

As a public entity, the District must comply with the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment requirement that the District neither establish religion in the schools nor prohibit students' free exercise of religion according to pertinent interpretation and application of those Constitutional provisions by the Courts. Accordingly, no employee will promote religion in the classroom or in the District's curriculum, or compel or pressure any student to participate in devotional exercises. Instructional activities shall not be permitted to advance or inhibit any particular religion or religion generally. Neither the Board nor any administrator or other employee or agent of the Board shall implement any rule, policy, or practice that prevents or that otherwise denies a person an established right to participate in constitutionally protected prayer in any of the District's schools, as such rights are detailed in formal U.S. Department of Education guidance on constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary schools and secondary schools.

Neither the Board nor any administrator or other employee or agent of the Board shall implement any rule, policy, or practice that prevents or that otherwise denies a person an established right to participate in constitutionally protected prayer in any of the District's schools, as such rights are detailed in formal U.S. Department of Education guidance on constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary schools and secondary schools.

An understanding of religions and their effects on civilization is essential to the thorough education of young people and to their appreciation of a pluralistic society. To that end, curriculum may include, as appropriate to the various ages and attainments of the students, instruction about the religions of the world.

The Board acknowledges the degree to which religions and religious traditions are sometimes intertwined with history, the arts, literature, music, and issues of morality. The instructional and resource materials approved for use in the District schools sometimes connect to a relevant religious context, contain religious references, or concern moral/ethical issues (e.g., "honesty") that have been a focus of some religious beliefs, tenets, or traditions. That such materials may have a religious component, connection, or context shall not, by itself, bar their use by the District. The Board directs that professional staff members employing such materials be neutral in their approach and avoid using them to advance or inhibit religion in any way.

The Board recognizes that religious traditions vary in their perceptions and doctrines regarding the natural world and its processes. The curriculum is chosen for its place in the education of the District's students, not for its conformity to any religious principles. Students should receive unbiased instruction in the schools, so they may privately accept or reject the knowledge thus gained, in accordance with their own religious tenets, if any.

The District shall provide for the reasonable accommodation of a student's sincerely held religious beliefs with regard to examinations, other academic requirements. If any such need is not adequately resolved by the application of regular classroom procedures, a student or a minor student's parent/guardian may submit a written request (including via email) for such an accommodation to the principal of the student's school. Access to and disclosure of such requests is limited as provided under the District's student records policies. The school principal or his/her designee shall approve or deny each such request. Potential accommodations may include, but are not necessarily limited to, being excused from participation in an activity, alternative assignments, release time from school to participate in religious activities, and opportunities to make up work missed due to religious observances. Any accommodation granted under this paragraph shall be provided to the student without prejudicial effect.

LEG REF:

Chapter PI 9

Chapter PI 41

20 U.S.C. sec. 7904

U.S. Department of Education "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression" (Jan. 16, 2020)

Policy Adopted: June 21, 2023