

ONTARIO DECLARATION OF SPIRITUAL VALUES - GENERAL NOTES

1. The teachings noted above and any other activity within the public education process that interferes with a parents' religious upbringing of his/her child, is subject to s. 2 Charter of Rights & Freedoms scrutiny.¹

2. It is difficult for a public school system to be all things to all people. For this reason I/we, the parents/guardians, wish to inform you that the named child is instructed in traditional Judaeo-Christian principles. It is important that information about these sensitive issues be taught in a way that positively connects the learning to the child's Judaeo-Christian understanding. To prevent conflict and confusion and to promote success, I/we request that topics, such as those listed, not be introduced to my/our child without my/our written consent.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The following explanatory notes have been included to provide further understanding.

Religious Instruction

Moral Relativism and Situational Ethics: Secular Humanism, the value system often assumed by public institutions as acceptable to everyone, has been identified as a religion in the courts. It has a set of doctrine outlined in the Humanist Manifestos (I & II) and the Declaration of Secular Humanism (1980). Teachings from the position of moral relativism and situational ethics, basic tenets of secular humanism, are directly opposed to our family's values and my/our child's spiritual understandings of absolute rights and wrongs.

Environmentalism: Naturalism, which denies the existence of a Creator, is another foundational principle of the value system/religion of humanism. Humanist Manifesto II identifies the goal that the doctrines of humanism, including naturalism, must be taught through the public arena, including education. This family's faith-based spiritual understanding requires that we be responsible stewards of all that our Creator (God) has entrusted to us. As such, we do agree with many of the goals of conservation, however, these principles are often presented from a humanistic (for the benefit of man to live as long as possible) or naturalistic (deifying the Earth) worldview which is in conflict with our teachings. Our faith requires that we place nothing above our God. Meeting expectations of conservation would be more successful, for our children, if connected to their spiritual understanding of being 'responsible to their Creator.

Family Life and Sex Education

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Trans-Gendered Issues: People do have the liberty to choose the lifestyle, and value system, they wish to lead. Alternative lifestyles based upon sexual orientation is oppositional to families adhering to Judeo-Christian spiritual values. To reduce spiritual conflict within the child, the learning must positively connect to the child's life experiences and spiritual understandings, and take place only when the child has developed beyond a certain level of spiritual maturity and confidence.

Sex Education: The instruction of conception and contraception, as per Ministry of Education expectations, may be acceptable. At the appropriate grade level (as suggested within Ministry documents) our child could be instructed in these topics, provided the learning positively connects the child's life experiences and spiritual understandings of the value of abstinence from sexual activity until marriage. An example of an activity that positively connects the child's spirituality to the curriculum expectations would be: the examination, within supportive peer groups, of the practical, medical, social, emotional and spiritual reasons their value system teaches that abstaining from sexual activity until marriage is the only safe and healthy choice.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases & Condoms: The teaching of this topic cannot effectively be achieved for our child without interfering with his/her spiritual understandings of the value of abstinence until marriage. The issue of STD's and condoms deal with values and principles that are most often delivered from a humanist perspective. This perspective is in opposition to our family's spirituality and could negatively affect the teachings at home and our child's spiritual development. I/we are requesting advance notice of any curriculum materials involving these topics so we can ascertain whether our child should remain in class during this section of the curriculum.

* I/we choose to inculcate in my/our child by precept and example the virtues of purity, chastity, and prudence in keeping with s.264 (1)(c) of the Education Act of Ontario².

¹ Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Part 1 of the Constitution Act, 1982) states that "everyone has the: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association."

² S. 264(1)(c) of the Education Act of Ontario. "[Teachers have a duty]...to inculcate by precept and example respect for religion and the principles of Judaeo-Christian morality and the highest regard for truth, justice, loyalty, love of country, humanity, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, purity, temperance and all other virtues."

Abortion: The acceptance of abortion by society is a value consistent with secular humanism, which accepts that our present physical life is the only life that we have any knowledge of (ie. there is no life after death). As a result, we need to make the most of it while we are alive. Thus the rationalization that "*I should have control over my body and be able to make decisions about it,*" takes priority within public education and other public arenas where humanism is the dominant value system. This information and approach fails, however, to connect the learning of this form of birth control to our child's life experiences and spiritual understandings of: life after death; the importance of the teachings of their Lord and making decisions that are consistent with their value system; the decisions made in this life affect their relationship with their Lord and could have consequences for their eternal life; human life as a gift of the Creator; and the value of human life.

Medical Consent: The reason for this request is to be sure that such treatment, counselling, etc. is consistent with our spiritual value system. Two examples of possible situations that would be counter to our spiritual understanding are: counselling a child to have an abortion without parental knowledge or consent; providing birth control devices without parental knowledge or consent.

IN THE EVENT A CONFLICT ARISES: In the event that the teacher identifies that some materials or curriculum may be in conflict with the requests outlined, I/we (parents/guardians) would appreciate that the teacher contact me/us for clarification. In the event that I/we (parents/guardians) identify a conflict has arisen, I/ we assure the school that the following steps will be taken to work with the school to dialogue and address the issue:

1. Parents will communicate directly with the teacher to reach an understanding and resolution.
2. In the event that the issue cannot be resolved at the parent/teacher level an interview will be requested with the principal.
3. If the issue is still not resolvable a meeting will be requested with school board officials (Superintendent & trustee), and other staff in an attempt to resolve the issue,
4. In the event that the issue cannot be resolved, a grievance may be filed with the Ontario College of Teachers, in an effort to resolve the situation.

Please be assured that the parents will try to resolve any conflict by first following steps 1 to 3. Only in extreme situations, where the issue cannot be resolved at the school or board level, will the counsel of the Ontario College of Teachers be sought.

Notes to Parents and Administrators: This declaration has been prepared for parents who wish to be an active partner with the school in the education of their children. The Declaration is intended to provide an open, honest and legitimate means of communicating with the school administration and teaching staff. The goal is to develop understanding of the cultural and spiritual values held by the family and child. It is hoped that through such communication the school will be able to address the expectations dealing with cultural and spiritual values found within the Standards and Practice in the Teaching Profession Document."

Through such understanding it should be possible to prevent conflicts that could arise within the classroom curriculum where alternative values may be presented in a way that gives primacy to a different value system and thus create conflict in the mind of the child.

The document is not intended to be an obstacle in the way classes are conducted in the regular academic curriculum.

Parents: Parents who use this declaration are to use it without any alteration. The specific wording is to cover those situations for which parents are entitled to exercise their rights under law and tradition. Parents are urged to register their declaration(s) with Hamilton-Wentworth Family Action Council, so that a record is kept and the numbers of parents using this form can be known. Although this form may be photocopied for use by others, it must be unaltered in this content and format.

School Administration: Considering that 'The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession (1999, Ontario College of Teachers) states, "*Our members of the Ontario College of Teachers:*

- **Respect:** Intrinsic to the ethical standard of Respect is trust and fair-mindedness. Members honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment, and further state:
- **Commitment to Students and Student Learning:** Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning,

this information will be of significant value in the programming for the child. The parents are requesting that this Declaration be placed in the file of the student named. Since topics referred to may arise in any subject area, all teachers who have authority and proximity to the student named should be made aware of this Declaration.

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Hamilton – Wentworth Family Action Council
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**Province of Ontario Declaration of Spiritual Values
 Related to Curriculum Topics and Teaching Strategies**

REGISTRATION

Dear Parent/Guardian: Beyond the central purpose of informing educators about your child’s spiritual needs, HWFAC maintains a confidential registry for the purpose of informing the Boards of Education and Government of the needs of families in the Public School System. Please mail this portion to the Hamilton-Wentworth Family Action Council for registration. If possible, please send a photocopy of the completed document. No fee is required, although a \$5 per family contribution to assist with the costs of administering this declaration would be very much appreciated.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov., PC _____

A Declaration of Spiritual Values has been filed with:

Name of School: _____ Board of Education: _____

City/Prov. _____ Date _____

for (child) _____ for (child) _____

for (child) _____ for (child) _____

Signature

Signature