

Released Time for Religious Instruction

The Board permits students to be released from school for religious instruction consistent with law. Absence during the school day for religious instruction is permitted, provided:

1. the student's parents or guardians submit a written request to the building principal;
2. the private entity providing instruction maintains attendance records and makes them available to the District and
3. the student is not absent from core curriculum subject courses. The District is not responsible for transportation to and from the place of instruction. Regular classroom instruction missed as a result of a student's absence for religious instruction will not be made up and students assume responsibility for any missed schoolwork. Students are not considered absent from school while attending a released time course in religious instruction. The District does not aid, assist or enforce attendance in a religious instruction program. The District does not discriminate against students who participate in such program.

No public funds are expended and no public-school personnel are involved in providing religious instruction. This policy is not intended and shall not be construed in any way, to associate the District with any faith or religious denomination.

CROSS REFS.:

IGAC - Teaching About Religion

JED - Student Absences and Excuses

KJA - Distribution of Materials in the Schools

NOTE: *House Bill 171 (2014) enacted Ohio Revised Code 3313.6022 specifying the conditions under which a board may adopt a policy on released time for religious instruction. Districts also may choose to add language to this policy authorizing high school students to earn elective credit toward graduation through released time courses, provided statutory requirements are met when evaluating the course for credit. The decision to award credit for a released time course of religious instruction must be neutral to, and cannot involve any test for religious content or denominational affiliation. Districts should work with board counsel to implement such programs.*

On April 17, 2019, the Ohio Attorney General released a new opinion (2019-015) on released time for religious instruction, which focuses on what a school district's policy may permit or prohibit, and the implementation of these policies.

The opinion analyzes and resolves several specific questions and scenarios. Districts are cautioned to keep in mind that these scenarios and questions are fact-specific and rely on certain assumptions. As the facts change, so may the answer. Districts should work with board counsel to assure legal compliance when implementing these policies.

Legal References: U.S. Constitution Amend. I
ORC: 3313.20, 3313.47, 3313.6022, 3321.04

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