

October 24, 2022

At the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB), we work collectively to fulfill our vocational call as Christians by ensuring that all are welcomed, included, and valued. As a system, we know that equity and inclusion are valuable contributors to overall student success and as a faith-filled community we are committed to ensuring that all students are engaged and feel welcomed and included in every aspect of school life. DPCDSB seeks to uphold the human dignity of all as we are all created in the image and likeness of God.

*“Let no one despise your youth but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)*

#### **Background**

Many schools will be hosting a variety of Halloween events including developing a fun-filled atmosphere by dressing up in costumes on October 31. As we approach Halloween and the Feast Days of All Saints Day on November 1 and All Souls Day on November 2, it is important to remember its Christian roots. “All Hallows’ Eve” is where the name of Halloween comes from. A hallowed person is another name for a ‘saint’. October 31, All Hallows’ Eve then, is the eve of All Saints Day. Therefore, in choosing to celebrate Halloween it is important to remember its Christian origins.

#### **Choosing a Costume**

When helping your child to choose a costume for Halloween, please be mindful of the way choices impact others. Ensure the costume choice does not offend anyone, particularly, any group that experiences oppression due to systemic barriers.

Concerns arise when people consider using characteristics, stereotypes, and stigmas of a culture, e.g., clothing, accessories, skin color, and/or religion, and replicating them into a costume. Consider impact over intent. Whether it is intentional or not, wearing certain costumes has real consequences and negatively impacts the people that deal with this kind of discrimination daily.

Wearing a costume that depicts another race, culture or identity contributes to stereotypes and causes real harm to communities that have been historically marginalized and continue to face systemic oppression today.

It is important to keep Halloween safe and inclusive by leaving culturally insensitive, racist, and sexist stereotypes out. Protecting and upholding the dignities of all individuals is a shared responsibility and choosing a costume that is offensive, hurtful, or potentially harassing and/or discriminatory in nature goes against Catholic Social Teachings and values of inclusion here at DPCDSB.

#### **When selecting a costume, please consider the following:**

- Does this costume make fun of human traits, identities, cultures, or race?
- Does this costume reduce culture or identity to stereotypes?
- Who might be harmed by my choice of costume?

**Extraordinary lives start with a great Catholic education.**

- Is this costume depicting and perpetuating a stereotype or stigma associated with a particular race, culture, gender, ability, or religion?
- Does this costume include a replication of a garment or item that is a significant component of a particular religion or culture with which I do not identify?
- Is this costume depicting a historical time-period where that look/costume is now considered offensive and discriminatory?
- Can I confidently say that this costume choice would not be considered offensive to a particular race, ethnic origin, ability, gender, or religion?

Halloween can be a time for fun. Think critically and creatively when helping your child choose a costume that honours the dignity of each human person, so that everyone can enjoy themselves.

### Accessibility Considerations

According to the Rick Hansen School Foundation (RHFSP), Halloween may not be accessible to 400,000 Canadian children with disabilities every year. In this regard, please consider the following accessibility considerations if you can.

1. **Treat Accessibly Lawn Sign** - Place an Accessible Trick or Treat lawn sign on your front lawn one week before Halloween (follow @TreatAccessibly for updates on where to get a sign near you) or print your own.
2. **Pumpkin Lantern** - Make sure the path to your trick-or-treating area is well lit.
3. **Clear the driveway and pathways.**
4. **Move cars out of the driveway to allow better accessibility for trick-or-treaters.**
5. **Create a trick-or-treating station at the end of your driveway, or out of your garage, or your vehicle's trunk.**
6. **Refrain from the use of strobe lights and high-pitched, sudden loud noises.** If you want to have these features, consider making them manual so that you can turn it on when you know you have an audience that will appreciate them.
7. **Make sure that any pets are kept safely away from the front of the house.**

Thank you for your consideration of this important information.

Adapted from: <https://rights.info.yorku.ca/inclusive-halloween-costumes/>