

**THE PROTESTANT SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD  
OF THE TOWN OF PENETANGUISHENE**

**POLICY MANUAL**

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**POLICY TITLE:**

**SECTION/CODE:**

**Equity and Inclusive Education**

**School Operations D – 28**

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**APPROVAL DATE:**

**SUPERSEDES:**

**NUMBER OF PAGES:**

**REVIEW DATE:**

**May 10, 2021**

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**\*Upon request, this policy will be made available in large print. Please call (705) 549-6442**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

The Protestant Separate School Board of The Town of Penetanguishene (the “Board”) recognizes that all people are created equal, in the image of God, each with inimitable characteristics deserving of dignity (Genesis: 1:27). In accordance with the Church’s teachings, it is the policy of the Board to provide in all its operations an educational environment which supports and enables diversity within its community.

The Board recognizes that any form of social or cultural discrimination is incompatible with moral principles and is in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code. The Board recognizes that the school system gives pre-eminence to the tenets of the Protestantism, congruent with the protection afforded in the *Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)*, the *Constitution Act, 1982* and enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The Board and its staff are committed to the elimination of discrimination as outlined in Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and the Ontario Ministry of Education (the “Ministry”) Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, in a manner which is consistent with the exercise of the Board’s denominational rights under section 93 of the *Canadian Constitution*, and as recognized at section 19 of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

**AREAS OF FOCUS**

Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2009) “Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools” identify eight areas of focus for implementing Equity and Inclusive Education.

In accordance with the above policy documents, applicable legislation that outlines the denominational rights of the Protestant school system and with adherence to the Guiding Principles of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, and consistent with the OHRC, each area of focus will be introduced and anchored by a preamble and the Board’s mission and vision statements. This will serve to guide the actions of the Board and its school, in honouring its commitments to Equity and Inclusive Education policy development, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

**1. BOARD POLICIES/PROGRAMS/PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES**

Preamble:

The Board recognizes the importance of antiracism and anti-harassment policies in promoting and maintaining a Protestant educational and working environment which fosters racial and ethno-cultural understanding.

The Board will ensure that its four year policy review cycle will result in the alignment and integration of the requirements of Policy/Program No. 119 and the Strategy with all Board policies, programs, procedures, and practices. The perspectives of the entire diverse Protestant school community will be reflected in all areas of the teaching, learning and administrative culture.

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Every effort will be made to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that may limit access to and opportunity for effective employment procedures for individuals from diverse communities and under-represented peoples within the context of the denominational rights of the Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene.

**Board Mission Statement**

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene provides an educational environment that encourages all students to achieve their full potential spiritually, academically, physically and socially in preparation toward becoming a contributing member of society.

**Board Vision Statement**

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene inspires in students a life-long love of learning by supporting their development, potential, and sense of self-worth, while honouring their individuality.

**Action Items**

The Board will:

- 1.1 Establish the foundational framework that will inform their review and/or development and implementation of a comprehensive Equity and Inclusive Education policy that recognizes and eliminates biases related to race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, family status, religion and linguistic differences as well as socio-economic factors.
- 1.2 Review existing Equity and Inclusive Education policies and/or extend or develop such policies to fulfill the requirements of existing regulations, the Strategy, Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, and the Code, in accordance with the denominational rights afforded to the Protestant school system.
- 1.3 Ensure that principles of Equity and Inclusive Education permeate and are explicitly stated in all Board policies, programs, guidelines, operations, practices, and the Board improvement plan.
- 1.4 Ensure all future policies, guidelines and practices are drafted and implemented in accordance with the Board's Equity and Inclusive Education policy.
- 1.5 Collect information needed to monitor the effects of the implementation of the Equity and Inclusive Education policy by the Board.
- 1.6 Ensure all persons with disabilities are accommodated appropriately and in a manner consistent with the OHRC.
- 1.7 Provide training for school and system leaders to facilitate equitable recruitment and hiring to reflect Ontario's diverse society.

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1.8 Provide opportunities for the diverse school community, including students, staff, parents/guardians, trustees and community members, to provide active input into Board policies and improvement plans on an ongoing basis.

1.9 Investigate in a thorough and timely manner any claims of discrimination and/or racism and take appropriate action consistent with the principles of the Code.

Our School will:

1.10 Review existing school policies, for example, codes of conduct, to determine that they reflect the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education.

1.11 Extend, develop, and implement strategies to actively engage students, parents/guardians, families, and the wider community in the review, development, and implementation of initiatives to support and promote Equity and Inclusive Education.

1.12 Implement Board Equity and Inclusive Education policies, programs and Board/school improvement plans consistent with the OHRC and that reflect the needs of their diverse Protestant school community.

## **2. SHARED AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP**

Preamble

The Board subscribes to an informed leadership philosophy that inspires, empowers, and supports all stakeholders in our Protestant community to join together to implement institutional practices and behaviours that cultivate equity and inclusion.

The Board is committed to providing informed shared leadership to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps for students by identifying, addressing, and removing all barriers and forms of discrimination.

The Board recognizes the critical connection between student leadership and improved student achievement and will strive to include the student voice in all aspects of the implementation of Equity and Inclusive Education.

In accordance with the Ministry's Ontario Leadership Strategy, effective Board and school leaders will encourage and promote a collaborative approach to all dimensions of Equity and Inclusive Education, which ensures the participation of students, parents/guardians, unions, colleges and universities, service organizations and other community partners.

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Board Vision Statement

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Action Items

The Board will:

Develop a system plan to build and sustain Board and staff capacity in the areas of Equity and Inclusive Education in curriculum and instruction, human resources and governance.

- 2.1. Identify and appoint a contact person to liaise with the Ministry and other Boards to share challenges, promising practices and resources.
- 2.2. Provide extensive and ongoing education and training for students, administrators, teachers (including guidance counsellors), support staff and trustees in implementing Equity and Inclusive Education and leadership initiatives.
- 2.3. Establish selection criteria for leadership positions that prioritize demonstrated commitment, knowledge and skills related to Equity and Inclusive Education implementation and inclusive leadership, and consistent with proactive Code compliance.
- 2.4. Provide ongoing training for all staff that reflects comprehensive attention to the principles of human rights and their fundamental role in an equitable and inclusive environment.
- 2.5. Strive to ensure that members of communities that are underserved and /or marginalized are included in the shared leadership.

Our School will:

- 2.6. Establish a collaborative culture where the collective capabilities and voices of all stakeholders are used to develop and implement Equity and Inclusive Education goals.
- 2.7. Promote equity minded student leadership related to issues of social justice.
- 2.8. Participate in initiatives such as a Student Leadership Conference in Equity where students represent diverse voices and experiences.
- 2.9. Demonstrate leadership in setting the tone for the positive and proactive implementation of the Equity Strategy within the school.

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**3. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

Preamble

The Board recognizes that the effective review, development, implementation and monitoring of Equity and Inclusive Education policies and practices requires the involvement of all members of the entire Protestant school community. The Board further recognizes the importance of engaging specialized expertise in developing and implementing its Equity and Inclusive Education policy.

The Board will seek collaboration with and active engagement from students, parents/guardians, staff and other Protestant community partners to create and sustain a positive school climate reflective of Protestant values that supports student achievement.

The Board will identify, examine, and remove any barriers that exist, that are part of systemic discrimination under the Code, and that prevent full participatory school community relations.

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Action Items

The Board will:

- 3.1. Develop a database of information that establishes the diversity of communities based on self-identification.
- 3.2. Review and/or initiate tools, for example, school climate surveys, to determine stakeholders' views on school environment and act upon relevant next steps.
- 3.3. Take proactive steps to ensure that existing committees represent the diversity of the wider community.
- 3.4. Review and deepen existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education.

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- 3.5. Expand community efforts to foster new partnerships that engage a cross section of diverse students, parents/guardians, staff, community members and various community organizations, including business groups, to ensure inclusion.
- 3.6. Establish processes to identify and address systemic barriers that limit or prevent all sectors of the school community from benefiting from enhanced opportunities for Board representation and greater access to Board initiatives.
- 3.7. Identify under-represented communities and facilitate their participation and involvement in Board activities.
- 3.8. Gather and use the knowledge, skills, and experience of Board community partners to enrich the total educational and career experiences of staff, students, and volunteers.

Our School will:

- 3.9. Implement strategies to review existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community.
- 3.10. Invite and support representation of diverse groups on school committees.
- 3.11. Engage stakeholders in community forums to listen and address concerns and suggestions.
- 3.12. Reflect the approaches described above in their outreach to the broader community.

#### **4. INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES**

Preamble

When we consider inclusive curriculum and assessment practices, we need to consider both the “how” and the “what”. What we bring to students in terms of content is as important as the way it is delivered. We must consider both what is said and what is not said, as it is known that our students learn both the explicit and hidden curricula. Both in its content and methodology, inclusive curriculum seeks to recognize our commitment to Protestant values and our respect for all students, regardless of race and ethnicity, gender, place of origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background, social and economic status, sexual orientation, age, and ability/disability.

Effective evaluation includes researched best practices that truly reflect the current level of achievement of the student. Multiple opportunities for assessment allow for student learning and accuracy of assessment and instruction.

Students must be represented in the curriculum and heard in the assessment and evaluation. Students’ voice is fundamental in the planning for instruction and the accuracy of assessment.

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Action Items

The Board will:

- 4.1. Review student assessment and evaluation policies and practices to identify and address systemic bias that may exist in the way students' work is assessed and evaluated in order to reduce the achievement gap. The principles of such a review will be consistent with the OHRC.
- 4.2. Support the school's review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide Equity and Inclusive Education policies and practices specifically addressing areas of discrimination (e.g., race, gender, disability).

Our School will:

- 4.3. Review student assessment and evaluation policies and practices to identify and address systemic bias that may exist in the way students' work is assessed and evaluated; the principles of such a review will be consistent with the OHRC.
  - 4.3.1 Promote effective, current, research-based practice to ensure a collaborative approach to student assessment.
  - 4.3.2. Ensure that assessment and evaluation support growth and learning, with the belief that each and every student can achieve and be successful given the appropriate time and support.
  - 4.3.3. Provide education and training based on the belief that all students can learn and ensure that it is reflected in expectations of students' assessment and evaluation practices, counselling about available program options, and other counselling practices.
  - 4.3.4. Use a variety of assessment strategies and instruments to inform short- and long-term planning to reduce gaps in student achievement and improve student learning.
- 4.4. Support the school's review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide Equity and Inclusive Education policies and practices.

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- 4.4.1. Provide multiple opportunities for assessment (self, peer, teacher, student led conferencing and/or parent/student and teacher interviews).
- 4.4.2. Adjust instruction based on the results of formative assessment. Feedback to students must be specific, timely and promote further learning.
- 4.4.3. Ensure collaborative learning structures recognizing the variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.
- 4.4.4. Ensure consistent monitoring of the growth of students who are on Individual Education Plans and/or are English Language Learners to ensure that the specific needs of students are addressed through the accuracy of programming based on best practices in assessment; all needed accommodations and modifications must be in place to assist the student in accessing the curriculum.
- 4.4.5. Ensure all students who have English language learning needs receive an education program that closely aligns with their specific needs and that ensures equity of access to the curriculum.
- 4.4.6. Ensure parents/guardians (and students where appropriate) are actively involved in identification and placement decisions, including those required by the Identification, Placement and Review Committee.
- 4.4.7. Ensure access and use of assistive technologies for students who require accommodations to support achievement and success.
- 4.4.8. Improve student learning and achievement through the use of differentiated product (e.g. an oral response for a reading comprehension task or a mind map in lieu of an essay or a dramatic performance that demonstrates the student's learning).
- 4.4.9. Engage students as active participants in their learning (e.g. students seeing and hearing themselves in the curriculum; gender specific teaching practices; culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy; research based practices in assessment and evaluation).
- 4.4.10. Review and reflect upon classroom practices and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with school-wide Equity and Inclusive Education policies.
- 4.4.11. Make certain that resources and instructional strategies are in accordance with Christian teachings and values; are in compliance with the provisions of the OHRC with respect to the prohibited grounds of discrimination; show people of different races, genders, and ages in non-stereotypical settings, occupations, and activities; explore the roles and contributions of all peoples in Canada, and the factors that shaped these roles; encourage open discussion of the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the OHRC (e.g., race, gender, disability) in society, the community, and the school.

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**5. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION**

Preamble

The Board provides a learning and working environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and Ministry Policy/Program Memorandum No. 108.

Within the framework of gospel values, traditions, and the Board's denominational rights, in recognition of this diversity, the Board will attempt to provide reasonable accommodation for students' and staffs' religious beliefs and practices, while also protecting its denominational rights.

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Board Vision Statement

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Implementation Strategy (Board):

- 5.1. Consult with a variety of individuals and groups who represent the religious diversity of the Board in the development and implementation of this policy.
- 5.2. Inform students and their parents/guardians and staff of their right to request accommodation for religious beliefs and practices.
- 5.3. Prepare a religious accommodation guideline (Appendix A) in keeping with the OHRC, and consistent with its denominational rights, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of creed, and other OHRC protected grounds, and provides a duty to accommodate.
- 5.4. Provide religious accommodation for students and staff, where reasonable and consistent with the OHRC.

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Implementation Strategy (School):

- 5.5. Revise /implement their religious accommodation practices to align with the Board's religious accommodation guideline.

**6. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT**

Preamble

The Board recognizes that a safe and welcoming environment is most conducive to learning. The Board will therefore seek to foster a Christ-centred, positive school climate, free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour. The Board acknowledges that a Christ-centered, positive school climate is one where all members of the school community feel safe, welcomed, and accepted.

The principles of Equity and Inclusive Education support positive student behaviour. The principles of equity and inclusion are consistent with Protestant doctrine and must be considered and applied in employing progressive disciplinary measures, particularly when it is necessary to take into account mitigating and other factors.

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The Board will:

- 6.1. Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents/guardians, and the community, so that diverse groups and the broader community have better Board-level representation and greater access to Board initiatives;
- 6.2. Put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely and that will also enable the Board to respond in a timely manner.
- 6.3. In an effort to alleviate the negative impact of suspensions and exclusions on students, proactive programs will be initiated or expanded to decrease the number of suspensions and expulsions.

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- 6.4. Create a climate in which excellence is continually strived for and respect for all permeates the environment.
  - 6.5. Communicate that administrators are expected to use progressive discipline (PPM 145) and professional discretion, and to understand the duty to accommodate students with disabilities.
- Our School will:
- 6.6. Ensure that codes of conduct are revised to address all forms of racism, discrimination, and harassment.
  - 6.7. Ensure the use of progressive discipline including peer mediation and restorative justice.
  - 6.8. Welcome, respect and validate the contributions of all students, parents/guardians, and other members of the school community.
  - 6.9. Ensure that every student is supported as outlined in Student Success strategies, Learning for All, Reach Every Student and other applicable legislation, and is inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.
  - 6.10. Ensure that the school code of conduct reflects the needs of the diverse Protestant community served by the school and are developed with the active consultation and involvement of students, staff, parents/guardians, and a representative cross-section of community members.
  - 6.11. Review or develop guidelines and procedures to address the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the OHRC as they may apply to students, staff, and others in the Protestant community.
  - 6.12. Ensure that the established Board procedure will enable students and staff to report incidents of harassment and discrimination safely and to have confidence that they will receive a timely and appropriate response (See Board Policy A-3a: Workplace Violence, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention).
  - 6.13. Ensure that all information about the new or revised procedures involving Equity and Inclusive Education is communicated to all students, staff, families, and others in the school community.

## **7. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

The Staff of the Board is its most important asset and is the vehicle by which equity is taught in the classroom and throughout the system. The Board, therefore, recognizes the importance of ongoing professional learning to create a foundation for Protestant values, cultural identity, human rights education and effective teaching practices.

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Professional learning increases the knowledge and skills that teachers bring to the craft and science of teaching, and, thus, engages the student with increasing complexity and precision teaching. Perpetual professional learning is the groundwork for positive changes in our schools. Professional learning must include knowledge creation and knowledge sharing (Earl and Katz, 2005) to ensure that all voices are represented. We recognize that in addition to essential knowledge embraced by the Protestant faith a continued quest towards honouring and appreciating the knowledge that exists within the diversity of the community.

Distributed, deep and sustained changes in practice and structures in school are key elements of professional learning and have impact on student learning, engagement and success in a knowledge society (Earl and Katz, 2005). Professional Learning works to engage all learners and strives for student success and includes the following:

- a) Changes in thinking and practices of teachers
- b) Collaborative inquiry at various levels within the school
- c) Pursuit of innovation (Katz, Earl and Jaafar, 2009)

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The Board will:

- 7.1. Support the school's review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide Equity and Inclusive Education policies and practices.
- 7.2. Allocate adequate resources to provide ongoing opportunities for students, administrators, teachers, support staff, and trustees to participate in Equity and Inclusive Education training and leadership initiatives.
- 7.3. Provide antiracism and antidiscrimination training that promotes respect and courtesy in all interactions, virtuous conduct, including training in prevention and early intervention strategies.
- 7.4. Ensure that training includes information on cross-cultural differences, and promotes a deeper understanding of exceptionalities and of how to mitigate discipline, in light of its effect on students with disabilities.

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- 7.5. Provide ongoing opportunities for students, administrators, teachers, support and Board staff, as well as trustees, to participate in Equity and Inclusive Education training and leadership initiatives.
  - 7.6. Ensure that the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education are modeled and incorporated in professional learning programs.
  - 7.7. Identify a Board Equity and Inclusive Education contact to liaise with the Ministry of Education and other Boards in order to share challenges, promising practices, and resources.
- Our School will:
- 7.8. Review classroom strategies and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with and reflect school-wide Equity and Inclusive Education policies.
  - 7.9. Promote collaborative teams that learn together through job embedded learning, implement their learnings and reflect together on best practices.
  - 7.10. Build staff capacity through ongoing needs based professional learning determined through data analysis and based on results.
  - 7.11. Encourage and support students in their efforts to promote social justice, equity, antiracism, and antidiscrimination in schools and classrooms.
  - 7.12. Develop opportunities and initiatives for students and staff to demonstrate advocacy and commitment to equity, providing timely and specific feedback that will further school-wide equitable practices.

## **8. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

### **Preamble**

The Board acknowledges and assumes the responsibility for its policies, actions, and decisions. In the pursuit of greater transparency and accountability, the Board, in respectful collaboration and communication with the whole Protestant school community, will report on its goals and progress in the areas of policy review, school improvement planning and the implementation of The Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP).

The Board is committed to assessing and monitoring its progress in implementing the MYSP and Equity Action Plan; to embedding the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education into all policies, programs, guidelines and practices; and to communicating these results to the community

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Board Mission Statement

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene provides an educational environment that encourages all students to achieve their full potential spiritually, academically, physically and socially in preparation toward becoming a contributing member of society.

Board Vision Statement

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene inspires in students a life-long love of learning by supporting their development, potential, and sense of self-worth, while honouring their individuality.

Action Items

The Board will:

- 8.1. Embed the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education into all Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices.
- 8.2. Through the school, actively communicate the Equity and Inclusive Education policy to students, teachers, parents/guardians, staff, school council, community partners, and volunteers post it on the Board's website.
- 8.3. Seek and use feedback to improve the Equity and Inclusive Education policy, in the spirit of continuous improvement.
- 8.4. Engage Board and school teams in school improvement planning with emphasis on using data to identify and remove barriers to student achievement, to raise awareness about discriminatory practices and to encourage conversations and collaborative actions about racism and other equity issues.
- 8.5. Establish processes to monitor progress and assess effectiveness of policies, programs, and procedures.
- 8.6. Report on the progress of implementation of the Equity Action Plan and its impact on student achievement using specific criteria.
- 8.7. Ensure the transparency of the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process by informing and supporting parents/guardians through this process (See the Board's annual Special Education Plan).

Our School will:

- 8.8. Report student achievement data annually to the Board and provide support at all levels to ensure the achievement and success of those students who are underserved in our system.

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- 8.9. Develop and communicate evidence-based school improvement plans that are aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan and the Equity Action Plan.
  
- 8.10. Review, establish, and employ self-reflection and self-assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of the school's Equity and Inclusive Education plans and procedures in order to identify next steps in a process of continuous improvement.

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**APPENDIX A – Religious Accommodation**

**PURPOSE:**

To ensure our mission, vision and values the PSSBP is committed to the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviours based on religion and will take all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodations within the legal rights afforded to the Protestant Separate School system. Such accommodations will be provided to staff, students and their families.

**REFERENCES:**

- PPM No. 119: Developing and Implementing EIE Policies in Ontario Schools (2013)
- PPM No 108: Opening or Closing Exercises in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (1989)
- R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 298: Operation of School-General s27-29 Religion in Schools
- Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)
- Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2009)
- Multi-Year Strategic Plan, PSSBP
- Mission, Vision, Values Statements, PSSBP
- Policy D-28 Equity and Inclusive Education

**GUIDELINES:**

**Introduction**

The PSSBP believes in the dignity of all people and their equality as children of God. The PSSBP recognizes the importance of freedom of religion and strives to recognize value and honour the many customs, traditions and beliefs that make up the PSSBP community.

Freedom of religion is an individual right and a collective responsibility. The PSSBP commits to work with the community it serves to foster an inclusive learning environment that promotes acceptance and protects individuals from discrimination and harassment on the basis of their religion.

In accordance with the teachings of the Protestant faith, it is the policy of the PSSBP to provide, in all its operations, an educational environment which promotes and supports diversity within its community as well as the equal attainment of life opportunities for all students, staff, parents/guardians and other members of that community.

**Legislative and Policy Context**

1. All school boards exist within a broader context of law and public policy that protect and defend human rights. At the PSSBP, a number of policy statements have been developed that reinforce both federal and provincial legislation, and also help ensure that the freedoms they set out are protected within the school system.

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2. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 15) guarantees freedom of religion. The Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) protects an individual's freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviours based on religion. Consistent with this legislation is The Education Act, its regulations and policies governing Equity and Inclusion in Schools:
  - PPM No 108, 'Opening or Closing Exercises in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools'
  - R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 298, 'Operation of School-General's 27-29, under the heading 'Religion in Schools'
  - PPM No. 119, 'Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools'
3. The PSSBP and its staff are committed to the elimination of discrimination as outlined in Federal and Provincial legislation in a manner which is consistent with the exercise of its denominational rights under section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and as recognized in section 19 of OHRC.
4. The PSSBP 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, equity and inclusive education policy, the safe and accepting schools policy and curriculum documents. All of these will be informed by, and interpreted in accordance with the principles of The OHRC.
5. This Policy reflects the PSSBP's fidelity to Canadian law protecting freedom of religion in accordance with the teachings of the Protestant faith.

**DEFINITIONS:**

***Accommodation***

- The OHRC's Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances defines 'accommodation' as a duty corresponding to the right to be free from discrimination.
- The OHRC 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 OHRC 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, OHRC, October 20, 1996, pg. 5)
- The duty to accommodate 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 OHRC. The duty to accommodate must be provided to the point of undue hardship. In determining whether there is undue hardship, section 24(2) of The OHRC provides that

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reference should be made to the cost of accommodation, outside sources of funding, if any, and health and safety requirements.

***Creed***

- Creed is interpreted by the OHRC's 1996 Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances as 'religious creed' or 'religion.' It is defined as a professed system and confession of faith, including both beliefs and observances of worship. The existence of religious beliefs and practices are both necessary and sufficient to the meaning of creed, if the beliefs and practices are sincerely held and/or observed.
- Creed does not include secular, moral, or ethical beliefs or political convictions. This policy does not extend to religions that incite hatred or violence against other individuals or groups, or to practices and observances that purport to have a religious basis, but which contravene international human rights standards or criminal law (Policy on Creed and the Accommodation of Religious Observances, OHRC, October 20, 1996, pg. 2).

***Undue Hardship***

- Accommodation will be provided to the point of undue hardship, as defined by the OHRC (for example in the Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate). A determination regarding undue hardship will be based on an assessment of costs, outside sources of funding, and health and safety. It will be based on objective evidence. For more information about the evidence needed to prove undue hardship, see (Human Rights at Work, Appendix E).
- A determination that an accommodation will create undue hardship carries with it significant liability for the PSSBP. It should be made only with the approval of the Supervisory Officer and, where appropriate, the PSSBP Board of Trustees.
- Where a determination is made that an accommodation would create undue hardship, the person requesting accommodation will be given written notice, including the reasons for the decision and the objective evidence relied upon. The accommodation seeker shall be informed of his or her recourse under the PSSBP's Equity and Inclusive Education policy and under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Where a determination has been made that an accommodation would cause undue hardship, the PSSBP will proceed to implement the next best accommodation short of undue hardship, or will consider phasing in the requested accommodation.

**ACCOMODATION GUIDELINES:**

- The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that all PSSBP staff, students, parents/guardians and other members of the school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities under The OHRC with respect to religious accommodation. It also sets out the PSSBP's procedures for accommodation and the responsibilities of each of the parties to the accommodation process. In accordance with the Equity Strategy, The OHRC and OHRC's Guidelines on Developing Human Rights Policies and Procedures, it is intended that the accommodation process, as well as the accommodation itself, be effective and respectful of the dignity of accommodation seekers.

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- The PSSBP is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and that is free of barriers based on creed (religion). Accommodation will be provided in accordance with the principles of dignity, individualization, and inclusion. The PSSBP will work cooperatively and in a spirit of respect, with all partners in the accommodation process.

**Accommodation Based on Request**

- The PSSBP will ensure all reasonable steps are taken to provide accommodation to individual members of a religious group to facilitate their religious beliefs and practices. All accommodation requests will be taken seriously. No person will be penalized for making an accommodation request.
- The PSSBP will base its decision to accommodate by applying The OHRC's criteria of undue hardship, the Board's ability to fulfill its duties under PSSBP policies and the Education Act
- When concerns related to beliefs and practices arise in the school, collaboration among school, student, family, and religious community is needed in order to develop appropriate accommodation. It is the role of the PSSBP and its staff to ensure equity and respect for the diverse religious beliefs and practices of students and their families and other staff in the school system. However, school administrators should not be placed in the position of monitoring a child's compliance with a religious obligation, and enforcing such practices, e.g. wearing a head covering is not the responsibility of the school or the PSSBP.

**General Procedures for Religious Accommodation**

- **Staff**
  - The person requesting accommodation should advise the administration at the beginning of the school year, to the extent possible. 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 this policy and the appropriate collective agreement.
- **Students**
  - Students must present verbal or written notice from their parents/guardians, specifying their accommodation needs relating to religious observances, including holy days on which they will be absent from school. This notice should be made enough in advance (preferably at the beginning of each school year) to ensure that scheduling of events and/or major evaluations, such as tests, assignments take the religious observances into consideration.
  - Student handbooks and parent/guardian newsletters should include information about the procedure to follow to request an accommodation for religious observances and/or holy days. Such procedures shall be easy for staff, students and parents/guardians to understand.

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**Unresolved Requests**

- Despite the PSSBP's commitment to accommodate, an individual may feel that discrimination based on religion has occurred. The PSSBP will take reasonable and timely steps to address the unresolved issues raised by the affected person which could include dispute resolution mechanism.

**Areas of Accommodation**

For some students and staff of the PSSBP, there are a number of areas where the practice of their religion may result in a request for accommodation on the part of the school and/or the PSSBP. These areas include, but are not limited to the following:

1. School opening and closing exercises
2. Leave of Absence for Religious Holy Days
3. Prayer
4. Dietary requirements
5. Fasting
6. Religious dress;
7. Modesty requirements in physical education
8. Participation in daily activities and curriculum

**GENERAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES:**

This policy will consider each (of the above stated) areas of accommodation in turn.

**School Opening and Closing Ceremonies**

Pursuant to the Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 108 ('Memorandum No. 108'), if a student or parent/guardian objects to all or part of the opening or closing exercises due to religious beliefs, the student will be exempted and given the option not to participate and to remain in class or in an agreed upon location through the duration of the exercise.

**Memorandum No. 108 states the following:**

- All public elementary and secondary schools in Ontario must be opened or closed each day with the national anthem. 'God Save the Queen' may be included.
- The inclusion of any content beyond 'O Canada' in opening or closing exercises is to be optional for public school boards.

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- Where public school boards resolve to include, in the opening or closing exercises in their schools, anything in addition to the content set out in item 1 above, it must be composed of either or both of the following:
  - One or more readings that impart social, moral, or spiritual values and that are representative of our multicultural society. Readings may be chosen from both scriptural writings, including prayers, and secular writings.
  - A period of silence.
- Parents/guardians who object to part or all of the exercises may apply to the Principal to have their children exempted.
  - These requirements will be interpreted in accordance with The OHRC and the PSSBP will consider other requests for accommodation as may be made.

**Absence for Religious Holy Days**

- The PSSBP affirms and values faith diversity. Section 21(2) (g) of the Education Act provides that a person is excused from school attendance in observance of a 'Holy Day by the Church or religious denomination to which he/she belongs'.
- All staff and students who observe religious holidays in accordance with section 21(2) (g) of the Education Act may be excused from attendance, subject to the particular request for religious leave process.
- The PSSBP will encourage members of diverse groups to identify their religious holy days at the beginning of each school year. The PSSBP will make reasonable efforts to acknowledge the different observances of their community when planning programs and events, such as tests and other evaluations. To the extent possible, conferences, meetings, workshops, co-curricular activities and evaluations, will not be scheduled on these significant faith days:

<b>Faith</b>	<b>Holy Day</b>
<b>Bahá'í</b>	Ridván
<b>Buddhist</b>	Lunar New Year/Chinese
<b>Eastern Christian</b>	Christmas Holy Friday
<b>Hindu</b>	Diwali
<b>Jewish</b>	Rosh Hashanah (2 days) Yom Kippur Passover (first day)
<b>Muslim</b>	Eid al-Fitr Eid al-Adha
<b>Sikh</b>	Baisakhi

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- PSSBP staff are encouraged to refer to the above multi-faith calendar in order to make appropriate accommodations.

**Guidelines for Administrators**

1. All staff and students who request to observe a religious holy day should be allowed this right without having to undergo any unnecessary hardship.
2. Staff requesting a leave should advise the school administration at, or as close as possible to, the beginning of the school year and leave should be granted in accordance with the terms of the appropriate collective agreement.
3. Students requesting a leave should give verbal or written notice from their parent/guardian to the school at, or as close as possible to, the beginning of the school year. Such procedures should be easy to understand and follow.
4. Student agendas, school newsletters and announcements should include information about the procedures for requesting leaves.
5. All staff members acting on behalf of/representing the PSSBP on other organizations, which in partnership with the PSSBP are planning events or activities that involve students and/or staff of Burkevale school, have the responsibility to bring this procedure to the attention of these organizations.
6. For consultation or further clarification of questions, administrators and managers should contact the Supervisory Officer for the PSSBP.

**Unresolved Requests**

- **Employee**  
In the event that, after an employee's consultation with the Supervisory unresolved issues remain, then the matter will be referred by the Supervisory Officer to the Board of Trustees.
- **Students**  
In the event that a student maintains that his or her rights under the PSSBP's religious accommodation policy have been compromised, then the matter will be referred to the Supervisory Officer.

**Prayer**

- The PSSBP recognizes the significance of prayer in religious practice. Burkevale school will make reasonable efforts to accommodate individuals' requirements for daily prayer by providing an appropriate location within the building for students and staff to participate in prayer. This may mean a quiet space in the library, an empty room, or wherever it is mutually satisfactory for the school and the student or staff member requesting the accommodation. The Supervisory Officer will be notified of these accommodation measures.

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- Adult presence should be for supervision purposes only.

### **Dietary Restrictions**

- The PSSBP is sensitive to the different dietary restrictions of various religious groups. Such sensitivity includes attending to issues related to the menus provided by outside catering companies, snacks, and food provided within the school, at school-sponsored activities and community events.
- Special attention needs to be given to overnight outdoor education activities, as well as field trips that extend over a mealtime period.

### **Fasting**

The PSSBP is sensitive to religious periods of fasting. Burkevale school will endeavour to provide appropriate space, other than areas designated for eating, for individuals who are fasting in religious observance. The PSSBP recognizes that students who are fasting may need exemptions from certain physical education classes. Burkevale school will make reasonable efforts to provide appropriate accommodations.

### **Religious Dress**

1. 'Dress Code' is the appropriate dress policy established by a school, and may include a school uniform.
2. The PSSBP recognizes that there are certain religious communities that require specific items of ceremonial dress. The PSSBP understands that some religious attire, which is a requirement of religious observance, may not conform to a school's Dress Code. Burkevale school will reasonably accommodate students with regard to religious attire. Religious attire is not cultural dress; it is a requirement of religious observation.
3. Religious attire that should be reasonably accommodated includes, but is not limited to:
  - Head covers: yarmulke, turban, Rastafarian headdress, hijab
  - Crucifixes, Stars of David
  - Items of ceremonial dress
4. Where uniforms are worn e.g. team sports, administrators may ask the student to wear religious attire in the same colour as the uniform (e.g. the head scarves for females); however, there may be religious requirements of colour that cannot be modified.
5. Special attention must be given to accommodations necessary for a student to participate in physical education and school organized sports. Where possible, these should be incorporated into PSSBP policies as part of an inclusive design process.

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6. The PSSBP seeks to foster an atmosphere of cultural understanding in order to be proactive in addressing potential harassment about religious attire. The school is aware that harassment about religious attire is one of the most common types of harassment and bullying. The PSSBP and its school will not tolerate any teasing directed at, or inappropriate actions taken against, an individual's religious attire and there will be appropriate consequences for individuals who violate this rule
7. There are religious communities that require specific items of ceremonial dress which may be commonly perceived as contravening PSSBP policies, e.g. the use of the Kirpan by Khalsa Sikh students or staff.

**GUIDELINE FOR KIRPAN ACCOMMODATION**

- A Kirpan is a ceremonial sword that must be worn by all baptised Khalsa Sikhs. The PSSBP seeks to accommodate Khalsa Sikhs who wear a Kirpan under the following conditions as follows:
  - At the beginning of the school year or upon hiring/registration, the staff member/ student and parents/guardians must report to their respective supervisor/school administration that they are Khalsa Sikhs and wear the five articles of faith, including a Kirpan.
- The Supervisory Officer/Principal, in consultation with the staff member/student and his/her parents/guardians, will develop appropriate accommodations to allow the staff member/student to wear the Kirpan while ensuring the safety of others. These may include the following conditions:
  - The Kirpan is six inches or less.
  - The Kirpan will be sufficiently secured with a stitched flap so it is not easily removed from its sheath.
  - The Kirpan will not be worn visibly, but under the wearer's clothing.
  - There is notification in writing to the Supervisory Officer/Principal by the staff member/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 the age of eighteen must be accompanied by parents/guardians when discussing the rules regarding the wearing of a Kirpan.

**Modesty Requirements for Dress in Physical Education Classes**

- The PSSBP recognizes that some religious communities observe strict modesty attire in respect of their religion. This can become a matter of concern when students are asked to wear the clothing used in physical education activities. Such policies should be designed inclusively, taking into account common religious needs that may exist.

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- If a family has concerns that cannot be addressed through inclusive design, the school should discuss the modesty requirements with them, and, taking into consideration the Ministry of Education's mandated expectations in the physical education curriculum, provide reasonable accommodation. 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.

**Participation in Daily Activities and Curriculum**

- The PSSBP will seek to reasonably accommodate students where there is a demonstrated conflict between a specific class or curriculum and a religious requirement or observance. Where academic accommodation is requested, the school should have an informed discussion with the student's parents/guardians to understand the nature and extent of the conflict.
- The school should make it clear during the discussion that its role is to protect students and staff from harassment and discrimination because of their religion and cultural practices. Where these conflict with the school routines, activities or curriculum, the school should consider accommodation. It cannot, however, accommodate religious values and beliefs that clearly conflict with mandated Ministry of Education and PSSBP policies.
- It is important to note that when an individual requests an accommodation related to the curriculum, the accommodation applies to the 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 (Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Policy and Program Requirements, 2016). In general, the PSSBP recommends an informed, common-sense approach to questions of religion and curriculum. Hopefully, these questions can be solved by an open discussion between the teacher, the student and his/her family.

**LIMITATIONSTO RELIGIOUS ACCOMODATION:**

- The PSSBP supports freedom of religion and an individual's right to manifest his/her religious beliefs and observances. The right to freedom of religion, however is not absolute and religious accommodation in the PSSBP is carried out in the context of the Protestant Separate School Education System and denominational rights of Burkevale Protestant Separate School.
- The PSSBP, at all times, will seek to accommodate an individual's right to freedom of religion in a manner that not only respects the individual's beliefs but the principles of the Protestant faith.
- It is recommended that school administrators designate appropriate space or classroom for religious expression celebrated by other faith traditions. The PSSBP may consult with the local Protestant clergy on such accommodations.