



Policy: 9.32

SUBJECT: PRAYER IN THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Supersedes:

Effective: September 8, 2008

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Approved by: Detroit Board of Education

1.0 Policy

1. The purpose of this policy pronouncement is to clarify what religious activity is permissible in the Detroit Public Schools. The Detroit School Board (the “Board”) intends that all religious expressions be consistent with established legal precedent.

2. Permissible Religious Activity:
 - a. The law permits a strictly voluntary program of student prayer or other religious exercise if it does not take place during regular school hours, and if the authority of the school is in no way utilized to recognize or maintain the exercise or to secure the attendance of the pupils.

 - b. The Board has discretion under the Revised School Code to make public school buildings available during off-school hours for the purpose of holding religious instruction classes as long as the authority of the school is in no manner utilized to secure the attendance of the pupils under such classes and the use is simply a use of the school building. However, students are prohibited from conducting any religious exercise, including the saying of prayers and Bible reading on public school property during regular school hours.

 - c. Students, outside of class activities, may pray solely or together and discuss religious views. They also may attempt to persuade other students about religious topics but not to the point of “harassment”.

 - d. Students may give religious literature to schoolmates on the same terms as other non-class materials are passed out. However, the school has the authority to impose reasonable rules of place, time and manner of distribution.

- e. Schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religions, their roles in history, their influence on art, music and social studies, and about the Bible and other religious writings as literature.
 - f. Students may express their religious beliefs as part of homework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments to be judged by academic standards.
- 3. School officials may neither encourage nor discourage non-classroom activities that have religious content, but they should ensure that no students are coerced or compelled to participate. Staff members cannot participate in these activities.
 - 4. The Board does not hereby require, conduct or sanction any voluntary program of prayers, bible reading, or other devotional exercises. However, it does observe the right of students to engage in the permissible religious activities described in paragraph 2, above. Accordingly, if requested by students, Detroit Public Schools are to allow permissible religious activity during off-school hours.
 - 5. In granting access to student religious groups, the Board hereby emphasizes that public schools may do so on the same basis as other extracurricular clubs, as long as the following conditions are met:
 - a. The meeting is voluntary and student-initiated,
 - b. There is no sponsorship of the meeting by the public school, the government, or either's agent or employees,
 - c. Employees or agents of the public school or government are present at religious meetings only in a non-participatory capacity,
 - d. The meeting does not materially and substantially interfere with the orderly conduct of educational activities within the school, and
 - e. Persons not affiliated with the public schools may not direct, conduct, control or regularly attend activities of student groups.

Attachments to Policy 9.32: None

See also: None

Legal References: U. S. Constitution
MI Constitution
20 USC § 6318

Labor Contract References: None