

Religious Expression in Ohio Schools

Pursuant to [Ohio Revised Code 3320.04](#), which becomes effective on Oct. 24, 2024, the Department of Education and Workforce compiled this non-exhaustive list of major religious holidays for the next two school years which schools and districts may use and add to when creating their policy for excusing students for religious expression.

Schools and districts must adopt a policy that reasonably accommodates a student’s sincerely held religious beliefs and practices for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system. Students are given up to three religious expression days per school year provided that the parent or guardian provides written notice to the school or district of the selected days within 14 school days of the start of school (or within 14 days of a newly enrolled student’s first day in the school or district). The policy must allow students to participate in interscholastic athletics or other extracurricular activities on a religious expression day.

Schools and districts must post and communicate the policy to families and students. Each school or district must collaborate with the student and family on accommodations needed when there is a conflict between a religious expression day and a school assessment or academic requirement. No inclusion or exclusion of a religious holiday or festival on this list shall preclude a student from full and reasonable accommodations for any sincerely held religious beliefs and practices for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system.

These three religious expression days do not count toward parental notification requirements under [ORC 3321.191 \(C\)\(1\)](#) for excessive absences.

Non-exhaustive List of Major Religious Holidays

Rosh Hashanah	Oct. 2-4, 2024	Sept. 22-24, 2025
Yom Kippur	Oct. 11-12, 2024	Oct. 1-2, 2025
Diwali	Oct. 31 - Nov 1, 2024	Oct. 20-21, 2025
Hanukkah	Dec. 25, 2024 - Jan. 2, 2025	Dec. 21-29, 2025
Ramadan	Feb. 28 - March 30, 2025	Feb. 17 - March 18, 2026
Ash Wednesday	March 5, 2025	Feb. 18, 2026
Eid al-Fitr	March 29-30, 2025	March 19-20, 2026
Pesach (Passover)	April 12-20, 2025	April 1-9, 2026
Good Friday	April 18, 2025	April 3, 2026
Easter	April 20, 2025	April 5, 2026
Eid al-Adha	June 6-7, 2025	May 26-27, 2026

STUDENT RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES POLICY

YouthBuild Columbus Community School

ARTICLE I STUDENT RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

Students may engage in religious expression before, during, and after school hours in the same manner that a student is permitted to engage in secular activities or expression before, during, and after school hours.

ARTICLE II USE OF FACILITY FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES

Students shall have the same access to the School's facilities to conduct a meeting for the purpose of engaging in religious expression as is given to secular student groups, without regard to the content of a student's or groups expression.

ARTICLE III RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN COMPLETION OF STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

Students shall have the right to engage in religious expression in the completion of homework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments. The School shall not penalize or reward a student based on the religious content of a student's work.

ARTICLE IV RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The School shall not solicit or require a student to affirmatively ascribe to specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements, or ideology. The School shall not use statements of commitment to specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements or ideology as part of the academic evaluation of students. The School shall not solicit or require academic admission to affirmatively ascribe to, or opine about, specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles concerning political movements, or ideology.

ARTICLE V RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION DAYS

Students are permitted to be absent for up to three religious expression days (R.E.D.) each school year to take holidays for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system or participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. The School shall not impose an academic penalty as a result of a student being absent as permitted in this policy. Students are also permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics or other extracurricular activities on days in which the student was otherwise absent for a religious expression day.

Alternative Accommodations for examinations and other academic requirements missed due to the student taking a Religious Expression day shall be given, provided that the student's parent or guardian has provided a written notice of up to three specific dates that the student will require alternative accommodations for Religious Expression. This written notice must be received by the principal within fourteen (14) school days of the student's first day of school or within fourteen (14) school days of the student's enrollment if emailed after the start of the Academic Year.

The school principal shall approve not more than three written requests per school year from a student's parent or guardian for an excused absence under this Article V. The school principal shall approve such requests without inquiry into the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system. However, the school principal may verify a request received by contacting the parent or guardian whose signature appears on the request. If a parent or guardian disputes having signed such a request, the school principal may deny the request. Upon approval of a request, a school principal shall require the appropriate classroom teacher or teachers to schedule a time and date for an alternative examination or other academic requirement if the approved student absence creates a conflict, which may be before or after the time and date the examination or other academic requirement was originally scheduled.

The School's website must provide:

- 1) A copy of this policy, which shall include the contact information of an individual who can provide further information about the policy;
- 2) A nonexhaustive list of major religious holidays, festivals, and religious observations, which may include, Eid, Good Friday, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover, for which an excused absence under this section shall not be unreasonably withheld or denied.

The state superintendent will provide the School with this nonexhaustive list. Any time this policy is distributed or published, including on the School website, a statement that the list is nonexhaustive and the list may not be used to deny accommodation to a student for a holiday or festival of the student's faith or religious or spiritual belief system that does not appear on the list. Nothing in this policy, and no inclusion or exclusion of a religious holiday or festival on the list posted by the School, shall preclude a student from full and reasonable accommodations for any sincerely held religious beliefs and practices with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system provided under this policy.

Schools shall annually convey to parents and guardians this policy, including a description of the general procedure for requesting accommodations. The manner in which the school conveys the information shall be determined at the School's discretion.

Any days excused under this section shall not be considered in determining absence hours for the purposes of parental notification under division (C)(1) of section 3321.191 of the Revised Code.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR R.E.D. COMPLAINTS

LEVEL 1

If a student, the "grievant", believes there is a R.E.D. grievance, they may present the grievance to the Principal or the Principal's delegate within fifteen (15) days of the alleged conduct that violates the R.E.D. policy. The alleged grievance shall be investigated by the

Principal or the Principal's delegate and meet with the grievant and attempt to resolve the matter informally. The decision on the grievance shall be delivered orally to the grievant.

LEVEL 2

If the grievant believes that the grievance has not been resolved appropriately, they may make a statement in writing of the alleged grievance to the Governing Authority of the School. This statement must be filed within ten (10) days of the date of the Principal's or the Principal's delegate's decision. The statement shall state the nature of the alleged grievance, and the relief sought. If the grievant is a student, the Principal or the Principal's delegate shall assist in the preparation of the statement and submission to the Governing Authority within the appropriate time frame.

LEGAL REFERENCES

ORC Secs. 3314.03, 3319.614, 3320.01, 3320.02, 3320.03, 3321.191; Sub. H.B.214 (135th GA)

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RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION DAYS

The Board reasonably accommodates the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of individual students with regard to all examinations or other academic requirements and absences for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief systems in accordance with State law.

Students in grades kindergarten through 12 will be excused for up to three (3) religious expression days per school year to take holidays for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief systems or participate in activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church or other religious or spiritual organization. No academic penalty will be imposed on a student who is absent for such reasons in accordance with this policy and all requirements of State law. The number of hours for which a student is absent on an approved religious expression day is not considered in the calculations for determining absence hours for the purpose of parental notification under Ohio Revised Code 3321.191(C)(1).

Students are provided with alternative accommodations with regard to examinations or other academic requirements due to an absence for a religious expression day in accordance with the following procedures:

1. The parent/guardian must provide the school principal with written notice of up to three specific dates for which alternative accommodations are requested within 14 days of the start of the school year, or within 14 days after the date of enrollment if transferring or enrolling into the District after the start of the school year.
2. The principal will approve the request without inquiry into the sincerity of the student's religious or spiritual belief system. The principal may contact the parent/guardian whose signature appears on the request to verify the request; if the parent/guardian disputes signing the request, the request may be denied.
3. If the approved absence creates a conflict, the principal requires the appropriate classroom teachers to schedule a date and time for an alternative examination or other academic requirement that may be before or after the originally scheduled time and date.

Students are permitted to participate in interscholastic or other extracurricular activities on days they are absent for approved religious expression days.

The District develops a non-exhaustive list of major religious holidays or festivals for which a religious expression day will not be unreasonably withheld or denied. The list is non-exhaustive and may not be used to deny a student's request for accommodation for a holiday or festival of the student's faith or religious or spiritual belief system that does not appear on the list. The list will include a statement to this effect. A student will not be denied a request under this policy for a religious expression day because it is not included on the list.

This policy and the list of holidays developed by the District are posted in a prominent location on the District website.

The Board directs the Superintendent/designee to annually convey this policy to parents and guardians, including a description of the general procedure for requesting accommodations in a manner deemed

appropriate by the Superintendent/designee. Each time the policy is posted, printed or published it will include a statement that the holiday list is non-exhaustive and may not be used to deny accommodation for a student for a holiday or festival of the student's faith or religious or spiritual belief system that does not appear on the list.

The Board believes that complaints and grievances are best handled and resolved as close to their origin as possible. If a parent, guardian or student has any grievance with regard to implementation of this policy, the staff member about whom there are concerns should be given the opportunity to consider the issues and attempt to resolve the problems. If the complaint is not resolved at that level, proper channeling of complaint is to the principal or other immediate supervisor, the Superintendent and then the Board.

Legal References

ORC 3320.04

ORC 3321.191

Friday, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover.

Adopted:

THIS IS A REQUIRED POLICY

Religious Expression Day(s) Request

YouthBuild Columbus Community School ("YBCCS") policy permits a student in any grade level to be absent for up to three religious expression days each school year to take holidays for reasons of faith, religious, or spiritual belief system or to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization as required by the Ohio Revised Code. YBCCS shall not impose an academic penalty as a result of a student being absent in compliance with the district policy. The policy permits students to participate in interscholastic athletics or other extracurricular activities on days in which the student was otherwise absent for a religious expression day. Students will be provided with alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements missed due to an absence if, not later than fourteen (14) school days after the first day of school, or fourteen (14) school days after the date of enrollment for a student who transfers to or enrolls in YBCCS after the first day of school, the parent or guardian of a student provides the school principal with written notice of up to three specific dates for which alternative accommodations are requested, if an absence conflicts with an examination or other academic requirement on that date. Parent verification of requests made for religious expression days may be required by YBCCS and may be denied if requests cannot be verified.

Student's first and last name: _____

Student's grade level: _____

Date(s) of Religious Expression

Day(s): _____

Are you requesting alternative accommodations? YES NO If yes, please provide the specific date(s) impacted along with the specific academic exam or requirement.

I attest that all of the above information is true and accurate:

Parent/Guardian print first and last name:

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Date: _____

SCHOOL USE ONLY

Date Received By School: _____

Date Verified By The School That The Parent/Guardian Submitted The Request:

_____ Approved _____ Denied - Request Not Made By Parent/Guardian

_____ Denied - Over 3 Permitted Days; Specific Days Denied

_____ Assessment/Academic Accommodations will not be implemented as the form was not submitted in compliance with the policy and Revised Code 14-day requirement.

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____