error to assume all Aboriginal students practice and are knowledgeable about traditional world views.

Use of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit/Aboriginal Cultural Symbols

Encouraging non-aboriginal students to engage in creating “cute,” “fun,” or “exotic” stand-alone items such as totem poles, dreamcatchers, masks, teepees, and the like trivializes and demeans First Nation, Métis, and Inuit/Aboriginal cultures. These items have spiritual significance that may not be completely known or understood by teachers, much less the students. They need to be understood in the context of the spirituality of the cultures of which they are a part. For example, to ask non-aboriginal students to create an “authentic” totem pole or dreamcatcher is unacceptable.

It is inappropriate and disrespectful for non-aboriginal students to assume the right to create Aboriginal items on their own. Community inclusion is important in Aboriginal education. It is encouraged to invite First Nation, Métis, and Inuit consultants, community guests or Elders to collaborate with the planning of school activities.

(Developed in consultation with the YRDSB FNMI Steering and Action Committee)

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 religion, 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

(The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís reports (March 2009) 1809 members of the Bahá'í community live in Toronto.)

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 during which 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.

(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

According to the 2006 statistics Canada census, 77% of Canadians identified themselves as Christians. Christianity is a historical religion which has its roots in Judaism. Christians follow the teachings of Jesus as described in the scriptures known as The Bible. They believe that God sent his son to Earth to save humanity from the consequences of their sins. The most important concept in Christianity is that Jesus gave his life when he died on the Cross, (the Crucifixion) and, in rising from the dead on the third day (the Resurrection), triumphed over death. Through this sacrifice and victory, they believe he redeemed believers of their sins so that they may join him in eternal life in Heaven. Christians believe that Jesus is not only alive in Heaven but will return to Earth in the future.

There are many branches of Christianity with most having a connection to one of the following organizations: the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox churches, (Eastern, Coptic, Oriental, Greek, Russian, etc.), or one of many Protestant churches.

Although each of these branches have many smaller sub-groups, it is primarily the “Protestant” and “Reform groups” that have multiplied and diversified in numbers according to significant theological differences and various interpretations of doctrine and practice. It is difficult to list all of the groups but the following have a familiar presence in York Region.

- Lutheran
- Anglican
- Calvinist (Presbyterians, Christian Reformed)
- United Church
- Baptist (Fellowship and Convention)
- Evangelical Protestant Denominations (Alliance, Missionary, etc.)
- Pentecostal
- Methodist
- Anabaptist (Mennonites, Brethren,)
- Quaker
- Seventh Day Adventists
- Salvation Army
- Jehovah’s Witness
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints (Mormonism)
- Unitarian
- Independent

Christians usually worship in churches but some may meet in homes, office-buildings, outdoor spaces, etc. Spiritual leaders are typically called priests, ministers or pastors and church leaders with added responsibility may be called bishops, deacons or elders. Their holy book is The Bible and consists of the Old Testament (comprised of the same books as the Tanakh), and New Testament. (There are variations of what texts are included in their ascribed bibles. Although bibles used by Catholics and Protestants include many of the same texts, Protestants do not usually include a set of books called the Apocrypha in their bibles. The Orthodox include many more texts that are not incorporated into Catholic or Protestant bibles.) Christians observe many holy days but the most significant of these are Easter and Christmas.

Religious Accommodations for Christianity

Because of the diversity of practice amongst Christians, there can be no one solution to providing accommodations. Accommodations will not only be influenced by sectarian, cultural, orientational and generational factors but by differences in the liturgical calendars used by different denominations.

Daily Prayer

Prayer is both private and corporate for Christians and incorporated into many aspects of faithful living. Prayers of

gratitude are commonly offered at the beginning of meals. Students who practice prayer before eating may request privacy or the opportunity to quietly pray without negative attention directed toward them. Nurturing a respectful environment in which personal prayer/think-time/reflection are recognized will mitigate concerns.

Observation of Christian Holy Days

Not all Christians observe the same religious holy days. For example, some Christians observe holy days regarding the birth or death of certain saints while others do not.

Christians from Orthodox traditions use the Julian calendar as their liturgical calendar for planning special feasts and celebrations. Most other Christian groups use the Gregorian calendar, otherwise known to all Canadians as our civic calendar. Because the dates of these calendars are not aligned, Christians who observe the same holy days and festivals such as Christmas and Easter may not observe them on the same dates. Christians following the Julian calendar will, therefore, require consideration for accommodations for their religious holidays. (see Section 4: Holy Day by Faith) Teachers should be mindful of how they schedule tests, assignments and presentations around these dates.

Note: Recognizing that the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus and the goodies they bring are in no theological way part of the Christian observances of Easter or Christmas is helpful to students who are often uncomfortable with the commercial aspects of these holidays. Other secular holidays such as Halloween may also cause discomfort for some Christian students. They may request withdrawal from secular holiday activities or alternative assignments to avoid secular Holiday content. By anticipating the needs of these students in advance and incorporating alternative materials and activities that accommodate them, requests for withdrawal from programming can be mitigated.

Fasting

As in many other religions, fasting is a common practice amongst Christians. For some, fasting is a voluntary practise which can be undertaken at anytime throughout the year but is most often associated with specific holy days identified on the liturgical calendar. For others, fasting is a more regimented, integral practice of faith entailing adherence to a range of requirements and restrictions. (Amongst Orthodox Christians, for example, more than half the days of their liturgical year require fasting with very particular requirements specific to each day.) Fasting may involve complete abstinence from food and/or drink or require a specific, restricted diet. Fasting is perhaps most notably associated with the 40 days of Lent leading up to Easter. During this period, Christians may actually restrict their overall intake of food and drink or restrict certain foods or drinks from their diets such as junk foods and sweets. Some Christians have transferred the concept of fasting to the avoidance of other consumptive behaviours/indulgences during Lent such as not playing video games or using social media.

Accommodations for Christians who fast may involve providing alternative space away from people eating or offering alternative food options such as vegetarian or vegan fare and alternatives to sweets and junk food. Giving students/families advanced notice of special classroom and school events that could present challenges to those who fast will be appreciated and allow students to provide for their own accommodations where possible.

Christian Dress

Some Christians are required to wear specific dress for modesty or for prayerfulness, irrespective of their activities. In some denominations, girls wear head (prayer) coverings and will require accommodation to wear these. In some denominations, modesty of dress may restrict girls from wearing pants or shorts. An accommodation allowing these students to wear dresses during physical educational activities may accommodate the needs of these students although consideration for safety may suggest alternative activities in some circumstances.

Human Sexuality – Healthy Active Living Education

Some Christians believe that teaching children about sexuality is the responsibility of parents/guardians and requests for excusing students from participating in units focused on human sexuality may result. Some students may be accommodated through the segregation of the genders for these units.

Social Events and School Socials/Dances

For some, social events and school dances may represent exposure to music, influences and interactions that are considered worldly and inappropriate. Providing meaningful, alternate activities for students during these events may be a requested accommodation. These alternatives should in no way appear to be punitive, (i.e, these students should not be grouped with those who have not been allowed to participate and are being consequence).

Language

Alternatives to traditional and nontraditional texts may be requested if the content conflicts with the beliefs and values of the student. Themes of violence, worldliness, politically charged dogma; anything that may be seen as irreligious with the potential to negatively impact the spiritual well-being of a child may be cause for concern and lead some students/families to request alternative reading materials. Open dialogue with students and families will inform what differentiations in materials may be suitable for instructional purposes. Ensuring the availability of a broad range of reading materials and resources will allow students to self-select according to their interests, needs, and religious values.

Music

Students/families wishing to avoid exposure to music that is considered worldly and irreligious may request accommodations. Careful consideration of the content of lyrics and the associated uses of the music will help to alleviate the need for such requests.

Dance

Dance can present concerns for students/families because of its assumed associations with worldliness and inappropriate social interaction. By ensuring that all aspects of the curriculum are visible and providing students with a range of choices in themes, activities and musical selections, concerns for accommodations can be reduced.

Art

Concerns about modesty may arise in secondary art classes, especially in cases where human models are used. Advanced communication about how the models will be presented will be helpful for students who may require accommodations.

Science

Some Christian students may be uncomfortable with the teaching/study of Scientific concepts or principles which contradict their religious beliefs. Students/families may seek religious accommodations for alternate focuses of study or request full withdrawal.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

In the late nineteenth century, Charles Taze Russell, along with a small group of Bible students, founded a religious order which, in 1931, became known as the 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. Although related to other Christian denominations, there are considerations for accommodations specific to Jehovah's Witnesses.

Observations of Holy Days

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.

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 sundown. The Lord's Evening Meal occurs in March or April (based on the Jewish lunar calendar). Students/staff may ask to be excused from attendance at school/Board evening meetings on the day of the Lord's Evening Meal celebration.

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

Birthdays, Holidays, Functions, and Social Events

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

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

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.

Health Issues

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.

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

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

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.

*(Developed in consultation with Dr. Patel, OMCSRC and
Susan Kennel Harrison, M. Div., Th M., PhD. Candidate, Emmanuel College @ Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto).*

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.

Most Hindus believe in a Supreme God, whose qualities and forms are represented by the multitude of deities which emanate from him. The Ultimate Reality is called Brahma who possesses personality, and Hindus worship him or her thus, as Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, or Shakti, depending upon the sect. They comprise the Hindu Trinity, where Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu is the Preserver, and Shiva is the Dissolver. Brahma 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 Brahma, and not a substitute for the supreme impersonal Brahma.

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 (Manifold 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. Havan (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. 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 Navmi (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, there may be students/staff who 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 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 the same spoons and serving utensils are not used to serve both kinds of food. Food and snacks 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 days, fun fair, or lunch programs to accommodate students who are vegetarians.

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.

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.

(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)

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. 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

Islam, as a religion, is approximately 1,500 years old. There are two main branches within the religion of Islam known as Sunni and Shi'a from which various denominations branch. In Arabic, Islam means peace and submission to the will of one God. The fundamental doctrine in Islam is the belief in One God. A Muslim is anyone who has this attribute of "Islam," that is, anyone who submits to the will of Almighty Allah. The word "Allah" is the name of God in Arabic.

Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be God's peace and blessings) was the name of the Prophet through whom the religion of Islam was revealed. Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca, Arabia in 571 CE and died in the year 633.

The practices of Islam, while diverse in their particular manifestations, are common in their spirit. These practices reflect the common commitment to worship God, and while so doing, to serve one's fellow human beings. Thus, practices in Islam assist an individual to remain conscious of their relationship with God, while also being reminded of their commitment to improve the lives of others in society. Traditionally, fundamentals in Islam have been articulated via a set of principles/pillars. While these pillars are similar amongst different Muslim communities, there also exists a degree of diversity regarding their specific practice and interpretation.

Islam promotes teaching of peace, love and respect for all living things. The religion of Islam promotes universal rights and liberties for both men and women such as the right to life, right to education, right to vote, right to participate in government affairs, right to inheritance and many more

The general practices encompassed in the 'Pillars' include:

- **"Kalima"** declaration of faith: "There is only one God and Muhammad is his Messenger"
- **"Salat"** daily prayers
- **"Saum"** fasting during the month of Ramadan - to bring about physical and spiritual purification and, moral rejuvenation
- **"Zakat"** charity
- **"Hajj"** pilgrimage

The general beliefs encompassed in the 'Six Articles of Faith' include:

- Belief in One God
- Belief in God's Angels
- Belief in God's Prophets (all previous messengers sent to humankind)
- Belief in God's Books (all previous tenets, holy scriptures and laws)
- Belief in the Last Day or Day of Judgment
- Belief in the Decree of God

Religious Accommodation for Islam

Daily Prayer

Beliefs and Practices

Prayer in Islam is required. Many Muslims perform prayers at specific times which change throughout the year, depending on the time of sunrise and sunset. Before prayer, Muslims are required to engage in a process of physical and spiritual purification called ablution, which includes washing 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/girls pray in separate areas. Women do not offer "Salat/Namaaz" (daily prayers) during menstruation because it is considered a time of rest.

Prayer times will vary according to the changing time of sunrise and sunset. Holy days are governed by the lunar calendar. The change to and from daylight savings time can also have an effect on these dates and prayer times.

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 may wish to use 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 or tests, class outings, and overnight outings.

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 (a few minutes may be required for washing). A private washroom would be most appropriate.

The formal practice of regular prayer is upheld by all Muslim communities (albeit with their denominational specificities). The traditional five-time-per-day prayer (Salat) is practiced by many Muslim communities and occurs during the following times:

- Before sunrise, called Fajr
- Mid-Day, called Zuhr
- In the afternoon, called Asr
- At sunset, called Maghrib
- At night, called Isha

Each prayer must be performed within a certain period of time, and Muslims can offer each prayer at any time during that period. In general, 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.

Some Muslim students and staff will 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 1st, for example, some Muslims 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.

Friday Congregational Prayer

Beliefs and Practices

Friday is the Muslim weekly holy day and congregational prayers occur on this day. Congregational prayers occur every day for all five prayers in the mosque, however, Friday is a special day where there is a sermon following the afternoon prayer and Muslims are encouraged to offer prayers in congregation this day. This afternoon service consists of a sermon and prayer and can take between 15-45 minutes. The service is congregational, and its performance in a mosque is preferred. The scheduled period of time for Friday Congregational Prayer changes throughout the year based on the time for noon prayer, and may also vary from mosque to mosque for logistical reasons (keeping in mind the change to and from Daylight savings time).

The following prayer timetable, adapted from the Perpetual Prayer Timetable for Toronto 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.

Please be mindful that there are slight adjustments in times on a daily basis. It is best to check with students and families and/or families to understand how to best support their needs.

Perpetual Prayer Timetable for Toronto and Vicinity

	September	October	November	December	January	February
	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
Date	Noon - p.m.	Noon - p.m.	Noon - p.m.	Noon - p.m.	Noon - p.m.	Noon - p.m.
1	1:18 - 5:56	1:07 - 5:11	12:01 - 3:25	12:07 - 3:00	12:21 - 3:09	12:31 - 3:46
2	1:17 - 5:55	1:07 - 5:10	12:01 - 3:24	12:07 - 2:59	12:22 - 3:10	12:31 - 3:47
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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	1:14 - 5:41	1:04 - 4:54	12:02 - 3:13	12:11 - 2:59	12:26 - 3:20	12:32 - 3:00
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
22	1:10 - 5:25	1:02 - 4:39	12:04 - 3:04	12:16 - 3:02	12:39 - 3:33	12:31 - 3:12
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
30	1:08 - 5:13	1:01 - 4:28	12:06 - 3:56	12:20 - 3:07	12:31 - 3:43	
31		1:01 - 4:27		12:21 - 3:08	12:31 - 3:44	

Perpetual Prayer Timetable for Toronto and Vicinity

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

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 may take approximately one hour. Students' absence or lateness from school (during instructional hours of the school day) will be reflected on the school's attendance record

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, giving gifts, sharing meals and gatherings with family and friends.

School Accommodation

Many Muslim students and staff may not be at school during the following 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 Shi'a 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. Please keep in mind with scheduling that if an extension is given or tests rescheduled to the day after Eid, it may mean that students will have to spend their holiday doing homework or preparing for tests. Ideally, it would be a good idea to give an additional couple of days so that students can enjoy their celebrations. Refer to the Calendar of Islamic Holy Days in Section 4.

Pilgrimage (Hajj)

Beliefs and Practices

Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca, (located in Saudi Arabia). It is compulsory for every Muslim who can afford it and is able to go at least once in their lifetime. The Hajj is a rigorous journey and families spend time getting prepared. These preparations usually include vaccinations and visa requirements.

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, many 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.

After Muslims break their fast at sunset, it is not uncommon for them to go to the mosque for several hours to engage in prayer. In the winter, this may happen in the evening, but in warmer months, due to the time change, this gets later. During the last ten days of Ramadan, many Muslims spend time engaging in extra prayer. Their evenings may look like this: break their fast at sunset, go to the mosque to pray and return home for a couple of hours. Some may then return to the mosque after midnight for several hours. Some children may return to the mosque for additional prayers, however this is not compulsory. Some children accompany adults to the mosque during these nights. It is important to keep this in mind with regards to homework, projects, tests and/or assignments during this time.

Dietary Restrictions

Beliefs and Practices

Muslims dietary law prohibits consumption of alcohol, pork, and any pork by-product or derivatives. Many Muslims only eat meat/food that is halal. Halal relates to food which is prepared by standards that regulate the slaughter and preparation of meat and poultry.

Some objectionable food items include pork, 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 special lunch days like "pizza day," school fairs, and/or other school food-based fundraising activities.

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

Food	Concern	Alternative	Availability
Crackers	A small number of crackers are made with animal shortening (lard).	Almost all crackers are made with vegetable shortening. Choose one of those brands.	Supermarkets
Cookies	A small number of cookies are made with animal shortening (lard).	Almost all cookies are made with vegetable shortening. Choose one of those brands.	Supermarkets
Cheese	Most cheese is made with rennet and pepsin, which are animal by-products.	Cheese is available that is made without rennet and pepsin. Instead, microbial enzymes are used.	Some supermarkets by special order
Pizza	Some pizza outlets use cheese that is made with rennet and pepsin, which are animal by-products.	Many pizza retail food chains, upon request, will use cheese that is made without rennet and pepsin.	Larger pizza chain outlets and other smaller outlets
Beef and poultry	Animals must be slaughtered using the halal method.	Purchase halal beef. Consider vegetarian substitutes.	Halal beef is available in some supermarkets or can be ordered. Veggie substitutes are available in all supermarkets.
Pork or pork by products	Muslims don't eat pork. Some food is made with pork by products.	No pork or pork by-products are acceptable.	
Gelatin-based desserts and candies	Jell-O, Skittles, Wine Gums, Starbursts, gummi bears, gums, gumdrops, marshmallows, and similar desserts and candies contain gelatin, an animal by-product.	Choose other candies and desserts	Supermarkets

Consideration for Staff

Regarding staff, activities such as staff social held at places such as bars or pubs may not be considered to be appropriate and may exclude some staff. For some Muslims, it is not only the consumption of alcohol that is considered to be contrary to their beliefs, it is also receiving it as a gift or going to places such as bars/pubs where it is the main emphasis of what is served.

Male/Female Interactions

Beliefs and Practices

After puberty, many Muslims do not allow any kind of casual touching between unrelated people of the opposite sex. This does not mean that Muslim boys or girls do not have friends or cannot work with students of the opposite sex. Some students though, may feel more comfortable working with members of the same sex (which they may or may not express).

School Accommodation

It would be best to allow the individual to be the one to determine his or her degree of comfort with gender-related issues/interactions. For some students and their families, shaking hands, touching, or any other close physical contact between members of the opposite sex should be avoided. Consider accommodations when doing activities where students may want to avoid such contact. For example, if doing an activity where students have to hold hands, asking students to hold a shared piece of cloth to connect them together (instead of physically holding hands directly) would be appropriate.

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. Teachers should take such considerations into account when grouping students in order to promote a learning environment that is comfortable and inclusive of all and ask student what they are comfortable with.

Similar accommodations may need to be taken into consideration for staff members.

Islamic Dress

Beliefs and Practices

Islam prescribes that both men and women 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 modest dress is required once a student reaches puberty, many Muslim parents/guardians seek to instill modest habits in their children from an early age. Many young girls may not wear an outwardly Islamic dress, but their attire will tend to be loose fitting and their bodies fully covered.

Modesty in clothing is reflected by women who choose to wear hijab (head covering) or an abaya/jilab/burqah (outer dress), and/or niqab (face veil).

Hijab

The hijab is commonly referred to as a “veil” or head cover, which characterizes the appearance of many Muslim women. It should be noted that variations of Muslim dress (including the hijab) are manifestations of the interactions between religion and culture.

Niqab

The Niqab is worn by some Muslim women in public, covering all of the face apart from the eyes.

Kufi

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

School Accommodation

Although modest dress is required once a student reaches puberty, many Muslim parents/guardians seek to instill modest habits in their children from an early age. Students who wear different forms of Muslim dress may be subject to social pressure; for example, 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 different forms of Muslim dress that seek to uphold the Islamic principle of modesty. The student body should be aware of the consequences of harassing students because of their religious dress. Schools need to be aware that there may be peer pressure amongst Muslim students to dress in a certain way.

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 modest dress code and male/female interaction. It is important to preserve and maintain the importance of Muslim dress requirements in physical education.

School Accommodation

Schools should ensure that Muslim parents/guardians know and understand the Physical Education curriculum so they can come to an informed decision about co-educational activities. They should also work with parents/students to address acceptable attire for gym, swimming, and spectator sports so that it is both safe and meets their needs. Muslim families should also understand alternatives to compulsory high school credits.

Showers and Change Rooms

Many Muslims will not undress or shower in front of members of the same or opposite sex. 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

Males may wear a track suit or jogging pants or long shorts with a T-shirt.

Females may wear jogging pants and long sleeved baggy T-shirt or top. Some females may also wear a head covering.

Swimming

Western swimsuits for women are generally not deemed to be acceptable. A combination of jogging suit pants/spandex leggings with leotard or T-shirt, plus a swimming cap, may be acceptable. Swimsuits that are less revealing 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.

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 questions 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 (including over night trips)

Beliefs and Practices

Many Muslim parents allow 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. A space should be made available for students to do their prayer at the appropriate time.

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 and equally appropriate, alternative programming if a dance happens during the school day.

Music

Beliefs and Practices

Music is not in itself forbidden in Islam. There is a wide array of views/interpretations about Music amongst Muslims. Songs and lyrics cannot conflict with Islamic teachings and morals.

School Accommodation

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 may not allow for dance education for some students. Co-ed dancing may create discomfort amongst some students and their families. Some Muslim parents/guardians may request an exemption.

School Accommodation

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

Visual Arts

Beliefs and Practices

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 a focus of study.

(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)

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.
- **Apareigrah:** 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 Vandana) for about 30 minutes and the one done in the evening or night, Pratikramam 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 Daslakshan 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 tolerance and ensure that students are not bullied, teased, or harassed due to the spirit of the 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) 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 Hashanah.

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 practice fasting for part of Yom Kippur. Observant staff and students will not attend school on this day.

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 commemorates 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 Jewish 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.

Calendar of Jewish Holidays

Please refer to Section 4

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.

The following are Kosher symbols:



Animals

Kosher is any mammal with split hoofs that chews its cud and has to be prepared by a kosher butcher. Food will indicate on the packaging if it is kosher with any of these symbols. Pork is not kosher.

Fish/Seafood

Fish that have fins and scales are kosher. Catfish and seafood such as lobster, shrimp, crab, squid, and Amphibians (e.g., frogs, turtles) are 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. When in doubt as to the acceptability of a product or to determine if it is kosher, please call 416-635-9550 for guidance. 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 super- markets 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, gummi bears, gums, gum-drops, marshmallows, or similar desserts and candies that 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 supported 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 9.

(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 I st. 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, YRDSB)

SIKHISM

The founder of the Sikh religion was Guru Nanak, born in 1469. He preached a message of love 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 Amritsar, 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, Kachera.

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. Boys wear a handkerchief called a patka until they are old enough to be able to wear a turban. 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, approximately six to seven inches long) 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.

Kachera

Kachera (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)

ZOROASTRIANISM

Zoroastrianism was founded by Prophet Zarathustra who most scholars believe lived and preached 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 (The Lord Wise) as the supreme being.

The Prophet Zarathustra emphasizes the 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 the Amesha Spentas (Bounteous Immortals) who are personifications of the attributes and qualities of Ahura Mazda and form the ethical structure of the religion.

The religion instills respect for the 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 are the concepts of free will and choice. Each adherent of the faith is enjoined to think with Vohu Manah (the Good Mind), endowed by the creator; and conduct his or her life upholding Truth, Devotion and Righteousness as embodied in the concept of Asha (Good Order/Harmony). This can help bring Divine Rule and prosperity, and peace in the corporeal world.

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 Zoroastrian unties and reties the girdle (kusti) while reciting the appropriate prayers. 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 or Navroze, the Zoroastrian New Year, starts March 21 of the year (Fasli calendar). The same by Shenshai reckoning is in the month of August. The latter, however, does not have a leap year day calculation, thus causing the date to vary.

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

(Prepared in consultation with the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario)

SECTION 4:

HOLY DAYS BY FAITH

Anglican	51	Jain Society of Toronto	56
Antiochian Orthodox Christian	51	Jehovah's Witnesses	56
Apostolic Church	51	Judaism	57
Armenian Church in Canada	51	Lutheran	57
Associated Gospel	51	Macedonian Orthodox	58
Bahá'í	51	Mennonite	58
Baptist	51	Methodist Churches	58
Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox	51	Missionary Church	58
Buddhism:	52	Native Peoples	58
Catholic:	52	New Dawn Moravian Church	58
Christadelphian	53	Pentecostal	58
Christian and Missionary Alliance	53	Presbyterian	58
Christian Assembly of Taiwan	53	Quakers	58
Christian Churches	53	Reform Church of Canada	58
Christ of Latter Day Saints	53	Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints	58
Christian Reformed Church of North America	53	Romanian Orthodox	58
Church of Scientology	53	Russian Orthodox Church of America	59
Church of the Nazarene	53	Salvation Army	59
Church of United Brethren of Christ	53	Serbian Orthodox Slava- Patron Saint Day	59
Egyptian (Coptic) Orthodox	53	Seventh-day Adventist	59
Ethiopian Orthodox	53	Sikh	59
Evangelical Baptist	53	Spiritualist Church of Canada	59
Evangelical Fellowship	53	Ukrainian Orthodox	60
Evangelical Lutheran	53	Unitarian	60
Greek Orthodox	54	United Church	60
Hindu	54	Wesleyan	60
Humanist Church, Canadian Humanist Association	54	Wicca	60
Islam:	55-56	Worldwide Church of God	60
		Zoroastrian	60

HOLY DAYS BY FAITH

This list of religious holy days by faith 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 communities. It is provided for information only. While the names of the observances will remain the same, the dates for solar and other calendars will change from year to year. Therefore specific dates are not provided below. Schools are reminded to follow collective agreements for the granting of requests for leave from members of staff.

York Region District School Board [Holidays & Observances Calendar](#)

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith
Anglican	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Antiochian Orthodox Christian	Good Friday Easter Sunday Pentecost Christmas
Apostolic Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Armenian Church in Canada	Christmas Good Friday Easter (Note: Remaining religious observances follow Gregorian Calendar.)
Associated Gospel	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Bahá'í (Dates are the 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 holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith
Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox	Christmas Epiphany Annunciation Good Friday Easter Ascension Dormition
Buddhism (Hinayana)	Lunar 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
Buddhism (Mayahana)	Lunar New Year Buddha's Enlightenment (Mahayana) Buddha's Birthday (Wesak) (Mahayana) Buddha's Birthday (Therevadin) (Note: In the Western world, festivals are generally celebrated on the Sunday nearest the actual date.)

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith	
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.)	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 Good Friday Easter (Resurrection) Ascension Pentecost Sts. Peter and Paul Dormition Christmas (Nativity)
Christadelphian	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Christian and Missionary Alliance	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Christian Assembly of Taiwan	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Christian Churches (includes Disciples of Christ and Christian Church)	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Christ of Latter Day Saints	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Christian Reformed Church of North America	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Church of Scientology	Birthday of Founder, L. Ron Hubbard	
Church of the Nazarene	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Church of United Brethren of Christ	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith
Egyptian (Coptic) Orthodox	Christmas Baptism of Christ Good Friday Easter St. Mark's Feast (Patron Saint) Pentecost Coptic New Year
Ethiopian Orthodox	Ethiopian Christmas Epiphany Feast of Cana of Galilee Good Friday Easter Ethiopian New Year Founding of the True Cross
Evangelical Baptist	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Evangelical Fellowship	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Evangelical Lutheran	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Greek Orthodox (Note: Dates given Gregorian Calendar; some members may choose Julian Calendar.)	Epiphany Day Annunciation Orthodox Good Friday Orthodox Easter Ascension Day Pentecost Dormition Holy Cross Day Christmas

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith
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.)	Putruda Ekadashi Lohri (Punjab) Makara Sankranti and Thai Pongal Vasanta Panchami or Saraswati Puja (North India) Mahashivaratri (appearance of Bagavan Shiva) Ram Navmi Vaisahki (Tamil New Year) Guru Purnima Raksha Bandhan (North India) Sri Krishna Jayanti Janmasthami Vinayaka Chaturthi for Lord Ganesha Durga Puja (Maha Ashtami) Vijaya Dashmi/ Dassehra Karva Chauth Diwali/Kali Puja Holi
Humanist Church, Canadian Humanist Association	None
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. Therefore they are different every year.)

Calendar of Islamic Holy Days

For additional approximate dates for the selected Holy Days, please refer to the Interfaith calendar at: www.interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm.

Dates are Approximate	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
First day of Ramadan	July 9	June 28	June 18	June 6	May 27	May 16	May 6
Eid-ul-Fitr	Aug 8	July 29	July 18	July 6	June 25	June 15	June 5
Eid-ul-Adha	Oct 15	Sept 23	Sept 24	Sept 12	Sept 1	Aug 22	Aug 12
Ashura	Nov 13	Oct 23	Oct 23	Oct 11	Oct 1	Sept 20	Sept 10

Note: Between 2014-2016, Ramadan begins to fall during June. This will impact exam schedules, prom, graduation and graduation trips.

Source: *Figh Council of North America*

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith	
<p>Islam (Ahmadiyya Movement)</p> <p>Every Friday, 12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – congregational prayers</p>	<p>Jum'at-ul-Wida Eid-ul-Fitr Eid-ul-Adha Next Day of the Pilgrimage Friday of the Jalsa Salana Convention weekend (subject to change each year – depending on Ramadan dates)</p>	
<p>Islam (Dawoodi Bohora)</p>	<p>Eid-ul-Fitr Day of Hajj Eid-ul-Adha First of Muharram Ashura Milad-un-Nabi</p>	<p>Meraj-un-nabi Nisf Sha'ban First of Ramadan Lailat-ul-Qadr Jum'at-ul-Wida</p>
<p>Islam (Shi'a)</p> <p>Every Friday, 12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – congregational prayers</p>	<p>Laital-ul-Qadr Jum'at-ul-Wida Eid-ul-Fitr Day of Hajj Eid-ul-Adha</p>	<p>Eid-e-Ghadir Navroz Ashura Milad-un-Nabi Milad Imam Zaman</p>
<p>Islam (Sunni)</p> <p>Every Friday, 12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – congregational prayers</p>	<p>Eid-ul-Adha Eid-ul-Fitr Milad-un Nabi</p>	
<p>Islam (Shi'a Ismaili)</p> <p>Every Friday, 7:45 p.m. – congregational prayers</p>	<p>Eid-e-Navroz (March 21st) Eid-ul-Adha Eid-e-Milad un-Nabi Imamat Laital-ul-Qadr</p>	<p>Eid-ul-Fitr Eid-e-Ghadir Salgirah Yawm-e-Ali Meraj-un-nabi</p>
<p>Jain Society of Toronto</p>	<p>Mahavira Jayanti Akshaya Tiritiya 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</p>	<p>Memorial of Christ's death (follows the Jewish Calendar)</p> <p>(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>	

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith
Judaism (Conservative) (Note: Sabbath starts Friday sundown. All holy days start sundown the night preceding the holiday.)	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)
Judaism (Orthodox)	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
Judaism (Reform) (Note: Sabbath starts Friday sundown. All holy days start sundown the night preceding the holiday.)	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

Five -Year Calendar of Jewish Holidays

	5773 2012-2013	5774 2013-2014	5775 2014-2015	5776 2015-2016	5777 2016-2017
Rosh Hashanah	Sept. 17 - 18	Sept. 5 - 6	Sept. 25 - 26	Sept. 14 -15	October 3 - 4
Yom Kippur	Sept. 26	Sept. 14	October 4	Sept. 23	October 12
Sukkot	October 1 - 7	Sept. 19 - 25	October 9 - 15	Sept. 29 - Oct. 4	October 17 - 23
Shemini Atzeret	October 8	Sept. 26	October 16	Oct. 5	October 24
Simchat Torah	October 9	Sept. 27	October 17	October 6	October 25
Passover	Tues., Mar. 26 Wed., Mar. 27 Mon., Apr. 1 Tues., Apr. 2	April 15 April 16 April 21 April 22	April 4 April 5 April 10 April 11	April 23 April 24 April 29 April 30	April 11 April 12 April 17 April 18
Shavuot	Wed., May 15 Thurs., May 16	June 4 June 5	May 24 May 25	June 12 June 13	May 31 June 1

Please Note: All holidays begin at sundown of the previous day.

Lutheran	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
----------	--

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith
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 holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Methodist Churches	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Missionary Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Native Peoples	National Day of Solidarity for Native Peoples (Note: Each band may have unique spiritual observances which are not religious holy days, but that may require accommodation.)
New Dawn Moravian Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Pentecostal	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Presbyterian	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Quakers	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Reform Church of Canada	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith	
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 holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Serbian Orthodox Slava	Christmas Eve Christmas Serbian New Year Epiphany St. Sava Good Friday Easter Sunday (Pascha) Easter Monday Pentecost	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
Seventh-day Adventist	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.	
Sikh	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	
Spiritualist Church of Canada	Information not available at time of publication	

Denomination	Holy Days by Faith
Ukrainian Orthodox	Christmas New Year Feast of Epiphany Good Friday Easter Monday
Unitarian	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
United Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Wesleyan	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays. However, depending on the congregation, some members observe Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and All Saints' Day, but would not likely require a full day off.
Wicca (Note: Evening observances commence at sundown. Solstice observances commence at sunrise. Dates are the same every year.)	Imbolc Spring (Vernal) Equinox Beltain (May Eve and May Day) Summer Solstice Lamas Autumnal Equinox Samhain Yuel (Winter Solstice)
Worldwide Church of God	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
Zoroastrian (Note: Dates will change, as Zoroastrians follow a 365-day calendar without leap year day. F: Fasli – seasonal S: Shehshahi – Royal (Prepared in consultation with the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario)	Jashan-e-Sadeh (F) Jamshdi Naurooz (New Year) (F and S) Birthday of Prophet Zarathustra (F) Farvardigan (F) Prophet Zarathustra Death Anniversary (S) Naurooz (S) Farvardigan (S) Mehergan (F) Asho Zarathost's Death Anniversay (F)