



Board of Education

Office of the Board
1 North Dearborn Street
Suite 950
Chicago, IL 60602

Board Report

24-1212-PO1

Agenda Date: 12/12/2024

AMEND BOARD REPORT 01-1128-PO4

POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS

FOR STUDENT RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS

That the Chicago Board of Education ("Board") amend Board Report 01-1128-PO4, Policy on Accommodations for Student Religious Practices in response to the biennial policy review requirement of Board Rule 2-6. This policy was posted for public comment from November 1, 2024 until December 2, 2024.

POLICY TEXT

It is the policy of the Chicago Public Schools ("CPS") to accommodate student religious practices provided that such practices can be accommodated in a manner which does not violate the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, and to the extent that the accommodation does not place an undue burden on the school. CPS is committed to continually assessing this policy's effectiveness in addressing the needs of students of all faiths and promoting equitable school environments. This policy shall be implemented in a manner that is consistent with: CPS Policy Against Discrimination on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion or Disability the Comprehensive Non-Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy [<https://www.cps.edu/sites/cps-policy-rules/policies/100/102/102-8a/>](https://www.cps.edu/sites/cps-policy-rules/policies/100/102/102-8a/); and Board Rule 4-14 1-9 which prohibits discrimination or harassment against any employee or student on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability.

Schools will work to create safe and supportive environments where students can use religious accommodations without feeling excluded or unsafe. Families, students, and school staff are encouraged to share feedback, and CPS will use this input to make necessary improvements and provide further training and resources to schools.

A. Holidays

1. Students All students, regardless of faith distinction, are entitled to excused absences for the observance of religious holidays.
2. Students All students who are absent for the observance of a religious holiday must have an equitable opportunity to make up any missed work, examination or assignment. Teachers and staff will collaborate with students to provide reasonable deadlines and ensure they do not face academic disadvantages.
3. Any student who avails themselves of the opportunity to make up any work, examination or assignment missed because of the observance of a religious holiday, shall not be penalized based on that absence. Make-up work must maintain the same standards as regular classwork to ensure equitable learning experiences.
4. A school, through its student handbook, may require parents/legal guardians to notify the principal up to five calendar days prior to any anticipated absence for a religious holiday. In accordance with a school's student handbook, parents/legal guardians may be required to notify principals of any anticipated absence for a religious holiday. The process will be communicated in ways that are accessible to all students and families, ensuring inclusive understanding.
5. When planning curricular scopes and sequences, schools and educators should anticipate and incorporate religious holidays

and practices into the academic calendar to ensure resource equity. This includes offering students alternate ways to engage with learning, to maintain consistency in learning opportunities for all students.

B. Other Religious Accommodations

1. Schools shall attempt to make reasonable accommodations for all students who have particular religious needs, regardless of faith distinction, if requested in writing by a parent/legal guardian. Schools are not required to accommodate a religious request if granting such a request would place an undue burden on the school. For example, a high school should grant limited space, if available, and limited time, for prayer, if prayer time and space is requested by a parent in writing. However, the principal need not empty a classroom that is otherwise being occupied in order to accommodate the student. If there is no space available in the building, the principal may deny the request. Prior to denying such a request, the principal must obtain approval from the Law Department.
2. Use of staff time to accommodate students' religious needs is both a burden to the school and support for a particular religious practice which is in violation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Therefore, no staff time shall be required to monitor or supervise a student's religious activities. Requests for accommodations which would require staff supervision should be denied.
3. In order to be granted a religious accommodation, a student's parent or legal guardian must submit a written request to the principal. The written request must state: (a) the specific accommodation requested; (b) why the accommodation is needed and (c) the time and duration of the accommodation. Schools must work in inclusive partnerships with students, families, and faith communities to ensure that reasonable requests are considered and fulfilled equitably.
4. ~~To the extent possible, students should fulfill their religious obligations during lunch or a free period.~~ If a student must fulfill a religious obligation during class time, the principal should grant an excused absence for a limited, defined time. Students who are excused from class for religious needs must have an equitable opportunity to make up any work, assignment or test missed as a result of the absence.

LEGAL REFERENCES: U.S. Const., Amend. I

CROSS-REFERENCES: 24-0725-PO1; Board Rule 1-9

Approved for Consideration:

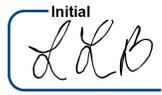
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