

# **STUDENT RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES POLICY**

## **Niles Preparatory Academy**

### **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 enrolled 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 (135<sup>th</sup> GA)

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