TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION

Religious education is the responsibility of the home and church and within the School shall remain the free choice of the individual. The School must be neutral in matters of religion and will neither inhibit nor promote any particular religion or practices.

However, religion influences many areas of education, such as literature and history, and religion's role in civilization can, and should be properly taught. Moreover, it is proper for teachers to emphasize the generally accepted moral and ethical principles of all religions and to provide information to and the opportunity for students to study the forms of various religions. In other words, it is proper for teachers to teach about religion as opposed to teaching sectarian beliefs, although study of the Bible and other sacred documents as literary forms may inform students concerning particular sectarian beliefs.

Teachers shall be permitted to objectively expose students to information concerning religions and religious beliefs, but teachers shall not advocate, openly or covertly or by subtlety, a particular religion or religious beliefs.

As used in this policy, "released time" means a period of time during which a student is excused from school to attend a course in religious instruction conducted by a private entity off school property.

The Board authorizes a student to be excused from school to attend a released time course in religious instruction, provided that each of the following applies:

1. The student's parent or guardian gives written consent.
2. The sponsoring entity maintains attendance records and makes them available to the School.
3. Transportation to and from the place of instruction, including transportation for students with disabilities, is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring entity, parent, guardian, or student.
4. The sponsoring entity makes provisions for and assumes liability for the student.
5. No public funds are expended and no public school personnel are involved in providing the religious instruction.
6. The student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork.

While in attendance in a released time course in religious instruction, a student shall not be considered absent from school. No student may be released from a core curriculum subject course to attend a religious instruction course.

Up to two units of high school credit for the completion of a released time course in religious instruction may be earned by a student.

The course shall be evaluated based on purely secular criteria that are substantially the same criteria used to evaluate similar nonpublic high school courses for purposes of determining whether to award credit for such courses to a student transferring from a nonpublic high school to a public high school. However, there shall be no criteria requiring that released time courses be completed only at a nonpublic school. The decision to award credit for a released time course of religious instruction shall be neutral to, and shall not involve any test for, religious content or denominational affiliation. Secular criteria may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The number of hours of classroom instruction time;
2. A review of the course syllabus that reflects course requirements and materials used;
3. The methods of assessment used in the course;
4. The qualifications of the course instructor, which shall be similar to the qualifications of other teachers within the School.

Notwithstanding O.R.C. §3313.603(C)(8), high school credit awarded to a student for a released time course in religious instruction may substitute for the same amount of credit in subjects listed in that division.

LEGAL REFS.: O.R.C. §§3313.601; 3313.6022

Adopted: November 2, 2017