

ALABAMA RELEASED TIME CREDIT ACT POLICY

A. Alabama Released Time Credit Act

Pursuant to the Alabama Released Time Credit Act, Alabama public school systems will allow a parent or guardian to choose for his or her student to attend a religious released time program conducted by a sponsoring entity, subject to exceptions permitted by law. In such event, Athens City Schools may permit released time classes and, in grades where credit is earned, award students elective credit for classes taken during the school day in approved released time programs. “Released time” is defined by the Act as a period of time during the school day when a student is allowed to participate in an approved elective course in religious instruction, conducted off school district property, by a sponsoring entity, defined as a church or other local community-based organization. By permitting such religious release time, Athens City Schools is complying with state law and does not endorse any particular religious belief, practice, or instruction.

B. Student Participation and Earned Credits

1. A student may participate in released time elective courses if all requirements are satisfied:
 - a. All parents or guardians of the student with legal custody of the student give written consent, and complete Athens City Schools’ standard checkout process;
 - b. The sponsoring entity maintains attendance records and makes them available to the public school the student attends;
 - c. The sponsoring entity makes provisions for and assumes all liability for the student who is excused from school to attend religious release time;
 - d. No public funds are expended other than de minimis administrative costs;
 - e. No public school personnel are involved in providing the religious instruction; and
 - f. The sponsoring entity conducts criminal history background checks for all employees or contractors of the entity who are likely to have direct, ongoing contact with a student who is excused from school to attend religious release time.
2. Elective course credit may be earned if the course content and curriculum are approved by Athens City Schools in accordance with the Alabama Administrative Code and other ALSDE guidelines.

C. Attendance

1. No student may be excused from the minimum instructional time for any course or subject as prescribed by the State Board of Education, or from any student intervention required under state or federal law, to attend released time.

2. Student attendance in released time shall be calculated as part of the school day and subject to all normal attendance rules.
3. The student shall assume responsibility for completing any school work missed as a result of participation in released time.

D. Transportation

Transportation to and from the place of released time, including transportation for any student with disabilities, is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring entity, parent, guardian, or student and may not be arranged, coordinated, or provided for by public school personnel.

SOURCE: Athens City Board of Education (Based on Model AASB Policy, 2026)

ADOPTED: September 29, 2026

LEGAL REF: Ala. Code § 16-1-20.6 (1975)