

Number:	<i>To be determined</i>
Topic:	Themed Schools
Effective:	May 2010
Cross-Reference:	Ontario Curriculum
Review/Revision Date:	January 2012
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education

POLICY STATEMENT

All schools within the Halton District School Board strive to build supportive, caring relationships with all students, ensure there is responsive programming and instruction to meet the needs of every child and offer diverse curricular and extra curricular opportunities for all students. This reflects the current state of the Halton District School Board's schools and occurs regardless of the implementation of a thematic approach to programming.

For the purpose of the Halton District School Board, it is necessary to define a theme as a common thread that weaves through all instructional areas. It is an enhancement to the Ontario curriculum. The theme is not a replacement for the Ontario curriculum. Instead students are provided a unique opportunity to master the Ontario curriculum through the lens of a focused theme, which has been thoughtfully selected to promote student engagement and support learning. Additionally the theme is extended throughout many of the school's dimensions, such as through special events and extra-curricular activities, school interior design and décor.

The chosen theme can directly expand upon current Ontario Ministry of Education initiatives. A theme will also align with the four values of the Halton District School Board. Literacy and numeracy would be supported through experiential activities and learning opportunities connected to a common theme.

The Halton District School Board's purpose in establishing a themed school is to heighten student engagement and to meet the needs of the students in that particular school catchment area. A themed school is not established with the intention of being a magnet school or school of excellence where students from out-of-catchment areas would attend. Out of area students could apply for optional attendance to elementary themed schools as per the Board's standard policy and procedure.

The intent of developing an elementary school theme in a particular school is independent of enrolment. Theming is not considered as a strategy for increasing school enrolment. A themed school in the Halton District School Board context would not have entrance application requirements for students nor require additional staffing.

Board Expectations:

- A theme does not supplant the curriculum but enhances the learning experience for the students in a focused area to serve as a vehicle for engagement in all curriculum areas.
- A themed school strives to respect the interests of all learners in a school and offers many diverse learning environments and opportunities supported by new community relationships all of which are strong components of the Board's safety and well-being pillar.
- A theme may present opportunities for the consideration of partnerships with community members, outside agencies, businesses or organizations operating within the same sphere. Any formal sponsorships or partnerships established must comply with current Board policy.

Not all schools within the Halton District School Board will or should be themed.

The initiation of a process to develop a theme should be a conversation between administrators and superintendents. Pending the superintendent's support of the theme concept, the administrator should engage the community in a consultation process regarding the theme.

Protocols for theme selection:

- initial discussion occurs between the school administrator and the Family of Schools Superintendent;
- following superintendent approval, community consultation occurs with all stakeholders, ie: school administrators, Halton District School Board School Programs staff teachers, parents, students, school council, trustee and community members;
- the theme should have broad school community support;
- the theme must be broad-based enough to engage and respond to the learning needs and interests of many students;
- a theme may still be implemented without the availability of additional resources;
- the theme must be an enhancement to the Ontario curriculum, not replace it;
- the theme must be broad-based so curriculum units can integrate learning outcomes from many curricula;
- the theme may present opportunities for the consideration of partnerships with community members, outside agencies, businesses or organizations operating within the same sphere; any formal sponsorships or partnerships established must comply with current Board policy;
- a recommendation for approval of a school's theme and resources required will be presented to the Board of Trustees for their approval;
- there will be a limit of four schools selected for themes each year;
- the theme must be reviewed and assessed every three years for efficacy and sustainability.

These protocols are the same for both new schools and existing schools, however there is a difference in the timing of the selection of a theme. In an existing school the current administration can initiate the process and then follow the protocols. In a new school the typical process for appointing new administrators is in March of the school year prior to the opening in September. Consequently, we recommend that the new school Principal be named a full year prior to assuming the position of Principal of a new school. The Principal will work with the Family of School Superintendent in completing the community consultations. It is not a requirement that new schools be a themed school. This only occurs if initiated by the local trustee, Family of Schools Superintendent or the school administration.

Resources:

Additional resources to support implementation of a theme at an elementary school is not to exceed \$10,000.

There must be a demonstrated need for these additional funds and their relationship to supporting the theme. Not all themes will require additional funds.

Allocation of funds to support a theme must be approved by the Board.

The Principal will submit a written proposal to the Superintendent and the Board which outlines the resource request amount, description of use, rationale, alignment with the theme, the impact on students' engagement in the theme and benefits to their learning.

Trustees will consider the following criteria in determining the allocation of additional resources.

- purpose of the additional resources;
- the funding is clearly aligned with the theme;
- the funding is used to purchase resources that increase the positive impact of the theme;
- the funding supports increased student engagement in their learning;
- funding approvals will not exceed \$10,000.00 per school;
- the theme and the resources requested to support the theme are strongly supported by the community.