

An optional sample policy to consider.

Students

Religion and Religious Accommodation

The District is dedicated to the academic achievement of each of our students. Part of an excellent educational experience is a learning environment where each person is respected and encouraged. The School District should encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be knowledgeable about each other's religious and cultural views. The School District should utilize its opportunity to foster understanding and mutual respect among staff, students and families, acknowledging our rich diversity in terms of race, culture, sexual orientation, economic background, and religious beliefs.

It is the policy of the Board of Education that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the School District or its employees, and none should be disparaged.

The District recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance student knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

The District also recognizes that it is important to accommodate the desires of its students and staff members to exercise their religious beliefs in a manner that does not substantially disrupt the school and work environment or impinge upon the rights of others. As such, the District will make reasonable accommodations for students and staff members who have particular religious needs. Schools are not required to accommodate a religious request if granting such a request would place an undue burden on the school, or in the case of requests made by staff members, would fundamentally alter the job duties of the requesting staff member.

Some optional language to consider if more specificity is desired:

Dietary Requirements: The Board of Education recognizes the multicultural and multi-religious composition of the District's population. Some children because of religious restrictions are prohibited from eating certain foods. If an alternate entrée is not available, the children will be unable to benefit from all food components of the meals served at school. Therefore, an alternative entrée shall be offered when such foods are served for meals.

or

Nothing in this policy is meant to require schools to operate special diet kitchens. Usually there is no difficulty acquiring substitute items. However, if the authorized substitute foods are not normally kept in inventory or are not generally available, the parent/guardian should provide the substitute food items.

Family Life and Sex Education: Students, parents or guardians shall be informed of their right to exempt the student from the family life program. The student will be exempted upon a written request for exemption from his/her parent or guardian.

Students

Religion and Religious Accommodation (continued)

Religious Student Clubs: Student-initiated, non-curriculum-related student groups shall be permitted to conduct voluntary meetings on school grounds during non-instructional time when other non-curriculum groups are permitted to meet, regardless of the size of the group or the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at the meetings, provided that the meetings do not materially or substantially interfere with the orderly conduct of the educational activities of the school. Such meetings shall be open to all students without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.

Student Prayer: Under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, school districts may not sponsor prayer in schools. Individual students may pray providing it does not disrupt school activities.

(cf. 0521.2 – Religious Neutrality)

(cf. 6115.1 – Religious Observances and Displays)

(cf. 6141.2 – Separation of Church and State)

(cf. 6141.21 – Religion in the Public Schools)

(cf. 6144.1 – Exemption from Instruction)

(cf. 6145 – Extra-Class Activities)

(cf. 6162.51 – Student Surveys)

(cf. 6145.3 – Distribution of Printed Matter, Freedom of School Press; Publications)

(cf. 9030.1 – Religious Guidelines)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 10-16a Silent meditation.
 10-15c Discrimination in public schools prohibited.
Lee v. Weisman, 112 S. Ct. 2649 (1992).
Jones v. Clear Creek Independent School District, 977 F. 2d 963 (5th Cir. 1992).
Harris v. Joint School District, 41 F.3d 447 (9th Cir., 1994).
American Civil Liberties Union of NJ v. Black Horse Pike Regional Board of Education, 84 F.3d 1471 (3rd Cir., 1996).
 20 U.S.C. 7904 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).
 U.S. Constitution, Amendment 1.
Tinker v. Des Moines School District, 393 U.S. 503 (1969).
Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602 (1971).
 Equal Access Act, 20U.S.C. Secs. 4071-74.

Policy adopted: