



Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances



A GUIDELINE

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Chair



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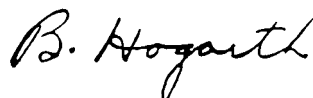
Director's Message

Religion is the cornerstone of life for many families in York Region. Customs, traditions and calendars from all different faiths need to be taken into consideration when planning board and school events.

I am very pleased with the advances our Board has made towards increasing faith awareness and sensitivity to the multitude of religious and spiritual traditions represented in our community.

I am certain that this guide, together with Procedure NPI 66.0 and Standing Memo S:10 on significant faith days, will serve as an invaluable reference in helping you to recognize and show respect for the importance of religious faith in our daily lives.

Bill Hogarth



Director of Education

Acknowledgement

This document is produced under authorization of the Toronto District School Board. Changes to the original document are the responsibility of the York Region District School Board.

We would like to acknowledge the work of all those from the Toronto District School Board who assisted with the development of the original document.

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This document has been reviewed for equity.

*Christian system is used for dates in this document

“Religious pluralism poses a challenge 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)



MISSION

We unite in our purpose to inspire and prepare learners for life in our changing world community.

VISION

We are the faces of public education. We understand our gifts and challenges. We are motivated by our dreams and act towards their fulfillment. We respect and celebrate our differences. We invite and value the spirit of community, creativity, and personal growth. We support each other. We have joy in who we are and who we are becoming.

VALUES

- We recognize and celebrate excellence, and the heart-felt efforts and contributions of our community.
- We strive for equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in all our programs, practices, facilities, and people.
- We value dedication and commitment.
- We value and will respond in an appropriate manner to the voices, ideas, and understanding of all our community members.
- We believe it is the right and responsibility of everyone to ensure a safe nurturing community.
- We embrace the spirit of innovation that acts to realize opportunities to transform our vision into reality.
- We are all responsible for our words and actions.

General Guidelines & Procedures for Religious Accommodation

A. Introduction

The York Region District School Board values the uniqueness and diversity of its students, staff and community, and understands that people from diverse faith communities need to work and study in environments that are safe and respectful.

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; it requires constant integration and evaluation of new knowledge and new approaches. Ultimately, the Board believes that the process of accommodation and partnership with members of its community will help to build an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

While this document establishes guidelines and procedures for religious accommodation in the York Region District School Board, 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 the religious accommodation guidelines and procedures do not compromise their rights and privileges.

In addition to the guidelines and procedures for religious accommodation in York Region District School Board schools and properties, this document also provides:

1. the legislative and policy context for religious accommodation; and
2. appendices that briefly describe some of the religions of the staff and student body of the York Region District School Board, noting the practices and observances that may need accommodation. The descriptions have been developed in consultation with Faith Group Representatives from The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

While these guidelines¹ and procedures² recommend courses of action and expectations for those who work in, or are associated with, the York Region District School Board, in the long term, the best strategies for achieving an inclusive learning and working environment is a proactive education system. It is essential that the curriculum, teaching methods, and management practices of the York Region District School Board 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.

Respect for faith diversity is a shared responsibility. While the Board 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 the students and the community to help the schools by highlighting and providing understanding of the needs of the many religious communities that share the resources of York Region schools.

¹ A Guideline is a recommended course of action consistent with the Board's Mission, Values and policies.

² A Procedure is a prescribed course of action emanating from board policy that must be taken in a given situation consistent with the Board's Mission, Values, and policies.



The rights and privileges of those who have no religious affiliation are not compromised by this guideline.



Respect for faith diversity is a shared responsibility.





The Board will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation.



The duty to accommodate is not required where it would cause an undue hardship.

B. Legislative and Policy Context

All school boards exist within a broader context of law and public policy that protect and defend human rights. At the York Region District School Board, a number of policy statements have been developed that both reinforce federal and provincial legislation, and help 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 York Region District School Board recognizes, and is committed to, the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion through its Human Rights Policy, the Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Policy, the Safe Schools Policy and Curriculum Documents.

B.1 Accommodation Based on Request

The York Region District School Board 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 Board will balance its decision to accommodate based on 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 the accommodation on the Board's ability to fulfill its duties under Board policies and the Education Act.

B.2 Unresolved Requests

Despite the Board's commitment to accommodate, an individual may feel that discrimination based on religion has occurred. The Board will, through its Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Policies and the Racial and Ethnocultural Harassment Procedure, take reasonable steps to address the unresolved issues raised by the affected person.

C. Definitions

Accommodation

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)

The duty to accommodate then, is an obligation that arises 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.



It is not the school's responsibility to monitor or enforce a child's compliance with a religious obligation.



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 their 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)

D. Areas of Accommodation

For many students and staff in York Region schools, there are a number of areas where the practice of their religion will result in a request for accommodation on the part of the school and/or the Board. These areas may include the following:

- observation of major religious holy days and celebrations
- school opening or closing exercises
- prayer
- dietary requirements
- fasting
- religious attire
- modesty requirements in physical education
- 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 faith accommodation. It is the role of the administrators and teachers to ensure fairness and respect for the diverse religious beliefs and practices of students and staff in the school system. However, school administrators and staff should not be placed in the position of monitoring a child’s compliance with a religious obligation, and enforcing such practices e.g. performing daily prayers or wearing a head covering is not the responsibility of the school.

Religious accommodation in the YRDSB will be granted in the context of respect for the Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Policy, the Human Rights and Safe Schools Policies, and the Board’s Mission, Vision and Values.

E. General Guidelines and Procedures for Religious Accommodation

The following are general guidelines and procedures to be followed when considering accommodation for religious purposes. These general statements do not name specific religions, but simply refer to common areas of concern.

E.1. 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 wishing to observe holy days.

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. The following procedures should be followed:

Staff

The person requesting the leave should advise the administration at the beginning of the school year. If September notice 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. For additional information please refer to Procedure NP166.0.

Students

Students are required to present written notice from their parents/ guardians, specifying the religious holy days on 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, such as tests, assignments or examinations, takes the 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.

(Refer to Procedure NP 166.0/memo S10 for additional information.)

In the case of an absence for religious holy day reasons, major tests or exams should be rescheduled for the student.

A list of major religious holy days is provided in Appendix 2.



Procedure NP166.0

Title: Significant Faith Days/ Memorandum S:10
Section: ADMINISTRATION
Date: June 26, 2002

GENERAL

The Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Policy 260 expresses the York Region District School Board's adherence to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code and Policy Memorandum #119 of The Ontario Ministry of Education.

In accordance with Policy 260, The Director has issued Standing Memo S:10. This Memo indicates an effort to provide clear guidelines for the observance of significant faith days by all schools and work sites of the York Region District School Board.

The Significant Faith Days listed in this procedure and in Memo S:10 **are not intended to be used in ascertaining the religious holy day entitlement of Board employees. For any questions on employee entitlement please refer to the Collective Agreement and/or contact the Labour Relations Coordinator.**

SIGNIFICANT FAITH DAYS

The days listed below (for specific dates please see Memo S:10, issued twice a year around January and April) are some faith holidays of particular significance to members of the major faith communities in our Board. We are committed to affirm and value equally the faith diversity in our schools and worksites; therefore, events such as conferences, meetings, workshops, other professional events, co-curricular activities, and exams/tests **will not be scheduled on these significant faith days:**

Baha'i	Ridvan
Buddhist	Lunar New Year/Chinese
Christian (Western)	Christmas Good Friday
(Eastern)	Christmas Holy Friday
Hindu	Diwali
Jewish	Rosh Hashanah (2days) Yom Kippur Passover/Pesah (first day)
Muslim	Eid-ul-Fitr Eid-ul-Adha
Sikh	Baisakhi

In addition to these days, Memo S:10 also lists other dates where staff are encouraged to take reasonable steps to accommodate students and staff members. Please refer to Memo S:10 for these dates.

GUIDELINE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

From time to time Administrators will receive requests for a religious holy day accommodation at their sites from students, community and/or employees. These requests may be discussed with the Race Relations Coordinator. Note that requests for leaves for religious holy day observation should be discussed with the Superintendent of Education in consultation with the Labour Relations Coordinator.

All Managers and Administrators shall bring to the attention of all staff, prior to the beginning of the school year, Memo S:10 and discuss its implications to the particular workplace.



In preparing the school year/work year calendar for their sites, Administrators and Managers are expected to refer to Memo S:10 and not allow meetings, conferences, workshops, professional development, examinations, tests, photo days and any other special events to be scheduled on any of the first set of days listed on Memo S:10.

Managers and Administrators are encouraged to refer to **Accommodation of Religious Requirements Practices and Observances: A Guideline** for additional information, suggested guidelines, and procedures for religious accommodation.

It is recommended that school administrators refer to the Board's Holidays and Observances Calendar, and in consultation with the School Council, develop appropriate ways of celebrating significant faith days in keeping with an inclusive curriculum.

School Administrators shall notify their Superintendent of Education as part of the approval process should any proposed extended field trip conflict with the days listed in this procedure and in Memo S:10.

All staff members acting on behalf of/representing the Board on other organizations, which in partnership with the Board are planning events or activities that involve our students and/or staff, have the responsibility to bring this Procedure and Memo S:10 to the attention of these organizations.

The Board and its staff will not participate in activities that contravene this procedure and Memo S:10.

For consultation or further clarification of questions, Administrators and Managers should call the Race Relations Coordinator.

UNRESOLVED REQUESTS

In the event that after consultation with the Race Relations Coordinator and/or the Labour Relations Coordinator, unresolved issues remain, then the matter will be turned over to the Superintendent of Employee Services and the Coordinating Superintendent.

If in the event that a student or employee maintains that his or her rights under The Board's Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Policy have been compromised, then a complaint may be lodged as per the Board's Racial and Ethnocultural Harassment Procedure. (See Procedure # 260.)

In addition to these dates, the Board advocates the recognition of "Days of Significance" as outlined in its publication, Holidays and Observances, throughout the school year and recommends that individual schools, in consultation with their school councils, develop appropriate ways of celebrating such significant days in keeping with an inclusive curriculum.



*Adults
presence during
prayer should be
for supervision
purposes only.*

E2. Opening and Closing Exercises

Procedures

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

Opening and Closing Exercises, and exemption from them, are established for 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) This section applies with respect to opening and closing exercises in public elementary and public secondary schools.
 - 2) Opening or closing exercises may include the singing of “God Save the Queen” and may also include the following types of reading 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.”

E3. Prayer

Guidelines

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 requesting the accommodation. Adult presence should be for supervision purposes only. Some accommodation for late school arrival or early school leaving may be necessary. For some religions, the time for prayer changes with the seasons.



E4. Dietary Requirements

Guidelines

Schools and workplaces should be attentive to the dietary restrictions of the various religious groups. This includes attending to issues related to the menus provided by the catering firms, 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.

E5. Fasting

Guidelines

Schools and workplaces should accommodate with respect to 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 from other classes where dehydration could be an issue, e.g., sports.

E6. Religious Attire

Guidelines

Schools should accommodate students with regard to religious attire. Religious attire is not cultural dress; it is a requirement of religious observation.

Religious attire that should be appropriately accommodated in school includes, but is not limited to:

- hairstyles
- yarmulkes (skullcaps), turbans, Rastafari headdress
- head covers
- crucifixes, Stars of David, etc.
- items of ceremonial dress

- In schools where uniforms are worn, administrators may ask the students to wear religious attire in the same colour as the uniforms (e.g., the head scarf for Muslim girls); however, there may be religious requirements of colour that cannot be modified.
- Harassment about religious attire is one of the most common types of harassment; school staff should be sensitive to it and be proactive in setting a climate of understanding.
- There are religious communities that require specific items of ceremonial dress which may be perceived as contravening Board policies, for example, the use of the Kirpan by Khalsa Sikh students. Refer to Appendix I, page 44 for the Kirpan Accommodation Guidelines.



Religious accommodation is within Board policies.



E7. Modesty Requirements for Dress for Physical Education

Guidelines

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

E8. Participation in Daily Activities and Curriculum

Guidelines

When accommodation is requested related to the contents of a curriculum in which there is a demonstrated conflict with a religious requirement, the school should have an informed discussion with parents/guardians and students.

The school should make it clear during the discussion that its role is to protect students and staff from harassment and discrimination that arises because of the practices of their religion that set them apart in some way and that may conflict with school routines and activities. Therefore, if curriculum directly conflicts with these practices, the school can consider accommodation. It cannot however, accommodate religious values and beliefs that conflict with Board policies.

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.

The Ministry of Education recommends substitutions when there are exemptions requested related to specific curriculum. (OSS, Grades 9-12, Program and Diploma Requirements 1999, 3.2)

In general, these Guidelines & Procedures recommend an informed, common-sense approach to questions of religion and curriculum. There will be questions that can be solved by an open discussion between the teacher, the student and the parents.

F. Limitations to Religious Accommodation

Religious accommodation in the York Region District School Board is 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 behaviour in its schools which may put public safety, health, or the human rights and freedoms of others at risk. As well, the Board will limit practices or behaviour in its schools that is in violation of other Board policies.

Appendix 1

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 to provide guidance to schools regarding religious accommodation requests. The descriptions outline aspects of the religion that may require accommodation on the part of the York Region District School Board.

These descriptions are intended for use by those not familiar with the religion. The descriptions cover those practices and observances of the religion (including those followed by more orthodox members) that may lead adherents to ask for accommodation from the school board. Therefore, **these are not full explanations of the religion**, but provide sufficient information for Board personnel to use when considering a request for accommodation.

Individuals in all religions make personal decisions about the practice of their faith. For some there is no need for accommodation from the Board to be able to freely practice their religion. For others, there is. As well, religious practice varies somewhat within some religions, and there are varying levels of orthodoxy. Therefore, **the descriptions that follow do not necessarily describe the beliefs and practices of all those who follow the religion under discussion**. The Board has been guided by the Faith Groups in developing these descriptions.

A large number of communities were initially contacted for this project. **Only those whose practices and observances may require accommodation have been included**. The list is not exhaustive. For information about other religious communities, 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, 789 Don Mills Road, Suite 608, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1T5, telephone: (416) 422-1490, e-mail: omcsrc@omc.on.ca Web site: www.omc.on.ca

The role of the York Region District School Board 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.

Staff should also consult and refer to the Board's Holidays and Observances Calendar, Procedure NP166.0 and standing memo S:10.



BAHÁ'Í

Introduction

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 religions, 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.

Religious Accommodation for Bahá'ís Prayer & 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 available.

Observations of Bahá'í Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices

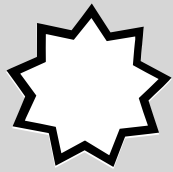
There are nine Holy Days throughout the year on which a Bahá'í should abstain from school or work.

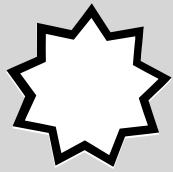
Ridván	April 21, April 29, & May 2
Declaration of the Báb	May 23
Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh	May 29
Martyrdom of the Báb	July 9
Birth of the Báb	October 20
Birth of Bahá'u'lláh	November 12
Naw-Rúz (New Year)	March 21

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 or major tests, Bahá'í students need to be accommodated.





Other Significant Holy Days (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 medication is 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 upon all those who reach the age of 15. Persons may be exempt from fasting for health or medical reasons.



School Accommodation

Students and staff should be allowed to gather in an area apart from the cafeteria during lunch breaks. Students may ask to be excused from strenuous exercise during the fast.



This information was developed in consultation with The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Toronto.



BUDDHISM

The Religion

Buddhism was founded by Lord Shakyamani Buddha, 539 B.C.

Buddhism is essentially a monastic religion. However, Lord Buddha also taught spiritual practices for lay people to follow.

All paths of Buddhism embrace the basic teachings of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha known as the Four Noble Truths:

1. **Dukkha:** Ordinary existence is a state of suffering
2. **The Arising of Dukkha:** Cause of Suffering
3. **The Cessation of Dukkha:** End of Suffering
4. **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: Wisdom: Right Understanding and Right Intention. Ethical Discipline: Right Speech, Right Action, Right Means of Livelihood. Mental Discipline: Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. There are 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 recommended 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 the occasion of 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

The Religion

Christianity is the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who lived in first-century Palestine. It is the largest religion in the world, with approximately one and a half billion followers. Members fall into three major traditions: Roman Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox. Although a wide variety of structures of church organization and forms of worship exist, all Christians confess faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who came into the world to bring together God and humanity. Please refer to Appendix 2 for a list of Christian churches.

Christianity is a historical religion which has its roots in Judaism. By the term “historical”, Christians mean God acts in human history and through human beings. This activity of God is traced throughout history in such people as Abraham, Moses, and the prophets (such as Isaiah) and is most fully seen in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The sacred text for Christians is the Bible, consisting of the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament. The Bible traces the activity of God in human history from the beginning of time. Within the Bible are the four Gospels (meaning Good News) which tell the life and teachings of Jesus. Christians believe God speaks to them through the Bible.

The source of Christian teaching is found in the words and actions of Jesus Christ as found in the Gospels. Christians look to the teachings and actions of Jesus Christ as a pattern for their own lives. Baptism is the rite of initiation for new believers and one grows in the Christian life by studying the Bible, and by regularly gathering together with other Christians to praise God.

Jesus’ message can be summed up in the commandments to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself. The marks of a Christian are to show compassion for others and to work for justice and peace. The Salvation Army and World Vision are two of many organizations which embody these principles.

Beliefs

Christians believe in one God who is the creator of all things and who desires a loving relationship with all people. People have the God-given freedom to choose to break that loving relationship and this is what Christians mean by the word “sin”. Christians believe that God sent His only Son, Jesus, to bring together God and humanity through his death on the cross and his resurrection. Belief in Jesus as Saviour means that sins are forgiven and one can enter into a new relationship with God. Through belief in a living Lord, Christians believe that eternal life with God awaits them after death.

Christian belief has been defined through the historical Apostle’s and Nicene Creeds. It includes the belief in Incarnation, that is, that “God became flesh and dwelt among us” in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Also included is the belief in a triune God consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God’s Spirit existing and operating in all creation. The Atonement, in which Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world, and the Resurrection are all common beliefs.

Prayer and Worship

Worship in Christianity varies from quiet meditation to liturgical prayer.

The major holy days of the Christian year are: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Ascension.

School Accommodation

There may be times during the year where church attendance conflicts with school schedules. Staff should be aware of the diversity within Christianity.

Please refer to Appendix 2 for additional information.



HINDUISM (HINDU DHARMA)

The Religion

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 originated 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 have evolved. This has resulted in the appearance of additional scriptural texts such as the Upanishads, Puranas, Ramayana, and the Bhagavad Gita.

Hinduism can be considered as a monotheistic religion, where the monotheistic concept of God is considered as not one God, but only God. The Ultimate Reality is called Brahman. Hindus believe that the unmanifest Brahman has an apparent manifestation as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. They comprise the Hindu Trinity, where Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu is the Preserver, and Shiva is the Dissolver. Brahman 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 Brahman, and not a substitute for the supreme impersonal Brahman.

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. Fire offerings (Hawan) 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. For these followers, the secular nature of the public school system may present some difficulties. 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 days of significance will vary from year to year because dates are calculated on the lunar and solar astronomical alignments.

1. 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.

2. Other Significant Holy Days

- Janam Ashtami (Birth of Lord Krishna)
- Ram Navan-Li (Birth of Lord Rama)
- Maha Shivaratri (Appearance of Lord 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, students/staff will not eat or drink through the day. Allow for a separate area (e.g., 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 or hot dog 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. Meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products are not allowed in these diets. Some Hindus are lacto-ovo (milk-egg) vegetarians.

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 that the same spoons and serving utensils are not used to serve both kinds of food.

Food and snacks which have been 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/hot dog 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 ornhee (scarf). These may be regularly worn head covers, or worn only during special days of significance.

School Accommodation

If Hindu students request accommodation for head cover, see Religious Attire in General Guidelines page 11.

Curriculum Concerns

Ontario Curriculum: Health and Physical Education's "Healthy Living" Strand.

Beliefs and Practices

Privacy and modesty are important tenets of Hinduism.

School Accommodation

There could be the following requests for accommodation:

- Gym classes: separate classes for males and females. Girls-only swim programs. Some Brahmin Hindu boys would prefer taking a shower individually in order to maintain privacy and modesty.
- Some parents may request exemptions from sections of Healthy Active Living Education related to human sexuality.

This material was developed in consultation with Pandit Suraj Persad, Faith Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

ISLAM

The Religion

In Arabic, Islam means peace, purity, obedience, total submission and commitment to the one and only God, and to His laws. Islam, therefore, describes an attribute—the attribute of submission to the will of God.

A Muslim is anyone who has this attribute of “Islam” i.e., anyone who submits to the will of Almighty God. Subsequently, Islam was not founded by anyone. “Muhammadanism” is a misnomer of Islam and offends its very spirit. Muslims are not Muhammadans. They do not worship Muhammad. They worship Almighty God. The word “Allah” is the proper name of God in Arabic.

Muhammad (upon Whom be God’s peace and blessings) was the name of the Prophet through whom the religion of Islam was revealed. The Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in 571 A.D. The Prophet died in the year 633.

The practices of Islam are called the Five Pillars. They are:

- there is only one God and Muhammed is his prophet
- fasting during the month of Ramadan
- charity
- pilgrimage (hajj)
- daily prayers

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual*)

Religious Accommodation for Islam

Daily Prayer

Beliefs and Practices

Prayer in Islam is required and must be performed at specific times which change throughout the year, depending on the time of sunrise and sunset. Before prayer, Muslims are required to wash 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 pray in separate areas within the same room. Women do not pray during menstruation.

The Timing of Prayer and Holy Day Times

Prayer times will vary according to the changing time of sunrise and sunset. Holy days are governed by the lunar calendar, and may move by as much as several months from year to year.

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 can use all or part of their lunchtime for prayers. During Eastern Standard Time (November to April), 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 and/or tests, class outings, and overnight outings.

Prayer takes an average of about 5–10 minutes. 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, up to 10 minutes may be required for washing. A private washroom would be most appropriate.





Prayer Timetable

Muslims pray five times a day:

- 1) at dawn – fajr
- 2) at noon – duhr/zuhr
- 3) at afternoon – asr
- 4) at sunset – maghrib
- 5) at night – isha

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

Muslim students and staff will usually have to pray during school hours for the noon prayer, since the period allotted for that prayer will fall during school hours.

Example:

Date	Noon Prayer	Afternoon Prayer
Nov. 1	12:01 p.m.	3:25 p.m.

On November 1, Muslims have to perform noon prayer between 12:01 p.m. and 3:25 p.m. Time for afternoon prayer begins at 3:25 p.m. and ends at sunset.

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.

This timetable should help schools assist students and staff when they request prayer accommodation for noon and afternoon prayer.

Example:

Date	September Prayer Noon – p.m.	October Prayer Noon – p.m.	November Prayer Noon – p.m.	December Prayer Noon – p.m.	January Prayer Noon – p.m.	February Prayer 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	12:30 - 3:33	12:31 - 3:12
23	1:10 - 5:24	1:02 - 4:38	12:04 - 3:03	12:17 - 3:02	12:30 - 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	



Date	March	April	May	June	July	August
	Prayer Noon – p.m.	Prayer Noon – p.m.	Prayer Noon – p.m.	Prayer Noon – p.m.	Prayer Noon – p.m.	Prayer 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 - 6:22
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	12:04 - 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	1:19 - 6:04
27	12:23 - 4:46	12:15 - 5:10	1: 15 - 6:30	1:21 - 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

Friday Congregational Prayer

Beliefs and Practices

Friday is the Muslim weekly holy day. Congregational prayer on Fridays is required after puberty. This afternoon service consists of a sermon and prayer. The entire service can take 15-45 minutes. The service is congregational, and its performance in a mosque is preferred. The scheduled period of time for Friday Congregational Prayer is consistent throughout the year, but may vary from mosque to mosque.

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 should be allowed a maximum of one hour.



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 and gatherings with family and friends.

School Accommodation

Students/staff are to be excused from attendance from school for these holy days:

Eid-ul-Fitr	1 day off (Some families follow the tradition of celebrating for 3 days),
Eid-ul-Adha	1 day off (Some families follow the tradition of celebrating for 4 days),
Ashura	1 day off (Shia) (not included in Memo S:10)

Scheduling of all school and school-related activities should take Islamic holy days into account. In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams or major tests, Muslim students should be accommodated.

Pilgrimage (Haji)

Beliefs and Practices

Haji is the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is compulsory for every Muslim who can afford it and is able to go.

School Accommodation

Students, whose families are travelling to Mecca, should be accommodated. Consideration should also be given to accommodating staff.

Ramadan

Fasting During Ramadan

Beliefs and Practices

The month of Ramadan lasts for 29 or 30 days, depending on the lunar calendar. During Ramadan, 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 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.

Dietary Restrictions

Beliefs and Practices

Muslims are careful about the food they consume and how it is prepared. Muslim dietary law prohibits consumption of mind altering drugs, alcohol, pork, and any pork by-product or derivatives. Standards, called Halal, regulate the slaughter and preparation of meat and poultry.

Some objectionable food items include: pepperoni, pork hot dogs, bacon, gelatin in Jello, candies, and desserts; animal shortening in breads, puddings, crackers, cookies; rennet and pepsin in cheese, etc. 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 “pizza day,” “hot dog day,” or at annual school fairs.

For more information on accommodating dietary restrictions, see below:

Food From	Concern	Alternative	Available
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 and available on order
Pizza	Some pizza outlets use cheese that is made with rennet and pepsin.	Pizza Pizza and Pizza Hut use cheese that is made without rennet and pepsin.	Pizza Pizza, Pizza Hut, and other outlets
Hot Dogs, Meat, Poultry	Meat and poultry must be slaughtered using the Halal method.	Purchase halal or kosher meat. Consider veggie hot dogs and other vegetarian substitutes.	Halal or kosher meat 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, wine gums, Starbursts, gummi bears, gumdrops, and similar desserts and candies contain gelatin, an animal by-product.	Choose other candies and desserts	Supermarkets

Male-Female Interactions

Beliefs and Practices

Gender relations in the Islamic community are predicated upon social distance between members of the opposite sex. After puberty, Islam does not allow any kind of casual touching or privacy between unrelated people of the opposite sex.

School Accommodation

It is important to be aware that some students and their families will observe this tradition.

It would be best to be reactive, as opposed to proactive, and allow the individual in question to be the one to determine his/her degree of comfort with gender-related issues.



For some students and their families, shaking hands, touching or any other close physical contact between members of the opposite sex should be avoided (shaking hands with students of the opposite sex in graduation ceremonies or when greeting parents). When meeting with students or parents of the opposite sex in one-to-one meetings, 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.

Islamic Dress

Beliefs and Practices

Islam prescribes that both men and women behave and 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 physical characteristics. Although the Islamic dress code is required once a student reaches puberty, many Muslim parents seek to instill modest habits in their children from a much earlier age.

Female and Male Dress

Hijab

The hijab is commonly referred to as a “veil” or head cover, which characterizes the appearance of many Muslim women. It also refers more generally to the loose-fitting, non-revealing clothes worn by Muslim women. The wearing of hijab is primarily an Islamic requirement and within the Islamic context, is seen as a symbol of identity and modesty. Another way to understand the importance of the hijab is by recognizing that there are different cultural constructions of the concept of “nakedness.” For Muslim women and girls, the amount of their body that they feel comfortable showing in public is governed by a different sense of what it means to be “naked” (i.e., showing even their arms or legs would make them feel naked).

Niqab

Some women extend the concept of nakedness to include covering their faces (Niqab) Kufi.

Males may also choose to wear a head covering (Kufi).

School Accommodation

Although the Islamic dress code is required once a student reaches puberty, many Muslim parents seek to instill modest habits in their children from a much earlier age. Students who wear Islamic dress may be subject to social pressure; 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 Islamic dress. The student body should be aware of the consequences of harassing students because of their religious dress.

It is important to understand that while some non-Muslims may consider Islamic dress to be restrictive, Muslim women who wear it see it as a way to be noted for their character and intellect, rather than their bodies.

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 with regard to physical education centres around the Islamic dress code and male/female interaction. It is important to preserve and maintain the importance of Islamic dress requirements in physical education.

Males: The area from the navel to the knee must be covered. The covering should be loose so as not to define the contours of the body, and should be of an opaque material so that the body cannot be seen through it.

Females: The whole body, except the face and hands (and feet according to some scholars), should be covered with clothing that is loose and opaque, as described above.

School Accommodation

Schools should ensure that Muslim parents know and understand the physical education curriculum so that they can come to an informed decision about co-educational activities, acceptable attire for gym or swimming, and spectator sports. Muslim families should also understand what the alternatives are to compulsory high school credits.

Showers and Change Rooms

Muslims are not permitted to undress or shower in front of members of the same sex, nor those of the opposite sex, so communal change rooms and showers are a source of much consternation and distress for many Muslim students and their families. Facilities should be made available for those students who require privacy.

Males: Males should be allowed to wear shorts or appropriate covering in showers if there is no access to private showers.

Females: Females should be allowed to wear appropriate covering, if there is no access to private showers.

Gym/Sports/Swimming

Male Dress: Track suit or jogging pants with a T-shirt; if shorts are worn they should be of the Bermuda type, reaching the knees.

Female Dress: Loose jogging pants and long sleeved baggy T-shirt or top, as well as head covering.

Swimming: Western swimsuits are not acceptable. A combination of jogging suit pants/spandex leggings with leotard or T-shirt, plus a swimming cap, may be acceptable.

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.

Ontario Curriculum” Health and Physical Education’s “Active Living” Strand

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.

School Accommodation

Discussing some aspects of sexuality in co-ed classrooms may preclude students from participating in the discussions or asking questions, due to modesty. The explicit nature of pictures and videos sometimes used in the teaching of health and sexuality units may be considered inappropriate by some parents, especially if introduced in elementary classes. It is advisable to inform parents of the content of the curriculum prior to teaching the units.

Where possible, classes should be gender-segregated to discuss sensitive issues. Exemptions may need to be provided with alternative programming if requested by parents.

Trips and Camping Out

Beliefs and Practices

Islam allows 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

When considering whether their child may participate in these events, allow parents reasonable time to review detailed information about the purpose and nature of the activities. For overnight and camping excursions, the provision of separate sleeping facilities for males and females should be communicated and explained to parents.

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 area of dancing and music when necessary.

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 alternative activities if a dance happens during the school day.

Music

Beliefs and Practices

Music is not in itself forbidden; it all depends on the type of music, its use, its instruments, and the persons involved.

The use of string and wind instruments is prohibited. The only sanctioned musical instruments are certain percussion instruments, specifically the baseless drum, which are usually limited to weddings and religious celebrations. Songs and lyrics cannot conflict with Islamic teachings and morals.





School Accommodation

There is a wide spectrum of views related to music. There are some Muslims who find music incompatible with their Islamic orientation. These parents may wish their children to be exempted from any participation in the music curriculum.

Music: Avoid teaching units that are solely music-based. Singing, clapping, and snapping fingers are Islamically viable alternatives which would allow students to demonstrate rhythm and the performing and creating requirements of the curriculum.

Singing: 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 do not allow for dance education for students. Some Muslim parents would like to see their children exempted.

School Accommodation

Requests from Muslim parents to withdraw their children from dance activities should be accommodated and an agreement reached regarding viable alternatives.

Visual Arts

Beliefs and Practices

Certain traditions within Islam do not allow for the depiction, portrayal, or representation of human beings and animals. This is seen as replicating the creation of God, and therefore an unacceptable Islamic practice. However, there is a long and renowned artistic tradition within Islam. Islamic art is characterized by calligraphy, 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 substituted.

Special attention should be paid to assessment and placement practices that require students to draw human and animal pictures. Muslim children may object to, or have limited or no experience in drawing human and animal pictures.

This information was developed in consultation with Muslim community organizations and the Islamic Council of Imams – Canada.

JAINISM

The 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 an ancient religion.

Jainism is a system of thought and a way of life.

The basic beliefs of Jainism rest upon four “pillars”:

1. **Ahimsa:** Non-violence, ranging from an act of simple kindness to a comprehensive outlook of universal fraternity.
2. **Anekantavada:** Principle of relativity, since truth has many aspects, and all viewpoints are tenable.
3. **Aparigraha:** Non-acquisition, or setting limits to one’s desires so that one does not deny others.
4. **Karma:** Deeds or actions, seen as something which accumulates according to one’s thoughts and activities, and which affects one’s future lives.

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual*)

Religious Observances & Practices

Dietary Requirements

Beliefs and Practices

The Jain motto is “Live & 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 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 accepted. Animal by-products are not used. During the holy days of Paryushan and Daslakshana, 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 to be taken to keep vegetarian and non-vegetarian food separate and not to use the same utensils for both. A Jain child/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 of the 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 & Celebrations

Tirthankar Mahavir’s Birthday or Mahavir Janma Kalyanak

Celebrated as an Ahinsa (Non-violence) Day. On this day, the community gathers at the temple, and the life and teachings of Mahavir are told in the form of worship or pooja.

Paryushan Parva and Daslakshana Parva

Each holy day consists of eight days of meditation-penance, when special confession-type services are done. The last day is observed as the Samvantsari, the Forgiveness Day. Most Jains fast during these days.

Mahavir Nirvan (Salvation) Kalyanak

Celebrated on the same day as the Diwali (the Festival of Lights).

Gnan Panchami

The Day of Knowledge, observed with pooja (ritualistic offering) to pay homage to Saraswati Devi, the deity of knowledge and learning.

Maun-agiyaras, the Day of Silence.

School Accommodation

Students/staff to be excused from attendance from school for holy days.

Scheduling

of all school and school-related activities should take holy days into account.

In the case of a conflict with assignments, exams, or 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 for students using Tilak or Chandlo after temple is recommended.

This information was developed in consultation with, Mr. Prakash Mody, Jain Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

The Religion

Charles Taze Russell, along with a small group of Bible students, founded the Jehovah's Witnesses in the late nineteenth century. They were first known as "International Bible Students". In 1879, they began publishing the Bible journal, now called The Watchtower. In 1931, they adopted the name "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 Bible principles gives purpose to life, promotes strong family ties and develops productive and honest citizens.

Religious Accommodation for Jehovah's Witnesses

Observations of Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices

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).

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

School Accommodation

Students/staff may ask to be excused from attendance to school/Board evening meetings on the day of the Lord's Evening Meal celebration.

Celebrations, Birthdays, Holidays, Functions, and Social Events

Beliefs and Practice

Jehovah's Witnesses celebrate special events such as weddings, anniversaries, engagements, and/or baby showers. Witness families find enjoyment in spontaneous giving throughout the whole year as expressions of love and affection. They encourage generosity, gift giving and other expressions of appreciation.

Holidays: Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate religious or semi-religious holidays that have non-Christian religious origins or those that promote patriotic exercises.

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

School Accommodation

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, or Halloween. Provide alternative activities if exemptions are requested, and celebrations happen during class time.

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. Teachers are encouraged to be careful if choosing curriculum that uses birthday celebrations as a focus when there are Jehovah's Witnesses in class, to ensure full participation in activities. Consultation with Witness parents in this area is advised.





Opening or Closing Exercises

Beliefs and Practices

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. They also do not participate in any activities promoting nationalism. While others stand for the national anthem, Jehovah's Witnesses remain seated and in the case of students, if they are already standing when the anthem is played, they will not necessarily sit down. In situations where a group is expected to stand and sing, Witnesses may choose to stand out of respect, but not sing.

School Accommodation

Accommodate as per request. Follow Guidelines and Procedures, E2, pages 10.

Health Issues

Beliefs and Practice

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 health-care field.

Mature Minors

Each baptized Witness carries an Advance Medical Directive that provides emergency contact instructions. His/her conscientious decision, outlined in this document, should be respected.

Minors

Younger children carry an Identity Card which similarly provides parental contact information and directives for emergency situations.

School Accommodation

In the event of serious injury during school trips, etc., school staff should endeavour to contact the parents/guardians and provide emergency medical personnel with the medical directive instructions.

Curriculum Concerns

Music/Art/Drama

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

School Accommodation

Their right to not participate should be respected.

Ontario Curriculum: Health & Physical Education's "Healthy Living" Strand

Beliefs and Practices

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that teaching children about sexuality is the responsibility of parents. Some parents may request that their children be excused from human sexuality classes.

School Accommodation

For accommodation, follow Guidelines and Procedures, item E8, page 12. This material was developed in consultation with Public Affairs Department, Watch Tower Society of Canada.

JUDAISM

The Religion

Jews believe that God chose Abraham to introduce the concept of Monotheism, and thus established a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their families, on an individual basis 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*)

Religious Accommodation for Judaism

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 mid-day 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 less 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 a family member. During this time the mourner emerges into a new frame of mind, talks about his/her loss, and accepts comfort from friends. The mourner will not be in school, and will welcome visitors to the Shiva house.

For eleven 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 10 persons and is part of the daily prayer obligation.

School Accommodation

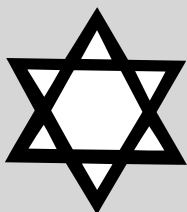
Students and staff who are sitting Shiva should be accommodated. Schools should accommodate students and staff before and after school time so that they may attend morning and afternoon services, especially during November, December, and January, when there are less hours of daylight.

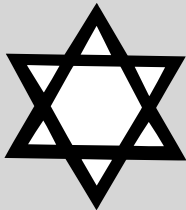
Preparation for Holy Days and the Sabbath

Beliefs and Practices

Jewish holy days start the previous evening at dusk, and end after dark.

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.

Jewish Holy Days That Require Accommodation

The Jewish holy days follow the lunar calendar.

Rosh Hashana (The Jewish New Year)

Rosh Hashana (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 Hashana.

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.

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.

Holy Days That May 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 Mt. 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, Shmini Atzeret, Simchat Torah, Shavuot, and Tisha B'Av.

Other Fast Days

There are a number of “other” 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)

Jewish Holy Days That Don't Require Accommodation

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.

Dietary Requirements

Beliefs and Practices

The Hebrew word “kosher” means that a given food is permitted and acceptable.

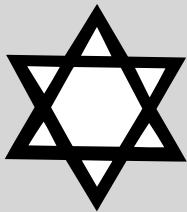
All fresh fruits and vegetables are kosher. The Jewish dietary regulations begin when dealing with foods that derive from animals, fish, or fowl.

Animals: Kosher is any mammal with split hoofs that chews its cud. Pigs are not kosher.

Fish/seafood: Fish that have fins and scales are kosher. Catfish and seafood such as lobster, shrimp, crab, squid are not kosher.

Amphibian animals: (frogs, turtles) are also not kosher.

Fowl: Chicken, goose, and duck are kosher. Fowl specifically listed in the Bible are not kosher.



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 cautions.

Food	Concern	Alternative	Available From
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 one of these symbols on the product label: COR MK U.	Supermarkets
Cookies	A small number of cookies of are made with animal shortening (lard).		Supermarkets
Cheese	Most cheese is made with rennet and pepsin, which are animal by-products.	In the absence of Rabbinic certification, the product is not kosher.	Some supermarkets and available by order.
Pizza	Some pizza outlets use cheese that is made with rennet and pepsin.		Kosher outlets
Hot dogs, meat, poultry	Meat and poultry must be slaughtered in a certain way.	Purchase kosher meat. Consider veggie hot dogs & other vegetarian substitutes.	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, meat to pizza.	
Gelatin-based desserts and candies	Jello, wine gums, Starbursts, gummi bears, gumdrops, and similar desserts and candies contain gelatin, an animal by-product.	Choose other candies and desserts.	Supermarkets



Gender Relations

Beliefs and Practices

Orthodox 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 be reactive, as opposed to proactive, and allow the individual in question to be the one to determine their 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.

Other Curriculum Concerns

Regarding concerns about other areas of the curriculum, see Guidelines and Procedures, E8, page 12.

This material was developed in consultation with Rabbi Ronald Weiss, Faith Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

RASTAFARI

The Religion

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 Nazirite of Biblical times. The religion's beliefs are based on the Bible and in 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 is Haile Sellassie 1st. 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 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 between 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 Afrocentric 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.

Religious Accommodation for Rastafari

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. They do not eat any form of meat, fish, or eggs, nor their by-products. Those Rastafari who do eat meat do not eat pork (scavengers of the earth) or derivatives. Fish is I-tal food, but lobster, crabs, and shrimp (scavengers of the sea) are not allowed. The fish allowed is small (no more than 12 inches). Tea and herbal drinks are permitted. Coffee, milk, soft drinks, and liquor are not allowed and considered unnatural.

Rastafari require a supportive and spiritually comfortable environment for eating.

School Accommodation

Many Rastafari parents 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. The colours 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” Bible: 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. A head covering may include a cloth wrap, knitted tams or shawls, etc.

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

Beliefs and Practices

Blood: 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 classroom cooking activities during their menstrual period.

This information was developed in consultation with Ras Ishaka Williams.

The Religion

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown from a small group of individuals from the New England States of the U.S., who carefully studied the Bible in the mid-1800's based on the teachings of William Miller, to a worldwide community of 11 million members. In 1860, at Battle Creek, Michigan, the Adventists chose the name Seventh-day Adventists and in 1863 formally organized a church body.

Adventists base their faith in God as revealed through Jesus Christ and as shown through the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit. They believe the Bible is the sole rule of faith and practice, and that it is the unequivocal word of God. Seventh-day Adventists observe the Sabbath on Saturday as Jesus observed the seventh-day Sabbath while on earth. They demonstrate their belief and commitment to their faith through baptism (being immersed in water), following the example of Jesus.

The writings of Ellen G. White, one of the Church's founders, are an aid to Bible interpretation. She also prescribed a dietary regimen of vegetarianism and abstinence from tobacco and alcohol.

(Source: *Multifaith Information Manual and Seventh-Day Adventist Web site: www.adventist.org*)

Religious Accommodation for Seventh-Day Adventists

Observation of the Sabbath

Beliefs and Practices

The Sabbath is a 24-hour unit of time that begins at sunset on Friday and concludes the following evening.

School Accommodation

Schools should accommodate Seventh-day Adventist students and staff in the scheduling of school requirements prior to and during the Sabbath, sunset Friday to Saturday. Weekend expectations should not include school activities on the Sabbath, e.g., work expectations or attending music festivals or camp.

Dietary Considerations

Seventh-day Adventists believe that a balanced vegetarian diet provides the healthiest lifestyle. Only fresh foods identified as "clean" in scriptures may be used.

School Accommodation

Teachers and cafeteria staff must be aware of food restrictions wherever and whenever food is served. Availability of vegetarian options are advisable in school cafeterias, elementary school snacks, breakfast or lunch programs, as well as on the occasion of overnight stays and school or Board events that involve a meal.

Curriculum Concerns

Halloween

Halloween is considered to be a pagan celebration, which in the past included rituals with some ties to chasing away evil spirits.

School Accommodation

Some Seventh-day Adventist parents may request that their children be exempted from any activities related to Halloween. If exemptions are requested, provision of curricular alternatives is recommended.

This material was developed in consultation with Giuseppe De Meo, Faith Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

SIKHISM

The Religion

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's (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.

Sikhism does not have priests; they were abolished by Guru Gobind Singh. Sikhs only have custodians of the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book). 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 of all faiths.

Religious Accommodation for Sikhs

Prayer and Worship

Beliefs and Practices

Sikhs worship three times a day—early in the morning and twice at night. The morning prayer takes about 50 minutes, has three segments, and is usually said just before dawn or breakfast. The evening prayer is said just before supper and takes about 20 minutes. The third prayer of the day takes about 5 minutes and is offered just before bedtime. Whenever possible, it is best to say the morning and evening prayers in congregation. The third prayer can be 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.

Observations of Holy Days

Beliefs and Practices

Sikhs meet in congregation for prayer and a common meal on the following holy days:
(Sikhs observe all of their holy days. However, in Canada most Sikhs will be absent from school or work on the following days)

Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh

Guru Gobind Singh Ji was the tenth 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. Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and last living Guru. After his death, Guruship was passed on to the eternal Guru, Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book.

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 Panth on this day. On this day, male Khalsa Sikhs are named Singh (lion), and female Khalsa Sikhs are named Kaur (princess). It is the most important holy day of the year for Sikhs.





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.

(Some Sikhs will be absent from school or work on the following days)



Maghi

Maghi commemorates the battle fought on behalf of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, in which 40 Sikhs, led by a woman 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, who sacrificed his life for religious expression. Guru Arjan Dev Ji built the Golden Temple at Amritsar and compiled the Adi Granth, the Sikh scriptures.

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 10 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 Divalhi.



Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji sacrificed his life for freedom of religious expression 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, or major tests, Sikh students should be accommodated.



Dress Requirements, Religious Attire

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. Sikh 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.



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 K's: **Kesh, Kangha, Kirpan, Kara, Kash.**

Sikhs wear the five K's 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 know-ledge of the faith. The family plays an important part in the decision and family members may be initiated at different ages.



1. **Kesh** (uncut hair) 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 cut their hair throughout their lives. Men's hair is always protected by a turban, women may also wear a turban. 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 Khalsa 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 for 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.

2. **Kangha** (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.

3. **Kirpan** (ceremonial small sword, approximately six to seven inches) is a symbol of courage, self-sacrifice, defense of the weak and righteousness. Wearing the kirpan is a requirement of being a Khalsa Sikh.

This ceremonial knife symbolizes each individual's duty towards 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.

GUIDELINE FOR KIRPAN 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 inches or less).
- 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 Kirpan could inadvertently cause physical harm to the wearer or to another individual in the school.

This Kirpan guideline was developed by the Toronto District School Board in consultation with Toronto Police and the Ontario Multifaith Council's Sikh representative and is endorsed by the York Region District School Board.



4. **Kara** (steel bracelet worn on 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

If there is a safety concern about the Kara, a similar procedure to that of the Kirpan should be followed:

5. **Kach** (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.

This information was developed in consultation with Harsharan Singh, Faith Representative from the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

Introduction

Christian Science dates to the 1860s in Massachusetts, USA, when Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) began to teach and practice successfully spiritual healing, based on her intensive study of the Bible and Jesus' healing ministry. In Rudimental Divine Science, she defined Christian Science as: "The law of God, the law of good, interpreting and demonstrating the divine Principle and rule of universal harmony." In 1875, she published the basic teachings of Christian Science in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In 1879, she founded the First Church of Christ, Scientist.

Since then, 60,000 testimonies of healing, experienced by adherents and others, have been published in the Church's periodicals. These have been of virtually every illness, many diagnosed as incurable or terminal. Christian Science also teaches the healing of moral problems and addictions.

"The following is a brief exposition of the important points, or religious tenets, of Christian Science:

1. As adherents of Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal Life.
2. We acknowledge and adore one supreme and infinite God. We acknowledge His Son, one Christ; the Holy Ghost or divine Comforter; and man in God's image and likeness.
3. We acknowledge God's forgiveness of sin in the destruction of sin and the spiritual understanding that casts out evil as unreal. But the belief in sin is punished so long as the belief lasts.
4. We acknowledge Jesus' atonement as the evidence of divine, efficacious Love, unfolding man's unity with God through Christ Jesus the Way-shower; and we acknowledge that man is saved through Christ, through Truth, Life, and Love as demonstrated by the Galilean Prophet in healing the sick and overcoming sin and death.
5. We acknowledge that the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal Life, even the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter.
6. And we solemnly promise to watch, and pray for that Mind to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus; to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; and to be merciful, just and pure."

Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, page 496

Religious Accommodation Needs

Health Care/Immunizations

Beliefs and Practices

While spiritual healing is central to the practise of Christian Science, adherents comply with all federal and provincial laws governing quarantine, the reporting of contagious disease, and mandated vaccinations. In addition, Christian Science parents recognize that teachers, and especially principals, must "give assiduous attention to the health and comfort of the pupils" [Education Act, s. 265(j)]. Within the framework of Canadian and Ontarian law, Christian Science parents make health care decisions regarding their children, with no intervention from the Church."





School Accommodation

Where religious accommodations provide for exemption from immunizations (such as does the Ontario Immunization of School Pupils Act), Christian Scientists typically exercise these options.

Parents or legal guardians should inform the principal, upon registration, if they choose care for their child that would differ from the care ordinarily provided. When this is done, if a Christian Science student becomes ill or incapacitated while at school or on a school supervised field trip, the teacher(s) responsible for the child will know what steps the parents wish to be taken.

Some Christian Science parents may request, as well, exemptions from classes in human sexuality, disease awareness, human biology, and other health-related courses. They may also request to have their children excused from school-sponsored medical-intervention programs.

This material was developed in consultation with Lyle Young, Christian Science Committee on Publication for Ontario, and representative of the Ontario Congregations of the Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science) on the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

Appendix 2

Religious Holy Days

This Calendar of Religious Holy Days 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.

In addition to the Board's Holidays and Observances calendar, schools and workplaces may wish to use this list 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, lunar and other calendars will change year to year.

Schools are reminded to follow collective agreements for the granting of requests for leave from members of staff.

ABORIGINAL & FIRST NATIONS

Aboriginal & First Nations

National Day of Solidarity for Aboriginal People (June 21)

Aboriginal & First Nations
Note: Each band may have unique spiritual observances which are not "Religious Holidays," but may require accommodation.

BAHÁ'Í

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 of the Festival of Ridvan
The Declaration of the Bab
The Ascension of Baha'u'llah
The Martyrdom of the Bab
The Birth of the Bab
The Birth of Baha'u'llah

BUDDHISM

Buddhism (Tibetan)

Tibetan's New Year
Day of Offering (First full moon day of Tibetan New Year)
The Buddha's Enlightenment (Saga Dawa)
His Holiness Dali Lama's Birthday
Chokor Korway Ducchen (1st Turning of the wheel of Dharma)

Buddhist (Tengye Ling Tibetan)

Tibetan's New Year (Losar)
Day of Miracles
Buddha's Birth (Wesak)
Buddha's Death (Parinivana)
Buddha's Enlightenment (Mahayana)
His Holiness the 14th Dali Lama's Birthday
Budda's Descent from Tushita Heaven



Buddhist (Hinayana)

Chinese 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 (Mahayana)
 Fall Ohigon
 Parinirvana
 Founder's Day
 Kathina (Theravada)
 Mert Shamp Day

Buddhist (Mahayana)

Note: In the Western world, festivals are generally celebrated on the Sunday nearest the actual date.

Chinese New Year Lunar New
 Buddha's Enlightenment (Mahayana)
 Buddha's Birthday (Wesak) (Mahayana)
 Buddha's Birthday (Therevadin)

CHRISTIANITY

Anglican

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

Antiochian Orthodox Christian

Good Friday
 Easter Sunday
 Pentecost
 Christmas

Apostolic Church In Canada

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing Statutory Holidays.

Armenian Church

Christmas
 Good Friday
 Easter
 Note: Remaining religious observances follow Gregorian/Western calendar.

Associated Gospel

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

Baptist

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.

Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox

Christmas
 Epiphany
 Annunciation
 Good Friday
 Easter
 Ascension
 Dormition

Catholic: Roman Catholic

No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.



Catholic: Polish	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Catholic: Ukrainian Catholic (The Ukrainian Catholic Church uses 2 calendars - Gregorian (new) and Julian (old) Ukrainian Catholic followers may follow either calendar. However, the accepted norm is that a person follow one calendar at one time, not both.	Christmas (Nativity) Epiphany (Theophany) Annunciation Good Friday Easter (Resurrection) Ascension Pentecost Sts. Peter & Paul Dormition
Christ of Latter Day Saints	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Christadelphian	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Christian and Missionary Alliance	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Christian Assembly Of Taiwan	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond statutory holidays.
Christian Reformed Church in North America	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays. Some members observe Ascension Day Eve services.
Church of Scientology (Date same every year)	Birthday of Founder, L. Ron Hubbard
Church of the Nazarene	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Church of United Brethren Or Christ	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Christian Churches (includes Disciples of Christ and Christian Church)	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
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, churches elect members to attend Fellowship Convention Day (first Wednesday in November) and Ontario Fellowship Day (first Tuesday in May) – members, if elected to attend, may request time off.
Evangelical Fellowship	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Evangelical Lutheran	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Greek Orthodox Note: Some follow Gregorian (Western) Calendar; some members may choose Julian (Eastern) Calendar.	Epiphany Day Annunciation Orthodox Good Friday Orthodox Easter Ascension Day (6th Thursday after Easter) Pentecost Dormition Holy Cross Day Christmas
Jehovah’s Witnesses Note: Members participate in the Annual District International Assembly (3-4 days) and two Annual Circuit Assemblies. Dates are scheduled locally; while not religious holidays, would require accommodation.	Memorial of Christ’s death (follows the Jewish Calendar- [Nisan 14th] April 17, 1992)
Lutheran	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Macedonian Orthodox	Christmas Day Good Friday Easter Sunday Easter Monday Pentecost Holy Trinity Theophany – Baptism of our Lord St. Clement of Oris-Patron Day
Mennonite	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Methodist (e.g., Free Methodist, Evangelical)	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays



Missionary Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays
New Dawn Moravian Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Pentecostal	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
People’s Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Presbyterian	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays. Holy days other than Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter celebrated on the nearest Sunday.
Quakers	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Reform Church of Canada	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Russian Orthodox Church of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christmas Epiphany Day 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.
Serbian Orthodox “Slava” –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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christmas Eve Christmas Serbian New Year Epiphany St. Sava Good Friday Easter Sunday (Pascha) Easter Monday Pentecost



Seventh-Day Adventists	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Spiritualist Church of Canada	Information not available at time of publication.
Ukrainian Orthodox	Christmas New Year Feast of Epiphany Good Friday Easter Monday
Unitarian	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
United Church	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
Wesleyan	No religious holidays requiring absence from work beyond existing statutory holidays.
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

HINDUISM

Hindu

Note: Specific dates may vary from year to year, based on the solar or lunar calendars. Dates can also vary, depending on the time differential between Canada and India.

- Putrada Ekadashi
- Lohri (Punjab)
- Makara Sankranti and Thai Pongal
- Vasanta Panchami or
- Saraswati Puja (N. India)
- Mahashivaratri (appearance of Bagavan Shiva)
- Rama Navami
- Vaisahki (Tamil New Year)
- Guru Purnima
- Raksha Bandham (N. India)
- Sri Krishna Jayanti Janmasthanami
- Vinayaka Chaturthi for Lord Ganesha
- Durga Puja (Mahastami)
- Vijaya Dasami/Dassehra
- Karva Chouth
- Diwali/Kali Puja



ISLAM

Note: Muslim holidays are based on Lunar Calendar, and observances may vary by a day, depending on the community.

<p>Islam: Ahmadiyya Movement</p> <p>Every Friday 12:15 – 2:00 -congregation prayers</p>	<p>Jum'at-ul-Wida (the last Friday of the month of Ramadan 1420 al-Hijri)</p> <p>Eid-ul-Fitr (one day at the end of the month of fasting – Ramadan)</p> <p>Eid-ul-Adha (Festival of Sacrifices)</p> <p>Next Day of the Pilgrimage – Hajj</p> <p>Jum'at-ul-Wida (the last Friday of the month of Ramadan 1421 al-Hijri)</p> <p>Eid-ul-Fitr (one day at the end of the month of fasting – Ramadan)</p>
<p>Islam: Dawoodi Bohora</p>	<p>Eid-ul-Fitr (1st day after Ramadan)</p> <p>Day of Hajj (Day at Arafat)</p> <p>Eid-ul-Adha</p> <p>First of Muharram (New Year)</p> <p>Ashura</p> <p>Mawlid-un-Nabi</p> <p>Mi'raj al-Naby</p> <p>Nisf Sha'ban</p> <p>First of Ramadan</p> <p>Lailat-ul-Qadr</p> <p>Jum'at-ul-Wida (Akhar Juma)</p>
<p>Islam: Shia Every Friday 12:15 – 2:00 -congregation prayers</p>	<p>Laylat-ul-Qadr</p> <p>Jum'at-ul-Wida</p> <p>Eid-ul-Fitr (1st day after Ramadan)</p> <p>Day of Hajj (Day at Arafat)</p> <p>Eid-ul-Adha</p> <p>Eid-e-Ghadir</p> <p>First of Muharram (New Year's Day)</p> <p>Ashura</p> <p>Mawlid-un-Nabi</p> <p>Mawlid Iman Zaman</p>
<p>Islam: Sunni Every Friday 12:15 – 2:00 -congregation prayers</p>	<p>Eid-ul-Fitr (one day-at the end of Ramadan)</p> <p>Eid-ul-Adha (one day and accomodation for those taking the pilgrimage to Mecca)</p> <p>Eid-ul-Fitr (one day-at the end of Ramadan)</p>
<p>Islam: Ismaili Every Friday 12:15 – 2:00 -congregation prayers</p>	<p>Eid-e-Navroz</p> <p>Eid-ul-Adha</p> <p>Eid-e-Milad</p> <p>Imamat-Birth of Ima (July 11, unless it falls within month of mourning, then may vary)</p> <p>Laylat-ul-Qadr</p> <p>Eid-ul-Fitr (1st after Ramadan)</p>



JAINISM

Jain Society of Toronto

Mahavira Jayanti
Akshaya Tritiya
Paryushana Parve (Shvetambara Sect-8 days)
Samvatsari & Daslakshana (Digambara sect)
Ananta Chaturdasi
Ksamavani (Forgiveness Day)
Mahavira Nirvana-Diwali
Gnan Panchmi (Day of Knowledge)
Lokashah Jayanti
Maun Ajiyaras

JUDAISM

Judaism: Conservative

Note: Sabbath starts
Friday sundown.
All holy days start
sundown the night
preceding the holiday.

Pesach/Passover(1st, 2nd, 7th, & 8th Days)
Shavuot/Pentecost (2 days)
Rosh Hashanah/New Year (2 days)
Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (1 day)
Succot (Tabernacles)

Judaism: Orthodox

Pesach/Passover(1st, 2nd, 7th, & 8th Days)
Shavuot/Pentecost (2 days)
Rosh Hashanah/New Year (2 days)
Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement(1 day)
Succot
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, & 8th Days)
Rosh Hashanah/New Year (2 days)
Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement (1 day)
Succot
Simchat Torah
Hanukkah

SIKHISM

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



WICCA	
<p>Wicca Note: Evening observances commence at sundown Solstice observances commence at sunrise. Dates are the same every year.</p>	<p>Imbolc Spring (Vernal) Equinox</p> <p>Beltain (May Eve & May Day) Summer Solstice</p> <p>Lamas Autumnal Equinox Samhain</p> <p>Yuel (Winter Solstice)</p>

ZOROASTRIAN	
<p>Zoroastrian Note: Dates will change as Zoroastrians follow a 365-day Calendar leap-year day. (F) Fasli-Seasonal (S) Shenshahi-Royal</p>	<p>Jashan-e-Sadeh (F) Jamshidi Norooz (New Year) (F&S) Birthday of Prophet Asho Zarthost's (F) Farvardegan (F) Asho Zarathost's Death Anniversary (S) Norooz (S) Farvardian (S) Mahergan (F) Asho Zarathost's Death Anniversary (F)</p>

This guide was revised by members of the Antiracism Action Team, chaired by Superintendent of Schools Vicki Bismilla and was edited by José Fernandes, Race Relations Coordinator. For further information and any corrections please call the Office of the Race Relations Coordinator at Ext.



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