

**CURRENT****TCDSB Policy Register****Safe Schools:****OPENING OR CLOSING EXERCISES POLICY S.S.02****Date** **Dates of Amendment:****Approved:**

November 14, 2002 - Board September 6, 2001

**Cross Reference:**

1. Ontario Safe Schools Code of Conduct
2. Safe Schools legislation Bill 81, S. 304
3. Ministry Regulations 298 (Operation of Schools General - as amended by Reg. 436) and Regulation:435 (Opening or Closing Exercises)
4. Prayers in Schools TCDSB Policy S.23
5. Ministry Memorandum August 30, 2000 from Deputy Minister re: new regulations

**PROPOSED**

<b>Date Approved:</b>	<b>Date of Review:</b> <b>2018</b>	<b>Dates of Amendment:</b>  Sept. 6, 2001; November 14, 2002
<b>Cross Reference:</b> Ministry of Ontario Regulation 298 Operation of Schools Ministry of Ontario Regulation 435/00 Opening or Closing Exercises TCDSB Policy S. 23 Prayer in Schools TCDSB Policy S. 22 Religious Accommodation TCDSB Policy H. M. 24 Catholic Equity and Inclusive Education Policy Ontario Ministry of Education PPM 119, Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario		
<b>Attachments:</b> Appendix A: Exemption Request Form: Parent Appendix B: Exemption Request Form: Student		

**Purpose:**

This Policy provides direction on opening and closing exercises in schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board which are reflective of the board's commitment to Living Our Values and developing school communities formed by Catholic beliefs and traditions.

## Policy

In keeping with the Board's commitment to develop school communities formed by Catholic beliefs and traditions, opening or closing exercises in each of the schools shall be conducted according to the following:

- (a) Each Principal shall ensure that opening or closing exercises are included within the daily schedule.
- (b) These exercises shall include public prayer and the

## Scope and Responsibility:

The policy governs all schools within the TCDSB. The Director of Education is responsible for this policy.

## Alignment with MYSP:

Living Our Values  
Fostering Student Achievement and Well Being  
Strengthening Public Confidence

## Financial Impact:

Generally, there is no significant financial impact.

## Legal Impact:

Generally, there is no legal impact. In the event that a student petitioned for religious accommodation, there would be the potential for a legal challenge if the board did not follow appropriate due diligence in application of the Religious Accommodation policy and Catholic Equity and Education Policy.

## Policy

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is committed to living the values of our Catholic faith and to supporting the development of school communities formed by Catholic beliefs and traditions, while also fostering national pride. Each principal of a school within the Toronto Catholic District School Board will ensure that daily opening and

singing of “O Canada” and may include the Pledge of Citizenship, the singing of “God Save the Queen”, scriptural/spiritual readings and public announcements.

### Regulations:

1. The principal will, in annual consultation with the school council, establish procedures for daily opening or closing exercises. These procedures will be reviewed for the beginning of each school year.
2. These exercises will include a vocal version of “O Canada”.
3. In keeping with the Board’s Mission Statement and statement of Catholic Graduate School Outcomes, prayers and/or scripture readings will form an integral part of each opening or closing exercise as per Board Policy S. 23: Prayers in School.
4. The principal may decide, after consultation with the school council, to include the Pledge of Citizenship *in the opening or closing exercise*. The version recited will be the one set out in regulation as follows:  
*“I affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, and to her heirs and successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a Canadian Citizen.”*
5. Following the consultation with the school council, the principal shall inform students 18 years of age or older and

closing exercises include public prayer and the singing of O Canada.

### Regulations:

1. The principal shall, in annual consultation with the Catholic School Parent Council, establish procedures for opening and closing exercises. These procedures will be reviewed at the beginning of each school year.
2. In respect of the national anthem, students will sing O Canada *a cappella*.
3. Consistent with the Board’s *Multi Year Strategic Plan* and the *Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations*, and Board policy S. 23, *Prayer in Schools*, prayers and/or scriptural readings will form an integral part of each opening or closing exercise.
4. The principal may decide, after consultation with the school council, to include the Pledge of Citizenship *in the opening or closing exercise*. The version recited will be the one set out in regulation as follows:  
*“I affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, and to her heirs and successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a Canadian Citizen.”*

the parents/guardians of students under 18 years of age in writing of their right to request an exemption from the singing of O'Canada and/or the recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship and of the process whereby they may do so.

6. The principal will exempt students from the singing of "O Canada" and the recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship upon annual application, if:

(a) The parent/guardian of a student under 18 years of age applies in writing to the principal for an exemption; (see Appendix A)

(b) A student, who is at least 18 years of age, applies in writing to the Principal to be exempted. (see Appendix B)

7. Exempted students will follow locally established school procedures for respecting the singing of "O Canada" and recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship; for example: stop, stand respectfully, remove hat, etc.

5. A pupil is not required to sing *O Canada* or recite the pledge of citizenship in the following circumstances:

a. In the case of a pupil who is less than 18 year old, if the pupil's parent or guardian applies in writing to the principal to be exempted from doing so. (Appendix A)

b. In the case of a pupil who is at least 18 years old, if the pupil applies in writing to the principal to be exempted from doing so. (Appendix B)

6. Any pupil exempted under regulation 5, will follow locally established school procedures for respecting the a capella singing of "O Canada" and/or the recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship; for example: stop, stand respectfully, remove hat, etcetera.

7. Consistent with S. 22, Prayer in Schools, TCDSB will, at all times, 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 Catholic Church.

8. It is understood that all students registered in TCDSB schools acknowledge that the school community

8. Prior to the commencement of classes in September, the principal shall communicate to all classroom teachers in writing the local expectations congruent with the Policy regarding the scheduling of Opening Exercises.

9. The policy applies to all elementary and secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the TCDSB.

10. Provision needs to be made for Opening or Closing Exercises for those classes that are not present at the time of the scheduled morning opening or closing exercises. E.g.: p.m. JK/SK classes.

proclaims, celebrates and cherishes its Catholic identity and traditions and that staff will teach the curriculum from a Catholic perspective. At the same time, the school is enriched and is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive, safe and free of barriers based on religion.

9. In respect of religious accommodation, TCDSB acknowledges that all students, in accordance with what the Catholic Church offers in its teachings and reflective practice, are entitled to their rights and responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

10. Prior to the commencement of classes in September, the principal shall communicate to all classroom teachers in writing the local expectations congruent with the Policy regarding the scheduling of Opening Exercises.

### **Definitions:**

#### **Accommodation:**

An adjustment made to policies, programs, guidelines, or practices, including adjustments to physical settings and various types of criteria, that enables individuals to benefit

from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. Accommodations are provided so that individuals are not disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of the prohibited grounds.

**Religious Accommodation:**

An obligation under the Ontario Human Rights Code to provide reasonable accommodation for students and employees who wish to observe the tenets or practices of their faith, as well as for those who wish not to participate in any form of religious observance.

**Ontario Human Rights Code, Section 19**

While the Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination and provides equal treatment for all people in Ontario with respect to a number of categories, Section 19 recognizes that the Code will not be construed to adversely affect any right or privilege respecting separate schools enjoyed by separate school boards or their supporters under the constitution Act, 1867 and the Education Act.

**Evaluation and Metrics:**

1. Implementation of the Opening and Closing Exercises policy is the responsibility of the school principal, in consultation with the Area Superintendent.
2. The consistent application of religious accommodation requests will be monitored and reported in an annual report to the Board of Trustees.

## APPENDIX A: EXEMPTION REQUEST FORM: PARENT

The principal will exempt students from the singing of “O Canada” and the recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship upon annual application, if the parent/guardian of a student under 18 years of age applies in writing to the principal for an exemption; or a student who is at least 18 years of age, applies in writing to the Principal to be exempted.

Please be advised I am requesting that my child, a student less than 18 years of age:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Be exempt from:

- ☐ The singing of O Canada
- ☐ The Recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship

For the current school year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX A: EXEMPTION REQUEST FORM: PARENT

The principal will exempt students from the singing of “O Canada” and the recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship upon annual application, if the parent/guardian of a student under 18 years of age applies in writing to the principal for an exemption; or a student who is at least 18 years of age, applies in writing to the Principal to be exempted.

Please be advised I am requesting that my child, a student less than 18 years of age:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Be exempt from:

- ☐ The singing of O Canada
- ☐ The Recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship

For the current school year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: EXEMPTION REQUEST FORM: STUDENT

The principal will exempt students from the singing of “O Canada” and the recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship upon annual application, if the parent/guardian of a student under 18 years of age applies in writing to the principal for an exemption; or a student who is at least 18 years of age, applies in writing to the Principal to be exempted.

Please be advised I am student at least 18 years of age.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I am requesting that I be exempt from:

- ☐ The singing of O Canada
  - ☐ The Recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship
- For the current school year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: EXEMPTION REQUEST FORM: STUDENT

The principal will exempt students from the singing of “O Canada” and the recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship upon annual application, if the parent/guardian of a student under 18 years of age applies in writing to the principal for an exemption; or a student who is at least 18 years of age, applies in writing to the Principal to be exempted.

Please be advised I am student at least 18 years of age.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I am requesting that I be exempt from:

- ☐ The singing of O Canada
  - ☐ The Recitation of the Pledge of Citizenship
- For the current school year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_