
HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION**POLICY HANDBOOK**

Policy Code:	HNA
Policy Title:	Lord's Prayer
Cross Reference:	HGAC, HGAE, HNB
Legal Reference:	<i>Education Act</i> S. 58, 58.1, <i>Alberta Act</i> (S. 17), <i>School Ordinance of the Northwest Territories</i> (S. 137 & 138), <i>Constitution of Canada</i> (S. 93)
Adoption Date:	April 15, 2014
Amendment or Re-affirmation Date:	March 27, 2023

POLICY

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION BELIEVES IN RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY, THE MAINTENANCE OF INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS IN ITS SCHOOLS, AND THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO GIVE EXPRESSION TO THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

GUIDELINES

1. In accordance with the Education Act, the Alberta Act, the School Ordinance of the Northwest Territories and the Constitution of Canada, the Board may direct that a school include recitation of the Lord's Prayer as part of its opening exercises.

REGULATIONS

1. Parent councils may request in writing to the Superintendent that the recitation of the Lord's Prayer become part of their child's school's opening exercises for the following school year. The Superintendent, will advise the Board of Trustees of such a request.
2. The Board of Trustees may direct the Superintendent to undertake a process to obtain parent/guardian opinion regarding a request for the Lord's Prayer to form part of the school's opening exercises through surveys, meetings or any other appropriate means of gathering information, and establish a timeframe for such undertaking. The Superintendent may delegate such an undertaking to Division staff members.
3. The Superintendent shall present information obtained to the Board, including the rationale for the request for recitation of the Lord's Prayer to form part of the school's opening exercises, the determined degree of parent interest in the request, the tradition and culture of the community, the proposed logistics regarding the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in the school and seek the Board's decision regarding the request.
4. The Board shall consider the information presented to it, and any other information the Board deems relevant to determine whether or not the recitation of the Lord's Prayer should be directed to form part of the school's opening exercises in that school.

Policy HNA – *Lord’s Prayer*, Cont’d.

5. If the Board directs the Lord’s Prayer is to form part of the school days’ opening exercises in the particular school, the Principal shall:
 - 5.1. ensure that parents of that school are informed of the religious practice at the time of registration each year (see sample notice, Appendix A);
 - 5.2. ensure that the parents are provided the opportunity to exempt their child from the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer as part of the opening of the school day at the time of registration each year (Appendix B); and
 - 5.3. annually ensure that written approval is provided to students whose parents/guardians wish them to be excluded from the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer as part of the school’s opening exercises.
6. In accordance with the *Education Act* as amended from time to time, or pursuant to any successor legislation, when the Lord’s Prayer is part of the school day opening exercises, the Principal shall make provision for any students whose parents/guardians do not wish them to participate in recitation of the Lord’s Prayer as a school opening religious exercise. Exemption may include:
 - 6.1. leave the classroom or place where the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer is taking place for the duration of the recitation; or
 - 6.2. remain in the classroom or place where the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer is taking place without taking part in recitation.
7. Teachers are expected to ensure that non-participants are treated discreetly and with respect at all times.
 - 7.1. Students exempt from partaking in recitation of the Lord’s Prayer are still expected to adhere to behavior expectations during the regular school day.
8. Should parents/guardians wish to cease the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer within their school, they must submit a formal written request to cease the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer to the Superintendent, who will advise the Board of Trustees.
9. The Board of Trustees may direct the Superintendent to undertake a process to obtain parent/guardian opinions regarding a request to cease the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer as part of the school’s opening exercises through surveys, meetings or any other appropriate means of gathering information, and establish a timeframe for such undertaking. The Superintendent may delegate such an undertaking to Division staff members.
10. The Board shall consider the information presented to it, and any other information the Board deems relevant to determine whether or not the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer should cease forming part of the school’s opening exercises in that school.

Appendix A

SAMPLE NOTICE FORM UNDER SECTION 58.1 OF THE *EDUCATION ACT*

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child is currently enrolled in a school or program where the Board of Trustees has directed the school to recite the Lord’s Prayer as part of the opening of the school day.

Pursuant to section 58.1 of the *Education Act*, as amended from time to time, or pursuant to any successor legislation, you as a parent/guardian may request that your child be excluded from the above-identified religious practice, without academic penalty, by having your child either:

- a) leave the classroom or place where the instruction is taking place or where the religious practice is undertaken for the duration of the practice; or
- b) remain in the classroom or place where the religious practice is taking place without taking part in the religious practice.

We request confirmation of your desire regarding your child’s involvement in this religious practice. In order to exercise this exemption option, you must sign and return the attached exemption form to the principal of the school. If this form is not returned, your child will be included in the religious practice.

If you would like additional information about the content of this notification, please contact

_____ [Identify Principal]

Policy HNA – Lord’s Prayer, Cont’d.

Appendix B

SAMPLE STUDENT EXEMPTION UNDER SECTION 58.1 OF THE *EDUCATION ACT*

TO: Principal _____ [*identify school*].

In response to the notice provided to me by the Horizon School Division dated _____ [*date of notice*] indicating that my school or program recites the Lord’s Prayer as part of the opening of the school day.

I, _____ [*name of parent/legal guardian*], in accordance with section 58.1 of the *Education Act*, as amended from time to time, or pursuant to any successor legislation, hereby request that my child, _____ [*name of child*], be excluded from the religious practice.

I request that my child: (check relevant box)

A) leave the classroom or place where the instruction is taking place or where the religious practice is undertaken for the duration of the practice.

OR

B) remain in the classroom or place where the religious practice is taking place without taking part in the religious practice.

I confirm that I am the parent/guardian of _____ [*name of child*] and have chosen to exercise my option to have my child excluded from the religious practice described in the notice from _____ [*name of school*]. I also confirm that it is my obligation to ensure that this form is returned to the school principal before my child is exempted.

The child to whom this exemption notice applies is: _____ [*name of child*]
Grade: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian

Date