

Teaching about Religion

1. Release Time for Religious Instruction

Elementary students may be excused from school for up to two hours in any week and secondary students may be excused from school for up to five hours in any week to attend weekday schools giving religious instruction. A written request must be signed by the parent or guardian before the student is released.

Religious teachers or organizations are not permitted to promote student participation by directly contacting students on school grounds or by asking students who participate in their programs to recruit students who remain at school. All promotional activities will be conducted away from school. (ORS 339.420)

2. Teaching about Religion and Teaching Religion

Although teaching about religion is an important and appropriate educational objective, teaching religion itself has no place in our public schools. The district allows the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama, art and symbols related to the study of religions, and audiovisual material. The role of religion in the development of civilization is another appropriate area of study. Such studies should be comprehensive and balanced and should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.

3. Religious Accommodation/Release Time/Exemption

Students may be released from the school day for religious study in accordance with ORS 339.420. Students will not suffer from any consequences due to nonattendance.

4. Student-Initiated Comments on Religion

In the classroom, students might initiate comments about religious experiences or beliefs that are related to the subject of instruction. Such comments should be respected and not demeaned, but solicitation or proselytization during class time is not allowed. Teachers are not to engage in proselytization.

5. Arts and Crafts Instruction

Historically, arts and crafts have used religious themes as topics for production. Additionally, many of the holidays in our calendar have a religious orientation. It is important in this age of diversity to recognize that an art or craft curriculum and/or instruction based on the above premises will be

exclusionary for some students. Teachers should take care to make sure that art and craft activities do not become a vehicle for making students feel excluded.

6. Private Student Prayer

Students have a right to engage in individual prayer which does not substantially disrupt the school's educational mission and activities. School staff are to protect the student's privilege to exercise this right, but may not endorse or promote student religious activity.

7. Student-Initiated Religious Clubs

Students have the right to initiate religious-oriented clubs in the same fashion the school allows other non-school-related clubs. Consult with your school principal for details.

8. Freedom of Discrimination/Harassment

Students may exercise their religious rights within the parameters of the law, in an environment free of discrimination from staff, students and others.