

1 **Potomac Elementary**

2
3 **INSTRUCTION**

2332
page 1 of 2

4
5 Religion and Religious Activities

6
7 In keeping with the United States and Montana Constitutions and judicial decisions, the District
8 may not support any religion or endorse religious activity. At the same time, the District may
9 not prohibit private religious expression by students. This policy provides direction to students
10 and staff members about the application of these principles to student religious activity at school.

11
12 Student Prayer and Discussion

13
14 Students may pray individually or in groups and may discuss their religious views with other
15 students, as long as they are not disruptive or coercive. The right to engage in voluntary prayer
16 does not include the right to have a captive audience listen, to harass other students, or to force
17 them to participate. Students may pray silently in the classroom, except when they are expected
18 to be involved in classroom instruction or activities.

19
20 Staff Members

21
22 Staff members are representatives of the District and must “navigate the narrow channel between
23 impairing intellectual inquiry and propagating a religious creed.” They may not encourage,
24 discourage, persuade, dissuade, sponsor, participate in, or discriminate against a religious activity
25 or an activity because of its religious content. They must remain officially neutral toward
26 religious expression.

27
28 Graduation Ceremonies

29
30 Graduation is an important event for students and their families. In order to assure the
31 appropriateness and dignity of the occasion, the District sponsors and pays for graduation
32 ceremonies and retains ultimate control over their structure and content.

33
34 District officials may not invite or permit members of the clergy to give prayers at graduation.
35 Furthermore, District officials may not organize or agree to requests for prayer by other persons
36 at graduation, including requests from students. The District may not prefer the beliefs of some
37 students over the beliefs of others, coerce dissenters or nonbelievers, or communicate any
38 endorsement of religion.

39
40 Assemblies, Extracurricular and Athletic Events

41
42 District officials may not invite or permit members of the clergy, staff members, or outsiders to
43 give prayers at school-sponsored assemblies and extracurricular or athletic events. District
44 officials also may not organize or agree to student requests for prayer at assemblies and other
45 school-sponsored events. Furthermore, prayer may not be broadcast over the school public
46 address system, even if the prayer is nonsectarian, no proselytizing, and initiated by students.

1
2
3
4 Student Religious Expression and Assignments
5

6 Students may express their individual religious beliefs in reports, tests, homework, and projects.
7 Staff members should judge their work by ordinary academic standards, including substance,
8 relevance, appearance, composition, and grammar. Student religious expression should neither
9 be favored nor penalized.
10

11 Religion in the Curriculum
12

13 Staff members may teach students about religion in history, art, music, literature, and other
14 subjects in which religious influence has been and continues to be felt. However, staff members
15 may not teach religion or advocate religious doctrine or practice. The prohibition against
16 teaching religion extends to curricular decisions which promote religion or religious beliefs.
17

18 School programs, performances, and celebrations must serve an educational purpose. The
19 inclusion of religious music, symbols, art, or writings is permitted, if the religious content has a
20 historical or independent educational purpose which contributes to the objectives of the approved
21 curriculum. School programs, performances, and celebrations cannot promote, encourage,
22 discourage, persuade, dissuade, or discriminate against a religion or religious activity and cannot
23 be oriented to religion or a religious holiday.
24

25 Student Religious Clubs
26

27 Students may organize clubs to discuss or promote religion, subject to the same constitutionally
28 acceptable restrictions the District imposes on other student-organized clubs.
29

30 Distribution of Religious Literature
31

32 Students may distribute religious literature to their classmates, subject to the same
33 constitutionally acceptable restrictions the District imposes on distribution of other non-school
34 literature. Outsiders may not distribute religious or other literature to students on school
35 property, consistent with and pursuant to the District policy on solicitations (Policy 4321).
36

37 Religious Holidays
38

39 Staff members may teach objectively about religious holidays and about religious symbols,
40 music, art, literature, and drama which accompany the holidays. They may celebrate the
41 historical aspects of the holidays but may not observe them as religious events.
42

43 Policy History:

44 Adopted on: November 8, 2010

45 Reviewed on:

46 Revised on: