

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MODEL POLICY ON RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS¹**

Per Section 1002.206, Florida Statutes, known as the “Florida Student and School Personnel Religious Liberties Act,” the Department of Education’s Model Policy on religious expression in public schools is as follows:

It is the policy of the [Insert County] School District that the district will not discriminate against a student, parent, or school personnel on the basis of a religious viewpoint or religious expression.

Student Expression of Religious Viewpoints

1. [Insert County] School District will treat a student’s voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner that a school district treats a student’s voluntary expression of a secular viewpoint.
2. A student may express his or her religious beliefs in coursework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination. A student’s homework and classroom assignments shall be evaluated, regardless of their religious content, based on expected academic standards relating to the course curriculum and requirements.
3. A student may not be penalized or rewarded based on the religious content of his or her work if the coursework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments require a student’s viewpoint to be expressed.

Religious Clothing, Jewelry, and Accessories

A student may wear clothing, accessories, and jewelry that display a religious message or symbol in the same manner and to the same extent that secular types of clothing, accessories, and jewelry that display messages or symbols are permitted to be worn.

Students Engaging in Religious Activities and Expression at School

1. A student may pray or engage in religious activities or religious expression before, during, and after the school day in the same manner and to the same extent that a student may engage in secular activities or expression.
2. A student may organize prayer groups, religion clubs, and other religious gatherings before, during, and after the school day in the same manner and to the same extent that a student is permitted to organize secular activities and groups.

¹ In addition to the requirements of Florida law, districts should ensure that they comply with all federal law regarding religious expression, including but not limited to the Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 4701-4704. Districts may also wish to consult U.S. Department of Education Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, which may be found here:

https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/religionandschools/prayer_guidance.html.

Employees Engaging in Religious Activities and Expression at School

1. [Insert County] School District may not prevent school personnel from participating in religious activities on school grounds that are initiated by students at reasonable times before or after the school day if such activities are voluntary and do not conflict with the responsibilities or assignments of such personnel.
2. [Insert County] School District must comply with the federal requirements in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits an employer from discriminating against an employee on the basis of religion.

Equal Access to School Facilities

1. [Insert County] School District shall give religious groups access to the same school facilities for assembling as given to secular groups without discrimination based on the religious content of the group's expression.
2. A group that meets for prayer or other religious speech may advertise or announce its meetings in the same manner and to the same extent that a secular group may advertise or announce its meetings.

Limited Public Forum Required for Student Speakers

[Insert County] School District is required to establish a limited public forum for student speakers at any school event where a student is to speak publicly. Where student speakers are permitted, the district:

1. Must provide the forum in a manner that does not discriminate against a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject;
2. Must provide a method based on neutral criteria for the selection of student speakers at school events, activities, and graduation ceremonies;
3. Must ensure that a student speaker does not engage in obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd, or indecent speech; and
4. Must state in oral or written form that the student's speech does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position, or expression of [Insert County] School District. [Insert County] School District must deliver this required disclaimer at all graduation events and at any other event where a student speaks publicly.
5. Student expression of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject may not be excluded from the limited public forum.