

Halton District School Board

Operational Policies/Procedures

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| NUMBER: | |
| TOPIC: | Opening Exercises |
| EFFECTIVE: | February 2004 |
| CROSS-REFERENCE: | Ministry of Education PPM 112 |
| REVISION DATE: | February 2007 |
| RESPONSIBILITY: | Director of Education |

POLICY STATEMENT:

- The Halton District School Board values the diverse and unique individual characteristics of the students and staff of Halton and Canada.
- The Halton District School Board recognizes that informed leadership identifies individual and systemic barriers, discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, and demonstrates accountability for their removal/ elimination with the goal of achieving equity for all. At the same time informed leadership will allow administrators to make good decisions for their school which support diversity and equity principles.
- The Halton District School Board values the opportunity provided during Opening Exercises to involve students and staff in meaningful activities that are educational and promote an inclusive and positive school culture.

PREAMBLE / INTRODUCTION:

Under the Education Act Section 304 and Regulation 298 Section 4, Boards are required to ensure that opening and closing exercises are held in all of their schools.

The exercises must include the singing of O Canada and may include the recitation of a pledge of citizenship.

Students shall be exempt from opening exercises upon parental application to the Principal where the student is under the age of 18. Students over the age of 18 may make the application themselves.

In the Ministry of Education and Training “Choices into Action” document the Interpersonal Development area states students “*will acquire the knowledge and skills required for getting along with others both within and beyond the school and choose ways of interacting positively with others in a variety of situations.*” Inclusive opening exercises provide the opportunity for building cross-cultural awareness, responsible citizenship and a global perspective.

Diversity is defined as any difference that is protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Halton District School Board recognizes for students and staff the principles and intents contained in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code for the Province of Ontario, believes that every person has a right to equitable treatment with respect to the educational process, or service and employment within the Halton District School Board without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, same-sex partnership status, family status or disability.

Guidelines for faith based material used in Opening Exercises are provided in Public Policy Memorandum 112 “Education About Religion in The Public Elementary and Secondary Schools”.

It states “The school may sponsor the *study* of religion, but may not sponsor the *practice* of religion.”

- *The school may expose students to all religious views, but may not impose any particular view.*
- *The school's approach to religion is one of instruction, not one of indoctrination.*
- *The function of the school is to educate about all religions, not to convert to any one religion.*
- *The school's approach is academic, not devotional.*
- *The school should study what all people believe, but should not teach a student what to believe.*
- *The school should strive for student awareness of all religions, but should not press for student acceptance of any one religion.*
- *The school should seek to inform the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to conform him or her to any one belief. “*

PROCEDURE:

1. Schools in Halton shall include the daily singing or playing of "O Canada" during Opening Exercises.
2. Schools are encouraged to provide age appropriate material presented by the school staff and/or students which reflects both the diversity of the school community and Canadian society.
3. The sources for opening exercises materials are at the discretion of the Principal in consultation with the members of the school community and shall reflect the inclusive and diversity principles of the Board and PPM 112. See Appendix 1

Appendix 1

These are examples of possible sources for opening exercises materials but are not limited to:

All About Us, A Seasonal Celebration Guide – HDSB Document (created by Lewis Williams, Durham District School Board) Diversity Coordinator, Director’s Office

HDSB Multifaith Days of Significance Calendar – Diversity Coordinator, Director’s Office

Ontario Multifaith Manual – Media Library

HDSB Opening Exercises Resource Document