



Shelton School District
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BOARD POLICY

Policy No. 2340
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INSTRUCTION

RELIGIOUS-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES

The Board recognizes that views and opinions regarding the relationship of the schools and religion are diverse. While community opinions are important in shaping policy, the Board must give primary credence to the United States and Washington State constitutions, state law and the decisions made by the respective courts when establishing guidelines for making decisions regarding religious-related activities and practices. The Board further accepts the declaration of the State Board of Education that “all students . . . possess the constitutional right to the free exercise of religion and to have their schools free from sectarian control or influence.” To this end, the Board establishes the following guidelines to preserve the constitutional rights of all students:

- Instruction about religious matters and/or using religious materials shall only be addressed when instruction serves a secular educational purpose. Furthermore, any instruction shall be conducted in regard to religion in an objective manner which demonstrates no partiality in regard to denominational or doctrinal issues.
- Criteria used to guide academic inquiry in the study of religion will seek the same neutrality, objectivity and educational effectiveness expected in other areas of the curriculum. In addition, materials and activities should be sensitive to America's pluralistic society and should educate rather than indoctrinate. Instructional activities should meet the three-part test established and used by the U.S. Supreme Court to determine constitutionality:
 1. The activity must have a secular purpose;
 2. The activity's principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and
 3. The activity must not excessively involve the school in religion. This constitutional restriction does not preclude a student from expressing his/her views relative to belief or non-belief about a religious-related issue in compositions, reports, music, art, debate and classroom discussion, when consistent with the assignment.
- All religious-related instructional materials and/or activities must relate to secular student learning goals or standards.
- Staff will avoid assigning work that emphasizes the religious aspects of a holiday. Individual students should be allowed, at their own direction, to use religious personages, events or symbols as a vehicle for artistic expression, if consistent with the assignment. State law prohibits staff from requiring that students reveal, analyze or critique their religious beliefs, from grading academic work on its religious

expression if any, from censoring or imposing consequences on students who engage in religious expression in accordance with the law, or from imposing the religious beliefs of the staff member on students.

- A student may decline to participate in a school activity that is contrary to his/her religious convictions.
- A student may distribute religious literature under the same conditions that other literature may be distributed on the campus provided that such distribution does not intrude on the operation of the school.
- Material and/or announcements promoting religion may not be distributed by non-students or on behalf of groups or individuals who are not students.
- Religious services, programs or assemblies will not be conducted in school facilities during school hours or in connection with any school sponsored or school related activity. Speakers and/or programs that convey a religious or devotional message are prohibited. This restriction does not preclude the presentation of choral or musical assemblies which may use religious music or literature as a part of the program or assembly.
- Music, art, and drama activities with a religious theme that are associated with the tradition of a particular holiday may be presented in a neutral, nondevotional manner provided that appropriate secular materials are equally presented. The activity must not have as its primary effect the advancement or inhibition of religion.
- A student, upon the request of a parent, may be excused to participate in religious instruction for a portion of a school day provided the activity is not conducted on school property.
- Upon receipt of a parent(s) request, a student will be excused from attending school in observance of a religious holiday.
- Students may wear religious attire or symbols provided they are not materially and substantially disruptive to the educational process.
- Commencement exercises will be free from sectarian influence, including invocations and benedictions.
- There will be no school sponsorship of baccalaureate services. Interested parents and students may plan and organize baccalaureate exercises provided that the service is not promoted through the school and staff, and student participation is voluntary.
- The Board recognizes that prayer and other such devotional activities may further the advancement of religion. Prayer is a private matter. As a matter of individual liberty, a student may of his/her own volition engage in silent prayer whenever he/she individually chooses to do so as long as it does not disrupt the educational instruction. School staff shall not encourage, organize or direct a student to engage in oral or silent prayer or any other form of devotional activity.
- Students, parents and staff who are aggrieved by practices or activities conducted in the school or district may register their concern with the building principal or District superintendent.

Use of School Facilities by Religious Groups

Religious activities shall not be held in school facilities during school hours or in connection with any school sponsored activities.

If noncurriculum-related student groups are permitted to meet on school premises immediately before or after school hours, students will be permitted to meet to discuss religious, political, philosophical or other issues provided such group meetings and facilities use comply with all other District policies.

Religious groups will abide by the same conditions prescribed by Board policy for the utilization of school facilities. Use of District facilities by such groups will be limited to times when students are not present as part of the regular school program.

Non-curriculum related groups of secondary students may use school facilities for meetings at times before or after the instructional day as approved by the school principal.

Date Approved: March 26, 1996
Date Revised: June 8, 2004
Revised: April 10, 2018

Cross References:

Board Policy 3122	Excused and Unexcused Absences
Board Policy 3220	Freedom of Expression
Board Policy 3223	Freedom of Assembly
Board Policy 3224	Student Dress
Board Policy 4330	Use of School Facilities

Legal References:

WAC 392-400-227	School district rules defining students' religious
RCW 28A.600.025	Student rights of religious expression— Duty of superintendent of public instruction to inform school districts
U.S. Constitution	First Amendment, Fourteenth Amendment
Wash. Constitution	Art. I § 11
Wash. Constitution	Art. 9, Sec. 4 and Art. 26