

## Flag Display

### RATIONALE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board displays flags with dignity and respect. The Flag procedure is aligned with and supports the principles and expectations of all Equity, Safe Schools and Well-Being policies as well as items in the Human Rights Code. HWDSB honours the tradition of half-masting of national flags as an expression of education, respect, sorrow and mourning.

### TERMINOLOGY:

*Half-mast:* Half-staff is the term used as reference to a flag flying below the summit on a pole on land or on a building. Half-mast is an acceptable term to use.

*Regulation 298:* This Education Act regulation states: 5 (1) Every school shall fly both the National Flag of Canada and the Provincial Flag of Ontario on such occasions as the Board directs; and (2) Every school shall display in the school, the National Flag of Canada and the Provincial Flag of Ontario.

*World Event:* As global issues and rapid widespread media communication converge, world events are increasingly coming to the attention of staff and students in schools. These events can range from natural disasters, accidents causing severe harm or death, death by suicide, shootings, terrorism and more. Frequent coverage of traumatic events can negatively impact a student's sense of security as well as their mental health and well-being.

### PROCEDURES:

#### 1.0 Dignity of the National Flag of Canada

The National Flag of Canada will take a position of prominence at all times when displayed with other flags. The manner in which the National Flag of Canada is displayed in Canada is not governed by any legislation. The rules applied by the federal government are not mandatory for individuals or organizations; **they serve as guidelines only.**

- 1.1 No flag shall be larger than the National Flag of Canada.
- 1.2 No flag shall fly higher than the National Flag of Canada.

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1.3 Where there are multiple flags displayed together, the National Flag of Canada shall always be displayed in a position of prominence:

1.3.1: in the centre of three flags where the flags are displayed on separate flag poles

1.3.2: when facing the front of a building, the National Flag of Canada shall be to the left of an observer facing the flags when there are two flags, with the secondary flag to the right

1.3.3: above any other flag when sharing the same flagpole

### 2.0 Flag Lowering

2.1 Flags shall be lowered on all administrative and school building sites to half-mast in the following events or situations:

- Remembrance Day (November 11)
- Worker's Day of Mourning (April 28)
- Any National or Provincial Day(s) of Mourning as determined by either the Federal or Provincial Government
- Death of the Sovereign or member of the Royal Family related in the first degree (spouse, son, daughter, father, mother, brother, sister)
- Death of the current or former Governor General
- Death of the current or former Prime Minister
- Death of the current or former Lieutenant Governor
- Death of the current or former Premier
- Death of a current local member of Parliament (from a riding within HWDSB's boundaries)
- Death of a current or former Trustee, Mayor, or Councillor
- Death of a current or former Director of Education
- A world tragic event, at the discretion of the Director of Education

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### 2.2 Individual school only

Before a flag is lowered, the principal will consult with Manager of Social Work to determine if support is needed. A flag should never be lowered in response to a loss without 1.) Receiving consent from the family and 2.) Providing supports through communication or directly from a staff member, which could include a social worker.

Flags may be lowered, provided there is consent (refer to section 9.0), to half-mast at the individual school site in the following events or situations:

- Death of a current student or staff member employed at the school.

Flags may be lowered to half-mast at the individual schools in exceptional circumstances in which students or the school community is impacted by the death. Please consult with Social Work prior to this decision.

### 2.3 Individual administrative building only

Flags will be lowered to half-mast on administrative buildings in the following situation:

- Death of a current staff member employed at the particular administrative building

## 3.0 Flag Raising

Every school shall fly both the National Flag of Canada and the Provincial Flag of Ontario according to *Regulation 298*. (Refer to Dignity of the Canadian Flag, section 7.0).

- 3.1 **Rainbow Flag:** Rainbow flags (also known as Pride Flags) have existed in many configurations representing many peoples and experiences throughout human history.

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The current Pride flag's exact colours and dimensions have changed from the Gilbert Baker flag, which first appeared as a representation of the LGBTQ+ community in 1977. Although the Rainbow flag is still strongly connected to the LGBTQ12S+ community, it also is a representation of social change cited as being a symbol of hope and peace.

LGBTQ12S+ refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transexual, Queer, Questioning, 2-spirited and Allies.

- 3.2 **Transgender Flag:** The transgender flag represents the transgender community and consists of five horizontal stripes: two light blue, two pink, and one white in the center. Monica Helms, an American trans woman and creator of the transgender flag, describes the meaning of the transgender pride flag as follows: *"The stripes at the top and bottom are light blue, the traditional color for baby boys. The stripes next to them are pink, the traditional color for baby girls. The stripe in the middle is white, for those who are transitioning or consider themselves having a neutral or undefined gender."*
- 3.3 **Indigenous flags:** HWDSB acknowledges our presence on ancestral Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacy land as determined by the Dish with One Spoon treaty. While there are flags in circulation that represent these two confederacies, the flag is a symbol of colonialism and staff should refrain from raising an Indigenous flag.
- 3.4 **Cultural or other significant flags:** A request to raise a flag can be done through the Office of the Director of Education in consultation with the Equity team. See section 4.0.

### 4.0 Flag Requests

A request to raise a flag can be done the Communications and Community Engagement Office. Community members can email [partnerships@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:partnerships@hwdsb.on.ca). The Office processes request for flag raising in consultation with the Equity team. HWDSB will maintain complete discretion to approve or not approve any request.

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The following criteria is used as a guide to process flag raising requests:

1. The flag represents a municipally, provincially or nationally recognized day(s) of significance, cause or initiative that:
  - a. Celebrates and recognizes history, heritage and contributions of historically marginalized communities in Canada.
  - b. Commemorates and memorializes histories of discrimination, harassment, murders, violence etc., with a goal to help foster and promote equity and inclusion.
  - c. Aligns with HWDSB's Strategic Direction.
2. The flag must not represent or imply derogatory, negative and exclusionary messaging or portrayal of any group or individual.
3. The flag must not promote and sponsor the practice of a faith/religion/creed, must not indoctrinate and/or impose any particular faith-related/religion/creed view.
4. The flag must not represent a political party/group/organization and must not be affiliated with for-profit and private organizations.
5. The community, non-profit group, and organization requesting flag raising must be Hamilton based and must demonstrate local partnership/working relationship with HWDSB in alignment with HWDSB's Strategic Directions. In recognizing a day of significance, flag raising should be accompanied by other learning and engagement opportunities to enrich student and /or staff learning.

### **5.0 Responding to World Events:**

Given that such flags are recognized as paramount symbols of their nations, the act of half-masting is a visual statement that speaks to the sense of loss that is shared by all their citizens. Decisions related to responding to world events will be done at the discretion of the Director of Education.

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The Manager of Communications and Community Engagement will refer to department's internal practice (No. 16) that provides guidelines based on School Mental Health Ontario's decision-tool resource and other informing criteria.

### **6.0 Flag Approval**

Where there is opportunity or requests from community to raise a flag connected with a day of significance, all requests will require approval from the Director of Education and will be considered in alignment with HWDSB's strategic direction.

### **7.0 Responsibility**

The Director's Office will notify the Facilities Services Department, who will direct the appropriate staff in each facility to lower flags to half-mast.

### **8.0 Duration**

- 8.1 Flags will be flown at half-mast for a period of three business days for bereavements or observances of mourning, unless otherwise determined. There may be occasions when the flag will be lowered for an extended time period to accommodate a funeral or other extenuating circumstance.
- 8.2 Flags can remain lowered over the weekend if within the timeframe. Where a flag lowering day of mourning falls on a weekend, the flag will be lowered at the end of the day on Friday and raised on Monday morning.
- 8.3 At the end of the third day, custodial staff will return the flag to standard height at the end of the evening shift.
- 8.4 There can be no flag activity when the flags are lowered. For example, a new flag is not to be raised if the flags are already lowered. The flag will be raised once all flags are raised, even if the day of significance has past.
- 8.5 Flags that align with a time period (i.e. Pride Month in June), may be flown for that length.

### **9.0 Consent**

Flags cannot be lowered unless consent by the family is given or the obituary is published. Contact the Manager of Social Work/Mental Health lead for more direction.

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### **10.0 Communications**

A message from the Director of Education will be sent or posted on the intranet for flags lowered across the system. The Manager of Communications and Community Engagement may act as designate with respect to informing the system about the flags being lowered.

Information may also be shared on the Board's website and through social media.

Supportive letters to respond to tragic events or grief are available for individual schools through Social Work Services and Communications and Community Engagement.