RELIGIOUS-BASED EXEMPTIONS FROM SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Policy Code: **3510**

Though students are expected to participate in all required courses and school activities, the Board supports the free exercise of religion and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion. The Board recognizes that at times a student or a student's parent or guardian may object to a specific classroom discussion, activity, or assigned reading based on religious reasons. The Board also recognizes that parents and guardians may want their students excused from school to attend private religious instruction. This policy is designed to provide students, parents, and guardians with a process for seeking religious-based exemptions from school programs.

A. RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS TO CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS, ACTIVITIES, OR ASSIGNED READINGS

The curriculum of the school system will be based on the current statewide instructional standards. The Wake County Board of Education, school administrators, and teachers will exercise their authority to select appropriate materials and teach the curriculum in an effective manner. To the extent practicable, students, parents, and guardians will be notified in advance of upcoming classroom discussions, activities, and assigned readings.

A student, parent, or guardian may petition to exempt the student from participation in a specific classroom discussion, activity, or assigned reading that the student, parent, or guardian believes would impose a substantial burden on the student's religious beliefs or invade the student's privacy by calling attention to the student's religion. Any request for exemption should be submitted to the classroom teacher and school principal in accordance with the following guidelines.

1. The request must be in writing.

2. The request must specify the discussion, activity, or reading and explain how it would impose a substantial burden on the student's religious beliefs or invade the student's privacy by calling attention to the student's religion.

3. The request may suggest a proposed alternate activity or study.

The classroom teacher and school principal shall consult about the request, and the principal shall review it in accordance with any constitutional or statutory standards. The principal shall accommodate the request as required by law. If accommodation is not required by law, the principal may choose to accommodate such a request after weighing factors, such as the interest of the child, the impact on other students, and the availability of alternative activities or materials. An appeal of the principal's decision may be made through 1742-5060 Responding to Complaints or Policy 1740-4010 Student and Parent Grievance Procedure as appropriate.

If a student is excused from a classroom discussion, activity, or assigned reading, the student will be provided an alternative activity or assignment aligned with the standard

course of study.

B. RELEASED TIME RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

The principal shall excuse students from school to attend released time religious instruction pursuant to G.S. 115C-407.45 and in accordance with the guidelines described below. For purposes of this policy, released time religious instruction means religious instruction offered by a private entity during the school day. Released time religious instruction is not a part of the school system's educational program or activities and is neither sponsored, supervised, nor controlled by the Board. No academic credit will be awarded for a student's participation in released time religious instruction. The school system will not expend state or local funds, excluding any de minimis costs of administering this policy, to facilitate a student attending released time religious instruction.

1. Participation in released time religious instruction is voluntary and may occur only upon the written request of the student's parent or guardian. School system employees shall not encourage or discourage participation.

2. Before a student may participate in released time religious instruction, the student's parent or guardian must provide the principal with a signed copy of the school's consent form. By signing the form, parents and guardians acknowledge that they are responsible for arranging transportation to and from the location where the released time religious instruction will occur. Released time religious instruction by private entities will not be provided on school property except as permitted by Policy 5030 Community Use of Facilities.

3. To reduce the amount of instructional time lost and to minimize disruption to school operations, students may be excused for one hour of released time religious instruction during a school week. Released time religious instruction will not be permitted during state-required tests, screenings, or other assessments, or state-required remedial instruction, interventions, or retesting.

4. The student's parent or guardian must provide the principal with written documentation affirming that the student attended religious instruction for each time the student is requesting an excused absence. The student is responsible for making up all missed schoolwork.

Legal References: U.S. Const. amend. I; N.C. Const. art. I, § 14; G.S. 115C-36, -47(33b) and (33d), -407.45

Adopted: October 7, 2025

Revised: