

1 **Kalispell Public Schools**

2
3 **INSTRUCTION**

2332
page 1 of 2

4
5 Religion and Religious Activities

6 In keeping with the United States and Montana Constitutions and judicial decisions, the District
7 may not support any religion or endorse religious activity. At the same time, the District may
8 not prohibit private religious expression by students. This policy provides direction to students
9 and staff members about the application of these principles to student religious activity at school.

10
11 Student Prayer and Discussion

12 Students may pray individually or in groups and may discuss their religious views with other
13 students, as long as they are not disruptive or coercive. The right to engage in voluntary prayer
14 does not include the right to have a captive audience listen, to harass other students, or to force
15 them to participate. Students may pray silently in the classroom, except when they are expected
16 to be involved in classroom instruction or activities.

17
18 Staff Members

19 Staff members are representatives of the District and must “navigate the narrow channel between
20 impairing intellectual inquiry and propagating a religious creed.” They may not encourage,
21 discourage, persuade, dissuade, sponsor, participate in, or discriminate against a religious activity
22 or an activity because of its religious content. They must remain officially neutral toward
23 religious expression.

24
25 Graduation Ceremonies

26 Graduation is an important event for students and their families. In order to assure the
27 appropriateness and dignity of the occasion, the District sponsors and pays for graduation
28 ceremonies and retains ultimate control over their structure and content.

29
30 District officials may not invite or permit members of the clergy to give prayers at graduation.
31 Furthermore, District officials may not organize or agree to requests for prayer by other persons
32 at graduation, including requests by students to open or deliver a prayer at graduation. The
33 District may not prefer the beliefs of some students over the beliefs of others, coerce dissenters
34 or nonbelievers, or communicate any endorsement of religion.

35
36 Baccalaureate Ceremonies

37 Students and their families may organize baccalaureate services, at which attendance must be
38 entirely voluntary. Organizers of baccalaureate services may rent and have access to school
39 facilities on the same basis as other private groups and may not receive preferential treatment.
40 The District may not be identified as sponsoring or endorsing baccalaureate services. District
41 funds, including paid staff time, may not be used directly or indirectly to support or subsidize
42 any religious services.

43
44 Assemblies, Extracurricular and Athletic Events

45 District officials may not invite or permit members of the clergy, staff members, or outsiders to
46 give prayers at school-sponsored assemblies and extracurricular or athletic events. District

officials also may not organize or agree to student requests for prayer at assemblies and other school-sponsored events. Furthermore, prayer may not be broadcast over the school public address system, even if the prayer is nonsectarian, nonproselytizing, and initiated by students.

Student Religious Expression and Assignments

Students may express their individual religious beliefs in reports, tests, homework, and projects. Staff members should judge their work by ordinary academic standards, including substance, relevance, appearance, composition, and grammar. Student religious expression should neither be favored nor penalized.

Religion in the Curriculum

Staff members may teach students about religion in history, art, music, literature, and other subjects in which religious influence has been and continues to be felt. However, staff members may not teach religion or advocate religious doctrine or practice. The prohibition against teaching religion extends to curricular decisions which promote religion or religious beliefs.

School programs, performances, and celebrations must serve an educational purpose. The inclusion of religious music, symbols, art, or writings is permitted, if the religious content has a historical or independent educational purpose which contributes to the objectives of the approved curriculum. School programs, performances, and celebrations cannot promote, encourage, discourage, persuade, dissuade, or discriminate against a religion or religious activity and cannot be oriented to religion or a religious holiday.

Student Religious Clubs

Students may organize clubs to discuss or promote religion, subject to the same constitutionally acceptable restrictions the District imposes on other student-organized clubs.

Distribution of Religious Literature

Students may distribute religious literature to their classmates, subject to the same constitutionally acceptable restrictions the District imposes on distribution of other non-school literature. Outsiders may not distribute religious or other literature to students on school property, consistent with and pursuant to the District policy on solicitations (Policy 4321).

Religious Holidays

Staff members may teach objectively about religious holidays and about religious symbols, music, art, literature, and drama which accompany the holidays. They may celebrate the historical aspects of the holidays but may not observe them as religious events.

Policy History:

Adopted on: 01/04/2000

Revised on: 09/12/2006; 12/11/2012