



**FAMILY GUIDE:
RECOGNIZING & RESPECTING
CREED DIVERSITY**
Creed Accommodation
Guidelines 2021



Embracing Who We Are

DSBN believes that diversity is a source of strength and innovation, and our schools embrace and appreciate the values, identities and lived experiences of students. Everyone has a story. It is through sharing these stories that we will learn about communities, their identities, beliefs and their backgrounds, which will serve as a powerful lens in appreciating students' experiences. Knowing these stories cultivates a sense of community where equitable learning conditions can be nurtured, differences are celebrated and all voices are welcomed.

The District School Board of Niagara acknowledges the land on which our school board and schools are located, is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this area is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

Purpose of this Booklet

The DSBN is committed to establishing partnerships with students, families and communities to create equitable and inclusive schools and learning spaces that promote acceptance and protect the religious and creed rights of all students.

This resource has been developed to help families understand the creed accommodation process to actively engage as partners with the school in acquiring religious and creed-based accommodations. This Family Guide is supplemented by an administrator's guide to creed accommodations so families and schools can work together. These partnerships will help to support an equitable education system that upholds and reflects the principles of fair, anti-racist and inclusive education to create positive outcomes for all students.

Families are encouraged to contact their school to discuss their child's accommodation for religious and creed beliefs. These conversations help to bring an awareness and understanding of your beliefs and practices to the school community.

What is Creed?

Creed includes religion in the broadest sense. Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life.

The Ontario Human Rights Policy provides the following characteristics as relevant when considering if a belief system is a creed. A creed:

- Is sincerely, freely and deeply held
- Is integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfillment
- Is a particular and comprehensive, overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices
- Addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a Creator and/or a higher or different order of existence

What are creed-based accommodations?

The rights to be treated equally based on creed, and to freely hold and practice creed beliefs of one's choosing, are fundamental human rights in Ontario, protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To protect this right, schools will work with families and make accommodations when issues or concerns with school practices relate to a student's creed-based beliefs. Together, appropriate and reasonable accommodations will be planned.

OHRC Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed, 2015

Guiding Principles

The duty to accommodate is about more than providing the most appropriate accommodation in the circumstances. It is also about engaging in meaningful, good-faith processes to assess individual needs and find appropriate solutions. Failing to carry out either component appropriately may be discriminatory.

There is no set formula for creed accommodation. We recognize each families' needs are unique and that a conversation is essential in learning how best to accommodate the request. It is intended that the accommodation process be effective and respectful of the dignity of the family and student making the request.

Accommodation will be provided in accordance with the following guiding principles of respect and dignity, individualization, and inclusion.



Respect and Dignity

- To create and maintain an atmosphere of dignity, acceptance and respect for all individuals
- Provide accommodations to students in a non-judgmental manner free from discrimination and harassment
- Protect and promote the health, safety and security of all individuals
- Protect the personal information and privacy of all individuals



Individualization

- Work collaboratively with each student and their family to gather and share any necessary and relevant information about a student's creed accommodation
- Provide students and their family with opportunities to participate in the planning, implementation and review of the creed accommodation to allow for adjustments as needed



Inclusion

- Providing an environment that is inclusive and free of creed based barriers
- Consulting and engaging with students, families, faith leaders, and other stakeholders to create and maintain a network of supports

How can I help my child's school understand what my family needs?

Family engagement is an important part of building relationships between families and schools. These partnerships promote open communication and collaboration to support your child's educational needs. We want to hear from you.

Input from families is valued, and DSBN encourages families to:

Be proactive

At the beginning of the school year:

- Contact your child's school and make an appointment to talk to your child's teacher or principal about any creed-based accommodations your child may need (e.g. absences from school for observations)
- Provide a list of dates and/or areas of concern to the school so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner
- The principal will keep a record of the conversation and will contact you for further questions and to review accommodations throughout the school year when needed

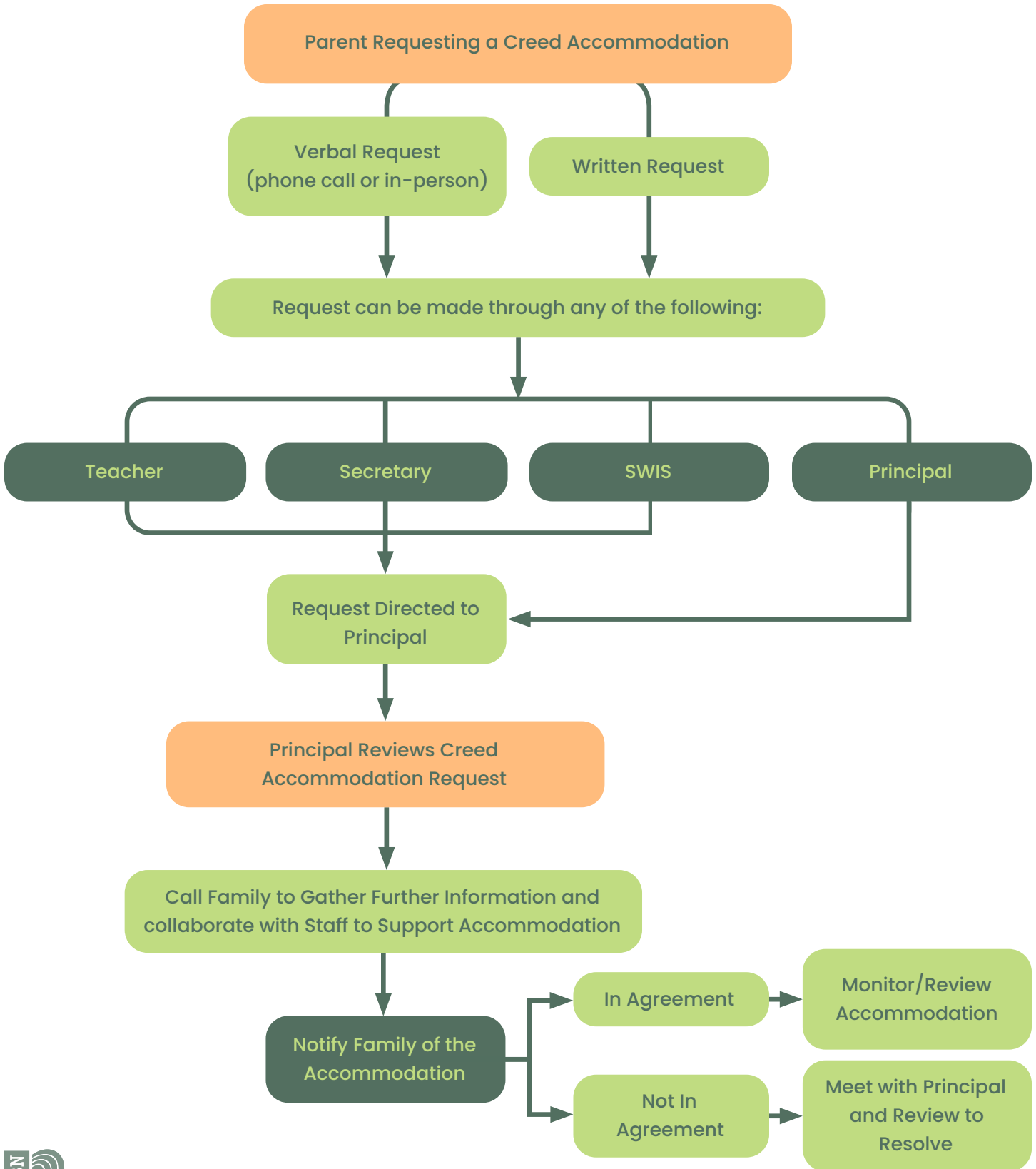
Collaborate

Working with schools to understand your religious or creed-based needs builds an understanding of your practices and lived experiences.

Communicate

Let the school know of any issues or concerns. People available to support you are your child's teacher, Settlement Worker In Schools (SWIS), as well as your school's principal. If you are not satisfied with the accommodation process, review your concerns with the principal to reach a mutually agreeable resolution.

Process for Requesting a Creed Accommodation



Creed Accommodation Request Form

This form will help schools to support creed-based accommodation request(s). This form can be completed by parent(s)/guardian(s) of students (or by students age 16 or older). Also, families may prefer to call the school and have a conversation about their creed-based accommodation request.

Date: _____

DSBN Creed Accommodation Request Form

The District School Board of Niagara values diversity and inclusion and supports these values with policies and procedures to accommodate the diverse creed-based needs of students. This form will help your child's school to support your creed-based accommodation request(s). This form can be completed by families of students (or by students age 16 or older). Families may prefer to call their child's home school and have a conversation about creed-accommodation with the principal.

Please complete this form at the start of the school year or as soon after as possible and submit it to your home school principal.

Person Submitting this Form:

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I am a: ___ Student (16 or older): ___ Parent ___ Guardian

Student to be accommodated:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Creed: _____ School: _____

Select all accommodations that are requested:

<p>Creed-based Practices</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Creed-Based Attire</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dietary Requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fasting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leave of Absence for Days of Significance</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Modesty Requirements in Physical Education</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prayer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> School Opening & Closing Exercises</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>	<p>Curriculum & Daily Activities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cultural/Holiday Events</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Health Issues</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Health and Sexuality</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male/Female Interactions Music</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social Events and School Dances</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> School Trips & Events</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Visual Arts</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
--	---

Please describe how the creed-based accommodation request(s) can be supported at the school. If necessary, please attach additional pages.

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: Personal information on this form is collected under the legal authority of the Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.E-2, and regulations as amended. This information will be used for administrative purposes for providing religious accommodation for the student. Questions regarding this collection should be directed to the Freedom of Information Coordinator, District School Board of Niagara, 191 Carlton Street, St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 7P4

This form can be downloaded from:
dsbn.org/equity and clicking on Creed Accommodation Guide



FAMILY GUIDE:
**RECOGNIZING & RESPECTING
CREED DIVERSITY**

191 Carlton Street • St. Catharines, ON • L2R 7P4

Learn more:
dsbn.org/equity

Ontario Human Rights Code
ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code