

ACCOMMODATING SINCERELY HELD RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Students' sincerely held religious beliefs shall be reasonably accommodated with respect to academic activities and requirements, examinations, and other school and Recreation and Community Education Department activities which take place outside the classroom. The scheduling of academic activities, examinations, and school and Recreation and Community Education Department activities will be accomplished in such a manner as to be sensitive to and to minimize conflict with sincerely held religious beliefs.

A student shall be permitted to make up an academic, activity, or examination requirement at another time or by an alternative method, without prejudicial effect, in either or both of the following situations:

- a. There is a scheduling conflict between the student's sincerely held belief and meeting the academic, activity, or examination requirement.
- b. Parents/guardians or students of legal age have given prior notification to the instructor of the specific days or dates on which the student will request relief from an academic, activity, or examination requirement.

The resulting make-up academic requirements, activity, or examination may be scheduled for full credit before or after the regularly scheduled requirement.

Instructors shall accept at face value the sincerity of the student's religious beliefs.

Notification by parents/guardians or students of legal age to instructors and requests for relief shall be kept confidential.

Complaints of failure to provide reasonable accommodation of sincerely held religious beliefs as required by this policy may be filed following the procedures outlined in:

- a. Policy 411: Equal Educational Opportunities and 411-Rule: Student Discrimination Complaint Procedures
- b. Policy 870-Rule: Public Complaints Regarding Instructional Practices, Disciplinary Action, or School District Employees

Notification of this policy shall be published annually in school handbooks.

Adoption Date	-	5/10/95, 10/9/96, 3/8/00
Legal Reference	-	PI 41 and PI 9 Wis. Admin. Code

GUIDELINES FOR ACCOMMODATING SINCERELY HELD RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Staff members are to be supplied a comprehensive list of religious holidays and festivals with corresponding dates no less than once annually. The list should include dates for the current year and future years when available. Some of these holidays and festivals will not conflict with classroom days due to the configuration of the school calendar. Staff members are to review the lists, make note of special holy days and plan teaching and event calendars to minimize conflicts with classroom and other activities as described in Policy 323.1 and 323.1-Rule. Classroom teachers are to provide a timely oral or written reminder to older students and to the parents of younger students that Policy 323.1 provides for accommodation of sincerely held religious beliefs. The reminder should include a statement from the teacher that the teacher welcomes notice of student absences on holy days and will provide accommodation to minimize conflict. Building principals and other administrators are to give special attention to holy days and provide direction and oversight to plans for classroom and other activities that result in minimal conflict or loss of opportunity when a student is absent from school for a holy day.

Teachers, administrators, staff and staff members of the Recreation and Community Education Department may not schedule significant reviews of class material or special events on these holy days so students are excused without penalty. Students are not to be asked if they plan to be absent on these days. Makeup for significant work should not be expected on the first day of return. If a project or major assignment is due after a weekend which includes a religious holiday, additional time should be provided to complete the assignment for students who celebrated the religious holiday. Work missed in a class due to absence for religious holidays may not be expected until the number of days upon return is equivalent to the number of days missed. Makeup of tests should be scheduled outside of classroom time. Even though tests may be scheduled on a religious holy day, a pattern of many makeup tests for the same students should be avoided. This practice will allow students to participate fully in school without compromising their sincerely held religious beliefs.

For example, attention should be given to the Jewish high holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Staff will be informed that Jewish students are usually absent on one or both days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. After school and evening activities should not be conducted on the primary Jewish holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The observance of Jewish holidays begins at sunset the evening before the holiday. A margin of three to four hours prior to sunset should be provided for students to prepare for the beginning of the religious holiday. Students may be involved in observances the evening before as well as the evening of the holiday. Also staff members will be informed that the Jewish Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends one hour after sunset Saturday.

Additionally, Muslims hold Friday services. The observance of Muslim holidays begins in the morning and students may also be involved in services around sunset and early evening.

Because of these types of observances, a student may be in attendance at school, but have spent the entire prior evening celebrating a religious observance. If the student brings a note from the parents to that effect and asks them to be excused from an activity that day, that note and excuse are to be honored.

Policy 323.1 and 323.1-Rule apply to all religions and their respective holidays/holy days (e.g., Ash Wednesday) when parents/guardians or students make requests to be excused or accommodated and/or a conflict occurs between a sincerely held religious belief and academic activities and requirements, examinations, and other school and Recreation and Community Education Department activities which take place outside the classroom.

Adoption Date -- 3/8/00