

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION, EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

The Board of Trustees acknowledges that a diversity of religious belief exists within the community and among the students served by Livingstone Range School Division. It is the desire of the Board of Trustees to promote religious tolerance, to acknowledge religious diversity, to establish and maintain inclusive environments in schools, and to provide appropriate opportunities for students to give expression to their religious beliefs. Accordingly, the school principal shall promote a school atmosphere that supports inclusion and that respects the diversity of religious belief which exists among students.

POLICY

The School Act (S. 50) provides opportunity for a school board to prescribe religious instruction and/or religious exercises for its students. The Board of Trustees expects, therefore, that religious instruction and/or exercises in Board of Trustees-operated schools will occur only when prescribed by the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees, in order to avoid the teaching of any particular religious doctrine or creed, to promote religious inclusion and tolerance, and to acknowledge the diversity of religious belief that exists among its students, does not prescribe religious instruction and/or religious exercises in its schools, with the exception of religious instruction and/or exercises that occur in the context of religious alternative programs that have been established by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Board Policy and the provisions of the School Act (S. 21). Furthermore, the Board of Trustees endorses the offering of provincially authorized courses of instruction about religion for the purpose of understanding current events, history, geography, culture, etc. (where sufficient interest exists to warrant the offering of such courses).

The above notwithstanding, the Board of Trustees recognizes that many day-to-day school activities may be considered to be of a religious nature, or may be perceived to include a religious element. These include activities of both an instructional and non-instructional nature. Such activities provide valuable learning and cultural opportunities for students, serve to acknowledge the religious diversity which exists among students, and provide students with opportunity to express their personal spirituality and religious beliefs.

GUIDELINES

1. The Board authorizes student participation in the following activities which may include incidental or indirect reference to religion or religious themes:
 - a) a moment of silence at a special event such as a Remembrance Day ceremony;
 - b) participation in extra-curricular activities such as religious clubs;

- c) appropriate and inclusive ceremonial address at special events such as graduation exercise and aboriginal awards ceremonies;
 - d) preparation for and performance of musical or dramatic selections with incidental religious themes or content, with the understanding that such selections shall not contain religious exercise such as prayers or bible readings and where the preparation and performance of those selections takes place in an inclusive, non-discriminatory and non-indoctrinational manner;
 - e) memorial services where such services do not contain religious exercise such as prayers or bible readings and the service takes place in an inclusive, non-discriminatory and non-indoctrinational manner;
 - f) the recital of the Lord's Prayer only as part of opening exercises;
 - g) concerts and activities in recognition of holidays with a religious basis, where such concerts and activities do not contain religious exercise such as prayers or bible readings and the concert or activity takes place in an inclusive, non-discriminatory and non-indoctrinational manner;
 - h) activities of a religious nature associated with the study of other cultures, and;
 - i) activities as part of provincially authorized courses of study where sufficient student interest warrants the offering of such courses.
2. In accordance with The Alberta Human Rights Act, parents/guardians shall be provided notice where courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion.

In accordance with the provisions of the School Act, upon request from a parent, a student shall be excused from activities that are considered by the parent to be religious in nature.

References:

School Act Section 3, Section 50
Constitution Act, 1867, 30 and 31 Victoria, C.3 (UK), section 93
Alberta Act, Section 17
School Ordinance of the Northwest Territories (O.N.W.T. 1901, Section 93)
Alberta Human Rights Act, Section 4, 11.1
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Sections 2(a) and 15
Administrative Procedure 205, Controversial Issues in the Classroom
Administrative Procedure 206, Controversial Materials in the Classroom
Administrative Procedure 213, Inclusive Education/Responding to Student Needs

Approved & Adopted: April 8, 2014