RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Code **IHAL** *Adopted* **10/1988** *Latest Review:* **03/21/2024** *Latest Revision:* **03/21/2024**

The board recognizes that one of the district's educational goals is to advance students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization. Religious instruction in the context of history, literature, art, music, and other core subjects is encouraged. Religious instruction provides an opportunity for learning about different cultures and fostering understanding and tolerance of diversity among students.

The district does not promote any specific religion or religion in general. The district will not interfere with a student's religious beliefs or religious expression. Accommodations for students will be made as long as such accommodations do not interfere with school schedules and procedures designed to ensure an orderly and safe environment for all students. Religious accommodations should not interfere with the religious beliefs and religious expressions of others. Students and staff members will be tolerant of the beliefs and expressions of others.

Therefore, it is the policy of the board to ensure the following:

- Students will not be penalized for absences to celebrate religious holidays.

- Students are responsible for assignments or tests that are missed due to religious observances. Teachers will allow students the opportunity to turn in assignments and make-up tests within a reasonable amount of time.

- Students' personal expression of religious beliefs in assignments such as homework, artwork, and oral presentations will be judged by ordinary academic standards. The district will accommodate student-initiated expressions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme.

- Students will be excused without penalty from participating in an activity that is objectionable based on religious or personal beliefs or practices. This does not include merely reading or discussing materials, or mere exposure to ideas, that are part of the district curriculum and are presented for the purpose of studying comparative religion, the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization, or religious texts for their literary and historic qualities. Where possible, students will be provided with appropriate accommodations or with an alternate activity.

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

- Students will not be penalized because they are unable to participate in an extracurricular activity due to observance of a religious holiday.

Religious instruction to enhance the curriculum for social, cultural, and historical purposes is encouraged. However, the promotion of religion in the classroom is not permissible. Instruction will include a variety of religions and cultures to promote diversity and tolerance.

Religious symbols and displays associated with religious holidays may be used as teaching aids or resources only during the period of instruction. No religious symbols should be represented on classroom materials unless the materials relate to curricular study about religion or culture.

The district will permit music, art, literature, and drama having religious themes or basis as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if they are presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.

Adopted 10/88;Revised 4/20/17, 3/21/24

Legal References:

A. S.C. Code of Laws, 1976, as amended:
   1. Section 59-1-435 - Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act.
   2. Section 59-17-140 - Religion and public schools training for teachers and administrators.
   3. Section 59-29-230 - Old and New Testament era courses.

B. Federal Cases:
   1. Wood v. Arnold, 915 F.3d 308 (4th Cir. 2019).
   2. *Mahmoud v. Taylor,* 606 U.S. 522 (2025).