

## **Ideology and Religious Expression Policy**

The School shall not prohibit students from engaging in religious expression in completion of homework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments. Assignment grades and scores shall be calculated using ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance, including any legitimate pedagogical concerns, and shall not penalize or reward a student based on religious content of a student's work.

The School shall allow students to engage in religious expression before, during, and after school hours in the same manner and to the same extent that a student is permitted to engage in secular activities or expression before, during, and after school hours.

The School shall provide the same access to school facilities to students who wish to conduct a meeting for the purpose of engaging in religious expression as is given to secular student groups, without regard to the content of a student's or group's expression.

### **Prohibitions:**

- (1) The School shall not solicit or require an employee or applicant for employment or academic admission to affirmatively ascribe to, or opine about, specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements, or ideology.
- (2) The School shall not solicit or require a student to affirmatively ascribe to specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements, or ideology.
- (3) The School shall not use statements of commitment to specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements, or ideology as part of the evaluation criteria for employees or applicants for employment, or employees that are seeking career progression or benefits.
- (4) The School shall not use statements of commitment to specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements or ideology as part of the academic evaluation of students.

### **Construction:**

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to prohibit, limit, or restrict any of the following:

- (1) The School's authority to require a student or employee to comply with federal or state law, including anti-discrimination laws, or to take action against a student or employee for violation of federal or state law;
- (2) An educator's academic freedom;
- (3) An educator's ability to research or write publications about specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements, ideology, or social action;
- (4) The School's authority to consider an applicant for employment's scholarship, teaching, or subject matter expertise in the applicant's given academic field;
- (5) The School's authority to offer an established character education program.

### **Public Availability:**

The School shall make publicly available all policies, guidance, and training materials used for students, educators, and staff on all matters regarding specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements, or ideology. However, this does not require the School to make protected legal communications or guidance publicly available

## Religious Expression Days Policy

The School shall reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of individual students with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system.

### **(A) Absences for Holidays**

(1) The School will permit a student to be absent for up to three religious expression days each school year to take holidays for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system or participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization.

Such holidays include but are not limited to: Eid, Good Friday, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover.

This list is non-exhaustive. The School shall not unreasonably withhold or deny permission for other holidays. The School shall not deny accommodation to a student for a holiday or festival of the student's faith or religious or spiritual belief system that does not appear on this list. The inclusion or exclusion of a religious holiday or festival on this list shall not preclude a student from full and reasonable accommodations for any sincerely held religious beliefs and practices with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system provided under section B below.

(2) The School will not impose an academic penalty as a result of a student being absent as permitted pursuant to this policy. The School will also permit students to participate in interscholastic athletics or other extracurricular activities on days in which the student was otherwise absent for a religious expression day under this policy.

### **(B) Alternative Accommodations**

(1) The School will provide students with alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements missed due to an absence pursuant to this policy if not later than fourteen school days after the first day of school, or fourteen school days after the date of enrollment for a student who transfers to or enrolls in the School after the first day of school, the parent or guardian of a student provides the School principal with written notice of up to three specific dates for which alternative accommodations are requested, if an absence approved under this policy conflicts with an examination or other academic requirement on that date.

Upon approval of a request that satisfies this Section (B)(1) the principal shall require the appropriate classroom teacher or teachers to schedule a time and date for an alternative examination or other academic requirement if the approved student absence creates a conflict, which may be before or after the time and date the examination or other academic requirement was originally scheduled.

(2) The principal shall approve not more than three written requests per school year from a student's parent or guardian for an excused absence under this policy. The principal shall approve such requests without inquiry into the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system. However, the principal may verify a request received under Section (A) of this policy by contacting the parent or guardian whose signature appears on the request. If a parent or guardian disputes having signed such a request, the principal may deny the request.

**(C) Posting**

The School will post in a prominent location on the School's web site this policy and the contact information of the principal who can provide further information about this policy.

**(D) Annual Notification & Procedure for Requests**

Each school year the School will convey to parents and guardians this policy which includes the procedure for requesting accommodations. Such annual notification may occur by inclusion in the Parent-Student Handbook.

Absences and accommodations under this policy may be made by submitting to the School principal a request in writing, which includes e-mail.

The written request shall include:

- student name
- the requested accommodation (days to be missed or academic/examination alternative)
- a statement that the request is for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief
- the parent/guardian name and signature (email shall be considered signed)
- the parent/guardian contact information

Parents and Guardians should try to submit requests in as far as advance as possible to allow the School to most effectively make the accommodations.

**(E) Grievances**

A student, parent, or guardian may notify the School of any grievance with regard to the implementation of this policy by contacting the School Superintendent.

**(F) Absences Do Not Count Toward Intervention**

The School shall not consider any days a student is excused under this policy in determining absence hours for the purposes of parental notification under ORC 3321.191(C)(1).