

Religious Beliefs and Customs

Factual and objective teaching about religion, the impact of religion, and religious-based ideas and ideals may be included in classroom instruction if such information is presented as part of the curriculum and is in keeping with the district's educational goals and student learning objectives. No religious belief or non-belief is to be promoted or disparaged. Rather, students are to be encouraged to understand, appreciate and be tolerant of the religious beliefs of others.

1. Secular holidays or those that have both a religious and secular basis may be observed in the schools.
2. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
3. Religious musical selections, literature, documents of historical significance, artwork, and other learning aids may be included in the curriculum on the basis of their particular educational value and/or traditional secular usage and shall be presented with works that are nonreligious in nature, shall be selected and performed as works of art, not as acts of veneration, and shall be presented prudently and objectively, with background information explaining their purpose.
4. The temporary use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, creche, symbols of Native American religions or other religious symbols that are part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and the educational purpose of the religious object is clearly identified.
5. The school district's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths and when possible, examinations and other major events should not be scheduled on such holidays. Students who miss school for religious reasons are to be given an opportunity to make up school work.
6. A student or parent who believes that inclusion of religious material in the instructional program infringes on the student's free exercise of religion shall be given the option of opting-out by filing a request with the building principal. The building principal shall direct the classroom teacher to provide the student with an alternative assignment.
7. Official public school music groups may not participate in religious services under the auspices of the public schools.
8. Fargo Public Schools educates children from many different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Out of respect for family values and different religious and ethnic traditions, and in accordance with state and federal law, accommodations shall be provided for those students who are absent from school for religious observances when parent requests for such permission to be absent are received in advance by the building principal.

9. The scheduling of events during after-school hours will be done respectfully with consideration given to the impact that they may have on our religious communities.

Religion in the Curriculum

1. Religious institutions and orientations are central to human experience, past and present. An education excluding such a significant aspect would be incomplete. It is essential that the teaching *about* - and not *of* - religion be conducted in a factual, objective and respectful manner.
2. The inclusion of religious literature, music, drama and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities is permitted provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.
3. The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature and history should be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.
4. Student initiated responses to questions or assignments that reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs shall be accommodated so long as they are appropriate to the assignment. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.
5. Sectarian instruction may not be offered to students in any school during regular school hours.

Student Prayer

Students may pray when not engaged in school activities or instruction and are subject to the same rules designed to prevent material disruption of the educational program that are applied to other privately initiated expressive activities. Among other things, student may read a bible or other scriptures, say grace before meals, and pray or study religious materials with fellow students during recess, the lunch hour, or non-instructional time to the same extent that they may engage in non-religious activities. While school authorities may impose rules of order on student activities (misconduct such as loud-speaking, eating, watching TV which is not conducive to prayer will not be tolerated) they will not discriminate against student prayer or religious speech in applying such rules and/or restrictions. Staff will not be asked to supervise.

Complaint Procedure

Anyone who believes that a particular program or practice may have violated this policy should follow the procedures and form included within Administrative Policy 4250, Selection of Instructional Materials.

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Parent/Guardian Prayer Request Form

I would like my child to pray during the school day.

- 1. Student name: _____
- 2. Parent name: _____
- 3. School student is attending: _____
- 4. Date of request: _____

5. The best time for him/her/them to pray is:

- _____ During lunch or study hall
- _____ Between classes
- _____ An exact time of prayer is required.
That time is (please fill in) _____

**There may be special circumstances (such as during testing or an emergency drill) when this time cannot be strictly followed.*

6. Check all that apply:

- _____ My child will need a place for cleansing
- _____ My child will need a quiet, private place for prayer
- _____ My child may pray wherever it is convenient
- _____ My child may pray alone

7. Classrooms are used throughout the day. School staff will determine a location for prayer as space allows.

8. Please let us know any other information that may help us support your child’s prayer needs:

Parent/guardian signature: _____

Phone number: _____

**This request will remain in effect until notification of change by parent. Please place in cumulative file.*