

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN DIVISION/SCHOOL RELATED FUNCTIONS

Background

Religious convictions are a personal matter. The primary place where such convictions are developed is the home. Public schools are inclusive and any parent who wishes to have his/her child attend a public school is welcome to do so. The parent, the child or any member of Division staff will not be discriminated against as a result of their personal religious beliefs.

The emphasis on religion in public schools is to be as a subject of intellectual inquiry with the exception noted below for Alternative programs.

Alternative programs, with a focus on religion, that have been established by Foothills School Division in accordance with provisions legislation/regulation, may satisfy the requirements of legislation/regulation by providing a clear statement on the registration form that religion permeates the school program. In such a case it is understood that religious instruction is an integral part of the Alternative program, and those enrolled within the program have agreed to participate in all such activities.

Conducting religious activities of a non-denominational or non-proselytizing nature that are acceptable to parents and staff in schools of the Division are authorized. The conditions governing the use of religious activities are contained in the procedures.

Principals are responsible for the administration of this administrative procedure.

Procedures

1. Religious Activities

- 1.1 Religious activities and readings may be used in the context of celebrating religious holidays (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, Ramadan, etc.).
- 1.2 Religious activities may be used as part of an opening exercise provided:
 - 1.2.1 Parents have been notified of such activities in advance and do not object to their student's participation (if a parent objects to their student's participation then the student shall be excused from that portion of the activity);
 - 1.2.2 The religious beliefs or choice of any staff member(s) involved is not discriminated against;
 - 1.2.3 The students treat religious activities with dignity.

- 2. Foothills School Division No. 38 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 our school community. The following are examples that may be considered to be of a religious nature and which are permitted in Division schools:

- 2.1 A moment of silence at the beginning or end of a school day, or at a special event such as a Remembrance Day ceremony;
 - 2.2 Student participation in extra-curricular activities such as religious clubs and accommodation of student/staff requests for religious observance;
 - 2.3 Ceremonial prayer at special events such as graduation exercises, aboriginal awards ceremonies, etc.;
 - 2.4 The performance of musical or dramatic selections with religious themes or content, with the understanding that the performance is not intended to be a religious exercise;
 - 2.5 Distribution of religious literature (i.e. "sacred books") to those students whose parents have provided written consent for their children to receive such literature;
 - 2.6 The placement in schools of religious symbols or illustrations associated with special events, celebrations, or festivals;
 - 2.7 Memorial services in remembrance of staff or students.
3. In accordance with the provisions of legislation/regulation, upon written request from a parent, a student shall be excused from activities that are considered by the parent to be religious in nature with the exception of Alternative programming as noted above.

Reference: Relevant Legislation and Regulations