

Article V.C.5. Religious Belief, Expression, and Exemptions in Schools

A. Statement of Purpose

The Granite School District (District) community is highly diverse combining myriad national, linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The Board of Education of Granite School District (Board) affirms that our diverse and pluralistic community is a fundamental asset of the District. Varying cultural and religious traditions are afforded a certain level of expression in schools, and the District protects those lawful expressions.

B. Definitions

1. “Discretionary Time” means the time before school, after school, and during lunch. Time when a student is assigned to a class period is non-discretionary time.
2. “Right of conscience” means any belief held by an individual regarding their own personal moral judgments, morals, and ethics. These beliefs are equivalent to religious beliefs for the purposes of this policy.
3. “School activity” means any program, event, or assignment that is sponsored or endorsed by the school or District, even if the activity does not take place on school property.

~~B.C.~~ Statement of Policy Religious Expression

To a significant degree, praying and other forms of religious expression are protected under the First Amendment in the limited public forum of schools. The First Amendment also includes countervailing protections against state establishment of religion.

1. Reasonable, personal expressions of faith by students and employees shall not be denied by the District or schools, and the District and schools shall be receptive to requests for accommodations to allow for such personal expressions.
2. Students may initiate and conduct voluntary religious activities or otherwise exercise their religious freedom on school grounds during discretionary time. However, individuals not currently enrolled as students in the school may neither conduct nor regularly attend recurring voluntary religious activities.
3. District employees may neither conduct nor actively participate in student led religious activities but may be present as necessary to ensure proper observance of school rules and may limit or prohibit student activities under this section which: (1) unreasonably interfere with the ability of school officials to maintain order and discipline; (2) threaten the well-being of persons or property; or (3) violate concepts of civility or propriety appropriate in a school setting.

4. Otherwise, District or school sponsored or endorsed religious expression, including prayers, shall not be allowed, given, recited, or encouraged in classes, assemblies, student activities, school-sponsored events, or any other similar activities. However, no students or District employees shall be ~~encouraged or discouraged~~precluded from participating in private prayer or silent observance during any such school-sponsored activity.

~~C. Any individual who believes that the policy has been violated may report the violation to school or District administrators, and the report will be thoroughly investigated.~~

D. Religious Exemptions

Under Utah state law, students shall not be required to participate in any school activity that is contrary to the students' and/or parents' religious beliefs or rights of conscience. Therefore, parents may waive a students' participation in any school activity that violates a religious belief or right of conscience.

1. When a student wishes to refrain from participating in an aspect of school that violates student's or parents' religious beliefs or rights of conscience, the school shall promptly notify the student's parents. The school shall not penalize or discriminate against a student for refraining to participate due to their belief or right of conscience.
2. If a student refrains from a school activity, the school may provide an alternative activity that does not violate their religious belief or right of conscience.
3. The school shall not require students or parents to explain, defend, or justify the religious belief or rights of conscience.

E. Religious Clothing and Athletics

Students that are required to wear a uniform for participation in athletic activities may not be prohibited from wearing religious clothing with the athletic uniform or wearing clothing under the athletic uniform as long as the athletic uniform is not substantially covered. Consistent with student's religious or moral belief, students may cover or conceal parts of their body that are not covered or concealed by the athletic uniform.

F. Responding to Complaints

Any individual who believes that the policies on religious expression, belief-based exemptions, and/or religious clothing have been violated may report the violation to school or the Educational Equity Department, and the report shall be thoroughly investigated. (See V.C.1. Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, Retaliation).

REFERENCES

Utah Code Ann., §53G-10-203 Expressions of Belief

Utah Code Ann., §53G-10-205 Waivers of Participation

Utah Code Ann., §53G-7-804 School Uniforms

Kennedy v. Bremerton School Dist., 597 U.S. (2022)