The Ontario Curriculum Document for Science (2008) lists expectations that recognize the importance of dissection in the development of Scientific Literacy. It notes that:

_Students in a science class typically demonstrate diversity in the ways they learn best. It is important, therefore, that students have opportunities to learn in a variety of ways – individually, cooperatively, independently, with teacher direction, through hands-on experiences, and through examples followed by practice. In science, students are required to learn concepts and procedures, acquire skills, and learn and apply scientific processes, and they become competent in these various areas with the aid of instructional and learning strategies that are suited to the particular type of learning. The approaches and strategies teachers use will vary according to both the object of the learning and the needs of the students._

_The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9-12: Science, 2008_

The York Region District School Board recognizes the importance of studying life forms in the classroom as a building block contributing to Scientific Literacy for students. It is the goal of the Board that all students will graduate as scientifically literate citizens. The Ontario Curriculum notes the importance of this activity in the analysis of biological interrelationships and the understanding of complex organic systems. As a result, dissection is an essential tool for studying the anatomy and physiology of animals, and it is reasonable that it be a required practice in laboratory courses in biology. In this context, it is the expectation of the Board that all dissection demonstrate respect for the animals being studied.

The York Region District School Board recognizes that students have the right to choose not to participate in or observe animal dissection for religious or ethical reasons. It is essential that alternatives be provided to achieve the goal of scientific literacy without necessarily participating in actual dissection. The following is designed to achieve this end result.

**PROCESS**

- all dissections and experiments will be carried out with the utmost respect for the animals, both on the part of teachers and students;
- specimens will be provided from sources that guarantee that specimens are raised for the purpose and not removed from an ecosystem;
- preservatives will be eco-friendly;
- large amounts of liquid preservatives must be stored and then disposed of during the annual chemical pickup in July/August; and,
- preserved specimens are not considered pathological waste and, when properly double-bagged, may simply be disposed of as general waste – when in doubt, contact must be made with the Occupational Health and Safety Officer.
INFORMING STUDENTS AND ADDRESSING CONCERNS

- the course calendar will provide a list of courses that incorporate dissection so that students can plan accordingly, and will note that options to this activity are available;
- all students will be informed at the beginning of the course through the Course Outline, at the beginning of each unit involving dissection, and prior to dissection activities, that they have the option of alternatives should they choose not to participate in or observe animal dissection;
- students must self-declare their choice to opt out to the classroom teacher;
- all students have the right to be excused from participating in any lesson, exercise or assessment requiring the student to participate in or observe any dissection activities; and,
- students who have been excused shall be provided with alternative methods through which the learning expectations can be met and assessed on required course material.

ALTERNATIVES

- the alternative project will require a student’s investment of time and energy comparable to that required by the original specimen dissection in classroom activities;
- alternatives for dissection may include use of hands-on models, digital photos, web-based sites, computer software and/or other research activities (see appended list);
- there will be no penalty or criticism if a student chooses not to dissect, but participates in the lab using alternative methods, and comparable assessment will be provided; and,
- schools will provide a supervised location for students who opt out of the dissection activity, such as the Library.