



Re: Parent Notification of Opt-Out Rights for Specific Instruction Based on Religious Belief

Dear Parent/Guardian,

On June 27, 2025, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*. The Court ruled that public schools must allow parents/guardians the option to opt their children out of specific instruction if a parent or guardian believes that instruction substantially interfere with a parent's right to direct their child's religious upbringing.

The Santa Monica–Malibu Unified School District is committed to ensuring that all students learn in a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment. We continue to uphold California Education Code requirements, including the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act (also known as SB 48) and the California Healthy Youth Act, which mandate inclusive curriculum and anti-discrimination protections for minority groups including LGBTQ+ students. These protections remain firmly in place.

Accordingly, SMMUSD will continue providing inclusive education that reflects California law as well as the values of belonging, curiosity, empowerment, diversity, equity, and inclusion. At the same time, we are implementing an opt-out process in compliance with *Mahmoud* for specific lessons identified in advance by you the parent/guardian as potentially conflicting with sincerely held religious beliefs—subject to case-by-case consideration of the lesson's content.

If you believe that exposure to a lesson would interfere with your child's religious development, you may complete the enclosed Opt-Out Form and return it to the site administrator. Your child will receive an alternative assignment or activity during that specified instructional period.

Please note, the opt-out applies only to discrete, clearly identified lessons and does not extend to broader discussions, materials, or curriculum that support inclusivity or meet California's legal mandates. SMMUSD remains fully committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all students, as required by the FAIR Education Act, California Healthy Youth Act, and Board policies.

Thank you for your partnership. Should you have questions about specific lessons or the opt-out process, please contact your school's administration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Antonio Shelton, Superintendent

Parent/Guardian Request for Student Opt-Out of Specific Instructional Content

This form provides parents/guardians with the option to request that their child be excused from specific instructional content when it may conflict with a parent or family's religious upbringing of their child pursuant to that parent or family's sincerely held religious beliefs. The request and district's response is dependent upon the specific religious beliefs and practices asserted as well as the specific nature of the educational requirement or curricular feature at issue.

Each request will be reviewed by the school to determine the appropriate response based on the nature of the request and the instructional context. Submitting this form does not automatically result in a student being excused from the identified content, and alternative arrangements will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Student Information

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____

Instructional Content for Opt-Out Request

Identify the specific instructional material including the type, name and/or title of the material (e.g., title of storybook, lesson, or unit)

Explanation of Conflict

Explain how the specific instructional content substantially interferes with the religious upbringing of your child in accordance with your sincerely held religious beliefs

Acknowledgments

- I understand that my child will not be subject to disciplinary action, academic penalty, or other sanction as a result of this opt-out request.
- I understand that the school will provide an alternative educational activity during the time my child is excused from the identified instructional content.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

For School Use

Request received [DATE] _____ Request processed [DATE] _____

Request was approved/denied [DATE] _____

School Staff Signature _____

Reason for Denial: _____