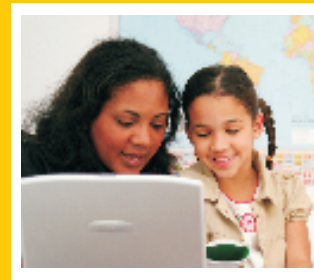


AN ORTHODOX PARENT'S GUIDE TO  
**Education Choices**



IN THIS BOOKLET YOU'LL FIND:

Measuring the Value of a Good Education

Is Our Heritage Being Lost?

Silencing Students  
on Questions of Sexual Morality

What's Best for Your Family?

A Contract with the Public Schools

Other Public School Options

Independent Schools & Home Schooling

Scholarships for Your Child



AN ORTHODOX PARENT'S  
GUIDE TO  
**Education  
Choices**



Getting the best for a student's education  
in Hamilton-Wentworth

AN ORTHODOX PARENT'S  
GUIDE TO

# Education Choices

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## MEASURING THE VALUE OF A GOOD EDUCATION

What goes into the making of a good education for a child? The debate has raged for years.

At a time when billions of Ontario tax dollars are channelled into government-run schools each year, these questions have never been more pressing:

- **Has spending more money resulted in more effective schools?**
- **Is it possible for large schools to handle the challenges of hundreds of students from a variety of home and family backgrounds?**
- **Does the school system “know better” than families the values students should be taught?**

These are critical questions, for parents, for families - and for kids. Most students spend between 40 and 50 waking hours each school week in a school environment, absorbing the views, priorities, and values of the teachers and students around them.

Often in the past, Orthodox parents have simply trusted schools to provide high-quality academic education, giving little thought to the social, moral, and spiritual influences in the schools. Today, even the academic standards of the schools are often sorely in question.

## PERFORMANCE

In recent years, the reporting of student and school academic performance has become more frequent, and more accessible:

**Government-run schools (and some independent schools as well) now use a clear, standardized report card**, with an objective indication of student progress in academic areas.

**Provincial testing in reading and writing**, and in math, takes place at regular intervals during a student’s school career, with results made available to students and their families.

**School-to-school and board-to-board test result comparisons** are available online at:

Parents can even find out how their child’s school is performing compared to others across Canada, online at: *(Select EQAO, then select school; local results can then be compared with provincial results).*

## THE GIFT OF TEACHING

Almost all of us have cherished memories of a special teacher who has helped us over the years.

Yet a wave of new school regulations today make it more challenging than ever for teachers to be able to give the best they have to their students:

- **Teachers run serious risk of discipline** if they share their views on moral issues;
- **Teachers are prohibited from teaching traditional values** as uniquely true;
- **Teachers can be singled out** for non-participation in “gay pride” events at school;
- **Staff become suspect to administration** if they refuse school-led campaigns to identify themselves as “gay positive” by placing a sticker on their classroom door;
- **Health teachers** are forced to withhold health research deemed “politically sensitive” on the risks of certain sexual behaviours.

In such an environment the work of a public school teacher is increasingly challenging, and the impact on students is not insignificant.

## IS OUR HERITAGE BEING LOST?

Twenty years ago, Orthodox Christian students attending public schools didn't have to worry about the way their faith and culture was presented in class. **It simply wasn't included.**

Today, with the move toward “cultural diversity”, one might expect to see a more comprehensive study of Orthodox cultures, faith, and history in schools. Yet the virtues of Orthodox faith and culture are almost always overlooked.

Much of the attention given by public schools to Orthodox heritage can be seen only in **the general attack on traditional beliefs and values.**

Consider the following examples:

- The Hamilton-Wentworth school board refused to grant Serbian staff their patron saints day *Slava* as a recognized personal religious leave day because the celebration “was not recognized”;
- Highschool history curriculum portrays Orthodox societies in Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, and other places as responsible for the persecution of Jewish citizens in Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- Public high schools invariably argue that Orthodox Christians are the primary cause of the crises in Kosovo and southern Russia;

- Media and social issues courses highlight Orthodox nations as major roadblocks against laws promoting homosexual privileges, free access to pornography, and other “progressive” moves;

For Orthodox students in public schools, it is undoubtedly a challenge to defend their Orthodox identity against attacks labelling them backward and out of step with the times.

Concerns about public schools targeting Orthodox tradition are only the beginning, however.

## SILENCING STUDENTS

In September of 2009, a new “**Equity Policy**” goes into effect in Hamilton-Wentworth public schools. Under this policy, students and staff will be silenced – and punished – for stating their family, cultural, or religious beliefs about traditional marriage.

**For example:**

- **If a middle school student expresses the idea that sex outside marriage is wrong**, the new policy directs teachers to “correct” the child, teaching them to respect “diverse” sexual choices.

- **If an elementary student tells another child that having two “daddies” is not right**, and the child feels hurt, the student making the comment can be sent to the office, disciplined, or sent home.

- **If a student writes an essay defending the traditional definition of marriage** – one man and one woman – they can now be sent to “reeducation” classes, in an attempt to change their “*homophobic*” (i.e. “anti-homosexual”) views.

- **If a student gives a speech arguing that homosexual activity isn’t normal**, they could well be suspended – or even expelled – under the School Board’s new “Equity Policy”.

- **If a teacher expresses their view that marriage is between one man and one woman**, they will face disciplinary action, and could face termination.

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## Boards must be accountable

Unbeknownst to many Hamiltonians, the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board continues to move ahead aggressively with their sexual orientation "equity" policy which will require the inclusion and encourage the celebration of numerous sexual behaviour choices in all subject areas...

In fact, the board has rejected requests from concerned parents to include official Ministry of Health information which establishes that those who practice MSM (males who have sex with males) have HIV rates as high as 25 per cent or one in four men (Region of Toronto).

This rate is 250 times higher than males from non-endemic countries who contact HIV via heterosexual contact.

**Harold Schulz, Ancaster  
Letters - Ancaster News  
April 17, 2009**

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## SEXUAL MORALITY

The adoption of the Hamilton-Wentworth school boards's new "Equity Policy" will also become the basis for changes in curriculum in all subject areas. Rather than studying English, math, and social studies in a fair and neutral setting, the new Policy turns the curriculum into a vehicle promoting a narrow, radical sexual agenda.

Consider the following:

- "**Anti-bullying**" rules (which already exists to protect all students) will now designate special, additional punishments if a student is bullied using "anti-gay" namecalling;

- **Social Studies units** will include explicit examples of "gay heroes" from history, in unit studies starting in the primary grades;

- **A Review of the "Hidden Curriculum"** will examine all curriculum to remove words deemed offensive to gay, lesbian, and transvestite activists, and will introduce "gay-positive" terms into the units of study;

- **Sex Education** will explore in detail sexual acts as presented in gay and lesbian resource materials. These discussions will serve to promote these activities as normal human relationships;

- **School "Gay-Straight Alliance"** clubs will be accommodated and supported in all area high schools, and in some middle schools. These clubs will support and promote "gay pride" events in schools, and the designation of "gay-friendly" zones in schools, where staff will be "encouraged" to post "gay pride" symbols on their classroom door. The school board has already organized events including a spring 2009 Gay Conference at Westmount Secondary School.

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## Orthodox Churches Speak Out

...The proposed Equity Policy rejects the traditional approach to human sexuality, marriage, and modesty around sexual issues that is held by virtually every traditional culture around the world...

...Those who would speak out in opposition to (the teaching of homosexual acts) in the schools would violate this policy, and open themselves up to disciplinary actions, as well as stigmatizing and discrimination...

**Pan Orthodox Association of Greater Hamilton  
Presentation to Hamilton-Wentworth School Board  
May 2008**

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## TRUE TOLERANCE

The Orthodox Church has always taught the need to show love, mercy, and compassion for everyone. To be Orthodox requires each of us to exercise humility, and to serve the best interests of others.

We are nowhere called to confuse the difference between holy living and immoral decisions,

however. As parents, we are called to provide an example of faithful, upright living, striving to do the best we can to live a life like the saints, with God's help.

Much is said in the public school system about **tolerance**. Yet true tolerance goes both ways: just as Orthodox Christians must show consideration for the needs of people struggling with homosexual passions, so too must those who oppose Orthodox Christianity tolerate the freedom of us and our children to practice our Orthodox faith, and to speak about it freely and humbly in public - including in schools.

With the advent of the "Equity Policy" in Hamilton-Wentworth public schools, tolerance has taken on a new meaning:

- **Board officials shut down Christian clubs at high schools on Hamilton Mountain**, forcing Christian students to move outside, just to say prayers at lunch hour (Muslim students were given a place for daily prayers). The reason? The Christian clubs explicitly stated that they would be *taking a Christian perspective* in their club.

- **Students supporting "gay rights" Days of Silence** are supported by school board administration in identifying other students and staff as "gay allies", and labelling non-supporters as "*homophobic*", thereby singling out students who cannot condone homosexual activity;

- **Written assignments** favouring traditional moral lifestyles, traditional marriage, or which articulate concerns about the health risks of homosexual activity can be deemed as "hate literature" under

the “Equity Policy”.

**True tolerance must go both ways.**

Orthodox students need the freedom to feel safe to express their deeply held moral and religious values in school, without threat of being punished, labelled, or bullied by other students or teachers.

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## Demands Aren’t “Equality”

...The LGBTQ Advisory Committee insists that their sexual acts including anal sex be taught as normal during health class and that not doing so is homophobic and heterosexist. They are insisting that society deem all sexual conduct as equal which simply is not the case nor the point of health classes....All sexual conduct is not equal. Health classrooms, and any school classroom for that matter, must be used to promote healthy living for our students rather than mislead them under the guise of Equality or Equity. Looking out for our children’s health is not homophobic; it is wise parenting.

**Jim Enos**  
**Hamilton-Wentworth Family Action Council**  
**Letter to the Editor - Hamilton Spectator - June 30, 2008**

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## EDUCATION CHOICES : WHAT'S BEST FOR YOUR FAMILY?

With so many issues facing students within Hamilton-Wentworth public schools, many parents are looking elsewhere to find programs that reflect their academic expectations, a positive social environment, and their spiritual values.

For those who choose to stay in public school (or who are forced to stay, because of limits on their choice), there are other steps which parents can take to secure the integrity of their son or daughter's public school education.

## A CONTRACT WITH THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

It's hard to believe that schools in Canada – a country to which our families came to enjoy freedom - are fast becoming places where the values we teach our children are under attack.

Yet public schools, including those in our city, **are legally required to respect the stated desires of parents when dealing with religious, cultural, or moral questions.**

If you are a parent or grandparent of a public school student, this puts a great responsibility in your hands: the responsibility to make your desires known for the education of the young people in your family.

Each family needs to make clear to their public

school the desires, and the limits, they would place on the social and moral teaching and indoctrination they would permit for the young people in their family.

Thanks to the work of several groups supporting the rights of parents, a easy-to-complete **Contract With the Public School** has been prepared for use by parents to inform their local school about their views, and to set limits on the kind of material to which their children can be exposed (See Appendix 2 on pages 27-35).

Drafted by lawyers, this simple document provides a clear and easy way to **share your desires with your local school**, and to make your views known to the classroom teacher.

All Orthodox parents are encouraged to complete this form, and to return it to their child's school, with the request that it be placed in the student's **Ontario Student Record (OSR), and that a copy be given to the classroom teacher(s) and to the principal.**

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## Orthodox Views Not Welcome in Public Schools

...(The Equity Policy) recommends silencing,, disciplining, and even expelling students or firing staff who would express or hold traditional views of marriage and sexuality that do not approve of homosexual sexual acts. For Orthodox Christians of all cultural backgrounds - North American, Russian, Greek, African, East Asian, Serbian, Romanian, Ukrainian, and countless others - such a policy would send one message: **you are not welcome in public schools.**

...Orthodox Christians and countless others (are) faced with the option of voting with their feet, and finding other options for the education of their children and grandchildren...

**Father Geoffrey Korz**  
**All Saints of North America Orthodox Church, Hamilton**  
**Letters - Hamilton Mountain News - May 2008**

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## “Grandpa, are you gay?”

In April 2009, one grandfather shared a personal account of when he picked up his 5-year-old grandson from Holbrook Elementary School in Hamilton.

On the way home, his grandson said, "Grandpa, you are gay." Grandpa asked, "What makes you say that?"

The five- year old replied, "Today my teacher told us that gay is when boys love boys and men love men. You always tell me you love me, so you must be gay"

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## OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOL OPTIONS

In Ontario, the **Catholic (Separate) school system** is fully funded by the provincial government, and for this reason, has no tuition fees. Catholic schools exist primarily for the education of students from Roman Catholic families. If a neighbourhood school has classroom space, they will consider on a case-by-case basis admitting non-Roman Catholic students (including Orthodox students).

Because the Roman Catholic Church views the Orthodox Church in a unique way, most Roman Catholic schools will admit Orthodox students more readily than other non-Catholics. Roman Catholic religious leaders have in past years supported this concept.

Orthodox students attending a Roman Catholic school must participate in all religious instruction offered during the school day. They will be required to attend any religious services, and may even be invited to participate. **Orthodox parents should make it clear that their Orthodox child cannot be a participant in any services outside the Orthodox Church, and should at no time receive Communion at a Roman Catholic service.**

While Catholic Separate Schools have many similarities to public schools, they do not yet, at the time of publishing, have a so-called "Equity Policy"

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## Parents making the choice

...It is precisely actions such as those of the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board that caused my wife and I to move our child out of the public school system early this school year. We have been very happy with the curriculum in the Catholic system, and can rest easy knowing our child will not be exposed to the radical agenda of normalizing sexual disorientations.

We suggest parents pull their children out of the public system ASAP as it is becoming an indoctrination mill for dangerous sexual behaviour. Most parents are clueless that this is even happening, and I believe that is exactly how the board prefers it.

**B. Capolongo, Grimsby  
Letters, Dundas Star Journal  
April 24, 2009**

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*(For Orthodox families interested in enrolling their children in Roman Catholic Separate Schools, see Appendix 3 on page 36).*

## INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Independent School include a variety of schools outside the public and Separate school systems. A wide spectrum of choices are available in the Hamilton-Wentworth area.

These generally include two types of education:

**1. Secular private schools**, ranging from small academic institutions to elite, multi-grade schools with a broad array of programs. Usually these schools shy away from religious content, although some may reflect the positions of programs similar to public schools.

These schools often offer an academically superior program, along with extensive extracurricular sports and clubs. Parent boards often take a strong leadership role in fundraising in support of the extensive program offerings. Tuition usually ranges between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per pupil per year. Scholarships are sometimes available.

**2. Independent Christian schools**, often operated by a particular denominational group (Reformed Protestants groups have been active in operating several of these school for many years). These schools often have the benefit of smaller classes, and a close-knit community in which families know each other, and often attend the same church. This contributes to a shared set of values within the school community. There is often close contact between the parent council and the school principal who oversees the day-to-day running of the program. In some cases, families are only eligible to sit on the parent council if they are members of the religious denomination that operates the school.

Tuition usually runs between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per student per year, although some schools offer a much more affordable flat rate for families.

## HOME SCHOOLING

An increasing number of parents (about 5% across Ontario) are opting to educate their children at home. Parents choose the home schooling option for a variety of reasons, including a desire for improved academics, a need for specialized instruction, an emphasis on moral and spiritual character-building, and the flexibility of enhance the curriculum beyond the limits of that which is studied in public schools.

Across North America, hundreds of thousands of children are educated in this unique and innovative way, achieving consistently high academic results.

Parents considering this education choice are often surprised to learn that Ontario is one of the most supportive jurisdictions toward home schooling:

**Parents hold the primary responsibility for educating their child:** registration with school authorities is not required, although some families choose to seek out the advice of the school system.

**Parents from any background can educate their children,** allowing families to share multi-lingual studies, technical studies, cultural and historical studies, and specialized arts and sciences not offered in public schools.

**A wide variety of curriculum choices is available,** allowing families to go beyond the minimum standards offered by government-run schools;

**Time flexibility allows students to enroll in**

**additional outdoor education programs** (such as the Royal Botanical Gardens home school program), music and language lessons, and folklore studies. Travel, museum trips, and specialized home school group programs are also available. Students develop a wide variety of friends outside the narrow experiences and struggle of the school environment;

**Ontario colleges and universities, including McMaster University in Hamilton, have recognized the value of home-schooled graduates.** Their outstanding personal character and academic success has led to the creation of special admission streams for home-schooled students, giving them a distinct advantage over other students for post-graduate admissions. **The Ontario Ministry of Education** even offers online credit courses for specialized areas of study such as higher maths and sciences.

## SCHOLARSHIPS FOR YOUR CHILD

Numerous scholarships are available for families seeking educational options outside the public school system.

You can find more information online at:  
[http://www.fraserinstitute.org/education\\_programs/](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/education_programs/)

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### What do these famous people have in common?

Leonardo da Vinci - Claude Monet - Mozart  
Douglas MacArthur - Alexander Graham Bell - Leo Tolstoy  
Thomas Edison - Moses - John the Baptist  
The Optina Elders of Russia - Albert Einstein  
Blaise Pascal - Winston Churchill - Charles Dickens  
C.S. Lewis - Mark Twain

All were home-schooled.

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## APPENDIX 1: FURTHER READING

*Boys Adrift*, Leonard Sax, PhD.

*On the Upbringing of Children*, St. Theophan the Recluse.

*Raising them Right*, St. Theophan the Recluse.

*The Well Trained Mind*, Susan Wise Bauer.

*Why Gender Matters*, Leonard Sax, PhD.

## INTERNET LINKS

*To Change Your Child's School*

**Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Board**  
[www.hwcdsb.edu.on.ca](http://www.hwcdsb.edu.on.ca)

**Calvin Christian School**  
[www.ccs.hamilton.ca](http://www.ccs.hamilton.ca)

**Hamilton District Christian High**  
[www.hdch.org](http://www.hdch.org)

**Hillfield Strathallan College**  
[www.hsc.on.ca](http://www.hsc.on.ca)

**Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools**  
[www.oacs.org](http://www.oacs.org)

## *Grants to Attend Private Schools*

### **Fraser Institute**

[www.fraserinstitute.org/programsandinitiatives/childrenfirst.htm](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/programsandinitiatives/childrenfirst.htm)

## *To find out more about homeschooling*

### **Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents**

[www.ontariohomeschool.org](http://www.ontariohomeschool.org)

## *Homeschooling Supplies*

**G. A. Educational Books** - [www.gaebt.com](http://www.gaebt.com)

**Scholar's Choice** - [www.scholarschoice.ca](http://www.scholarschoice.ca)

## **Curriculum Fairs & Conferences**

## **APPENDIX 2: CONTRACT WITH THE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

Some Orthodox parents will choose to enroll their family members in public schools. For these parents, it is strongly encouraged that the following **Contract with the Public School** be submitted to the school.

The document has been drafted by Ontario lawyers, and should be treated as a legal document, submitting parameters by the parents to the school board regarding the education of the child(ren) involved.

The document has two parts:

**The Contract** (*pages 28-29*). This should be completed and submitted to (1) the classroom teacher(s), (2) the principal, and (3) the school office, with a request that the document be placed in the **Ontario Student Record (OSR)** of your child.

**General Notes** (*pages 32-35*). This should be given to the child's teacher (in person, if at all possible), to help outline some of the areas of concern to the family.

**CONTRACT WITH THE PUBLIC SCHOOL:  
STATEMENT OF SPIRITUAL VALUES  
(For inclusion in Ontario Student Record)**

Parents/Guardians: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Grade Level (as of the date the form was completed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Re: Our Family's Values**

Dear Principal / Teacher:

I/we wish to thank the school for its commitment to my/our children and their education. As a parent(s) I/we understand the responsibility of being "Partners in Education" and commit myself/ourselves to the goal of assisting you to achieve the best education for our children.

It is understood that each individual is made up of three basic domains; body, mind; and spirit. Educators have traditionally focused on developing the body and the mind. As our culture has become more complex, educators have become more concerned about character and values education.

As Orthodox Christians our family adheres to a set of values based on the teaching of the Church, the Bible, and Holy Tradition. As a parent(s) I/we work hard to teach these values to our children because the application of these values is important for the salvation of their soul.

As educators in a multicultural community you receive children from many cultural and spiritual backgrounds. As a pluralistic Board of Education, HWDSB attempts to respect and understand the values of all groups that attend. An understanding of the cultural and spiritual backgrounds of the children helps teachers to better meet the educational needs of the child without accidentally undermining the values taught at home. The "Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession" identifies the expectation that teachers will help students to *connect the learning in the classroom to the child's cultural and spiritual understandings. 1*

For the above reasons, I/we have included information on the following pages that is intended to help you understand the value system taught at home. Our request is that with this knowledge of our child and their spiritual background, the teacher(s) would encourage the child to incorporate their values and faith within some of their work (artistic, creative writing, etc.).

In addition, whenever concepts or values are presented that may conflict with the values listed I/we request to be contacted prior to lessons. With an understanding of what is to be taught, I/we may choose to not participate, or we may use the opportunity to discuss what was learned and help my/our child to better understand who they are and how they fit within a multi-cultural, multi-faith community.

Thank-you for your respect and sincere understanding

Sincerely,

## SPIRITUAL VALUES ISSUES IN EDUCATION & SOCIETY

Considering the **secular humanistic** approach often applied to subjects and issues within public education, I/we request that we be advised prior to my/our child's involvement in any activity or program containing the following spiritual values issues, which are in conflict with our faith:

### **a. Religious Instruction**

1. \_\_\_ Values neutral education - indoctrination of students in "moral relativism" and principles of situational ethics. This "ism" is a central tenet of the religion of "Secular Humanism";
2. \_\_\_ Occult principles and practices - witchcraft, black magic, spirit guides, Satanism, wizardry, new age, channelling, astrology, horoscopes, psychic powers and other such practices contradictory to Orthodox Christian principles;
3. \_\_\_ Environmental Worship - placing environmental issues/concerns above the value of Orthodox Christian principles and human life

### **b. Family Life & Sex Education**

1. \_\_\_ Discusses or portrays homosexual/bisexual conduct and relationships and/or transgenderism as natural, healthy or acceptable;
2. \_\_\_ Discusses or portrays sexual conduct that we determine to be unnatural/unhealthy (sadism, masochism, bestiality, fetish, bondage, sodomy, oral sex, anal sex, etc.) as natural, healthy or acceptable;
3. \_\_\_ Teaches about or provides birth control drugs and devices, without parental consent;
4. \_\_\_ Teaches that abortion is an acceptable method of birth control and that life does not begin at conception;
5. \_\_\_ Encourage the acceptance of infanticide or euthanasia;
6. \_\_\_ Provides a false sense of security with regard to the effectiveness of condoms in preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases;

### **c. Medical Treatment**

\_\_\_ As long as I remain liable under the Family Law Act of Ontario to provide support to my child, I hereby request that all employees and agents of the school board refrain from counselling, treating, or referring my child for non-emergency treatment, admission to a care facility, or personal assistance

services within the meaning of the **Health Care Consent Act of Ontario**, without my full knowledge and prior consent; subject only to a written waiver of this instruction for particular forms of treatment in specified circumstances, and circumstances qualifying as "emergencies" under that statute.

### **I/We further request that:**

1. You accept this document in whole, which will serve the purpose of communicating our family's spiritual values set out herein;
2. My/our child not be approached for his/her consent to participate in any of the above activities, with the intent to nullify this communication; and
3. As the **Ontario College of Teachers' 'Standards of Practice in the Teaching Profession'** requires teachers to connect learning to the child's life experiences and cultural and spiritual understanding, this information will be important for a teacher who is educating the child.

Therefore, it is requested that teachers who will be in contact with the child be informed about this communication and that this document be made available in the child's Ontario Student Record (OSR) (*... "an OSR will contain additional information identified as being conducive to the improvement of the instruction of the child." ...*)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Standards of Practice

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Student Record Guideline 2000, Section 3.

See also Article 17, United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) [Canada is signatory]: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, Nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

## **CONTRACT WITH THE PUBLIC SCHOOL: SPIRITUAL VALUES - GENERAL NOTES**

Dear Staff:

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 share with you that the my/our child is raised in traditional Judaeo-Christian principles, within the Orthodox Christian Church. I/we feel that it is important that information about these sensitive issues be taught in a way that positively connects the learning in the classroom to the child's Judaeo-Christian understanding.

To prevent conflict and confusion in the mind of our child, 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. Further, I/we would ask that when the child chooses to share her values through their school work (e.g. writing about what they believe with respect to a topic, or completing a piece of art work that includes communicating their faith) they will be encouraged.

In an effort to promote understanding, please find below explanatory notes about the issues listed that could lead to conflict.

### **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

#### **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 Ontario<sup>2</sup>.*

**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 Christ and making decisions that are consistent with their value system; the decisions made in this life affect their relationship with Christ and could have consequences for their eternal life; human life as a gift of God 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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."

<sup>2</sup> 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."

## **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) in an attempt to resolve the issue.

# APPENDIX 3: LETTER FOR ADMISSION TO A ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL

Sample Letter from  
Orthodox Parish Priest to  
Roman Catholic Separate School Board  
Superintendent

Dear Superintendent:

**RE: (Child's Name)**

Please be advised that the above mentioned student is an Eastern Orthodox Christian, whose family is seeking admittance to **(Name of School) Catholic Elementary School**.

This student is permitted by the Orthodox Church to attend the local Catholic school, and is furthermore to be welcomed into Catholic schools in accordance with the papal encyclical **Ut Unum Sint (1995)**.

Please be advised that Orthodox students should not approach for communion during Roman Catholic Mass, since Orthodox and Roman Catholic communion has not been established between our respective religious bodies at this time.

Trusting this will be satisfactory, and asking the Lord's blessing upon your work throughout the coming school year, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

*(Orthodox Priest Name & Signature)*



To download additional copies of this guide, go to:

**[www.asna.ca](http://www.asna.ca)**

To contact the Pan-Orthodox Association of Greater Hamilton through its general secretary, write to **[korzgj@hotmail.com](mailto:korzgj@hotmail.com)**.