Policy

RELIGIOUS-BASED EXEMPTIONS

Code **IMBC** *Issued* **11/26**

The district is committed to meeting the educational needs of all students while respecting the religious beliefs and values of its students and their families. The district serves students from a wide range of backgrounds, and it is the responsibility of the board, teachers, and administrators to balance the district's educational goals and current statewide instructional standards with sensitivity to the sincerely held religious beliefs of its students and their parents/legal guardians.

Objection To Materials

While students are expected to participate in all required instructional programs and activities, the board recognizes that there may be instances in which a student and/or their parent/legal guardian object to a specific classroom discussion, assigned reading, or activity. It is the policy of Spartanburg County School District Four to provide a process for parents/legal guardians to request that their child be excused from specific classroom discussions, assigned readings, or activities that the parent/legal guardian believes are contrary to their sincerely held religious beliefs.

Parents/legal guardians will be notified in advance of upcoming instruction, classroom discussions, activities, and assigned readings involving related moral topics (excluding state law: Erin's Law and Gavin's Law). Such notice will be provided through one or more of the following methods:

- class syllabi distributed within the first 10 days of each semester
- periodic classroom updates that preview upcoming instructional materials containing sensitive content
- maintain an updated catalog of all books and materials in Destiny Classroom Library Manager (DCLM) or other digital formats
- written notice

Inspection and review of instructional materials

Parents/legal guardians who would like to inspect and review instructional materials before use should make a written request to the school principal identifying the instructional materials the parent/legal guardian is seeking to preview. Within 10 business days of receiving the request, the school principal will provide access to the requested materials along with the Religious Opt-Out Request Form.

The district will provide access to the requested materials by providing the parent/legal guardian with a copy of the materials or by scheduling a mutually agreeable date and time for the parent/legal guardian to come into the school to review the materials.

Opt-out requests

A parent/legal guardian may request that their child be excused from participating in instruction, classroom discussions, activities, or assigned readings that may conflict with

their sincerely held religious beliefs. The request must be submitted in writing using the Religious Opt-Out Request Form to the school principal.

The school principal will review the request to ensure the objection is clearly identified and religious in nature.

The school principal will defer to the parent/legal guardian's good-faith assertion of a sincere religious belief. The parent/legal guardian will not be required to prove their faith or to defend their beliefs.

The school principal must approve the request in writing by noting the action taken on the Religious Opt-Out Form.

Students will not be penalized for their inability to participate in instruction on sexuality or other sensitive moral topics where accommodations have been granted based on the sincerely held religious beliefs of the students' parent/guardian. Where feasible, an appropriate alternative assignment will be provided.

The district will keep written documentation of parental notices, Religious Opt-Out Forms, and any alternative assignments offered in accordance with the district's recordkeeping policies.

Parents/legal guardians who have concerns about instructional materials for reasons other than their sincerely held religious beliefs should follow the procedures outlined in KEC, *Public Concerns and Complaints About Instructional Resources*.

The superintendent will develop the necessary administrative procedures to implement this policy.

Training

The district will provide annual training to teachers and school principals regarding parental rights and the proper handling of opt-out requests.

Escalation Protocol

If the matter is unresolved with the principal, the parent/legal guardian may escalate the request to the superintendent or his/her designee for consideration.

If objections become so frequent or broad that providing alternative instruction is impractical, the superintendent will refer the matter to the board for review.

Notice
This policy will be posted on the district website and printed in student handbooks.

Cf. JRA, KEC
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Legal References:

A. Federal Cases:
   1. *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, 606 U.S. 522 (2025).

B. S.C. State Board of Education Regulations:
   1. R 43-170-Uniform Procedure for Selection or Reconsideration of Instructional Materials