225 Religion in the Schools

Religious belief and disbelief are matters of personal consideration rather than governmental authority and the students of this School are protected by the First Amendment from the establishment of religion in the schools. Accordingly, no devotional exercises or displays of a religious character will be permitted at the School in the conduct of any program or activity under the jurisdiction of the School, nor shall instructional activities be permitted to advance or inhibit any particular religion, or religion generally. However, a student may 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 also give 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.

An understanding of religions and the contributions that religion has made to the advancement of civilization is essential to the thorough education of young people and to their appreciation of a pluralistic society. To that end, the curriculum shall be developed to include, as appropriate to the various ages and attainments of the students, instruction about the religions of the world.

The Board and School acknowledge the degree to which a religious consciousness has permeated the arts, literature, music, and issues of morality. The instructional and resource materials approved for use frequently contain religious references or concern moral issues that have traditionally been the focus of religious concern. That such materials may be religious in nature shall not, by itself, bar their use by the School. The Board directs that teaching staff members employing such materials be neutral in their approach and avoid using them to advance or inhibit religion in any way.

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 students of the School, not for its conformity to religious principles. Students should receive unbiased instruction in the schools so that they may privately accept or reject the knowledge so gained in accordance with their own religious tenets.

Accordingly, no Student shall be exempted from attendance in a required course on the grounds that the instruction therein interferes with the free exercise of his/her religion.

Consistent with the School's attendance policy, students are permitted to be absent for up to three (3) school days each school year in order to participate in holidays for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief systems, or to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. Absences shall be treated as excused, and students shall not be penalized as a result of their absence. Students absent for religious expression days or religious holidays shall be permitted to participate in athletics or extracurricular activities on days in which the student was otherwise excused from attendance at school. The School shall also provide alternative accommodations in order to complete exams and other academic requirements missed due to a timely requested absence. Accommodations may include re-scheduling the alternative examination or other academic requirement for the approved student, which may be before or after the time and date that was originally scheduled.

Parents shall report absences due to religious expression or holidays in writing to the Principal in the usual manner required by the School's attendance policy. Provided however, requested absences that require accommodation for an exam or academic requirement shall be made in writing by the student's parent no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the school year, or

the date of the student's enrollment, whichever is later, in order to be deemed timely. The Principal may require confirmation of the parent's signature on any absence request, but may not inquire as to the sincerity of the student's religious or spiritual belief system.

The School also shall not prohibit a student from engaging in religious expression in the 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 the religious content of a student's work.

For questions or grievances regarding this policy, please contact:

_____ (Title)

_____ (Address)

_____ (Phone)

Grievances related to this policy will be addressed through the School's standard grievance procedure outlined in **Policy 115**.

This policy, as well as a non-exhaustive list of major religious holidays, festivals, and religious observations for which an excused absence shall not be unreasonably withheld or denied, shall be posted in a prominent location on the School's website and conveyed to parents on an annual basis.

R.C. 3320.04.

See also **Appendix 225- A** List of Non-Exhaustive Religious Holidays and Festivals.