



**Administrative Regulation
3067 - Religion in Education**

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Preamble

Section 3(1) of the School Act says:

“All education programs offered and instructional materials used in schools must reflect the diverse nature and heritage of society in Alberta, promote understanding and respect for others and honour and respect the common values and beliefs of Albertans.”

The Board of Trustees of the Calgary Board of Education requires the Chief Superintendent to operate in compliance with all legislation and the Board of Trustees Governance Policies and Executive Limitations.

The Board of Trustees’ Ends Policy E-5: Character sets out the following expectation for students:

“Each student will possess the character to do what is right, act morally with wisdom, and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others.”

The Board of Trustees’ Executive Limitations Policy EL-6: Instructional Programming says:

“The Chief Superintendent shall not fail to ensure that the district’s instructional program achieves the Board’s Ends policies for individual student learning.

Accordingly, the Chief Superintendent shall not fail to:

10. Assure that no program emphasizes a particular religion, notwithstanding the School Act definition of alternative programs.”

The Calgary Board of Education accepts children of all faiths and creeds, and it must show understanding and respect for differences arising from differences in faith, while encouraging inquiry and discussion in the continuing search for truth, which is the hallmark of a growing, rational being.

The Calgary Board of Education endorses teaching students about religion not the teaching of religion.

Teaching about religion	1	<p>The educational objectives of teaching <u>about</u> religion are to assist each student to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) an understanding of and respect for the beliefs of others; (b) a knowledge and understanding of the influence of religion in such areas as politics, economics, history, the arts, literature, music; (c) a knowledge and understanding of ethical standards, their derivation and application; and (d) a sound basis for making moral decisions, with an intelligent awareness of the effect of such decisions on oneself and on others, and with full knowledge of the expectations of society.
Religion in an instructional context	2(1)	<p>At the Calgary Board of Education, religion is a subject for study either embedded in existing units of study or in the Alberta Education Program of Studies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2) Religious activities which constitute public acts of worship and/or the propagation of dogma are not permissible within an instructional context. (3) Teachers are encouraged to involve students in an age appropriate objective discussion of religious, moral and spiritual topics whenever such topics become relevant in the curriculum. (4) Where religion is an aspect of existing units in social studies and other subjects, it must be given adequate treatment. (5) An open and age appropriate discussion on moral and ethical questions by teachers and students is encouraged in both formal and informal learning situations. (6) Additional information is found in: "The Role of Religion in the CBE, Questions and Answers".
Religious holidays	3(1)	<p>Nothing in this regulation is meant to suggest any reduction in, or cancellation of Christmas and Easter celebrations at a school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2) The principal must make reasonable efforts to acknowledge major

religious holidays observed by the school community. Major religious holidays are noted in multi-faith calendars and principals may wish to consult with their school community about holiday observance.

Student personal religious expression in school

- 4(1)** Principals may authorize student-initiated informal voluntary group opportunities for student personal religious expression provided that:
- (a) there is a voluntary teacher supervisor for religious clubs/prayer groups;
 - (b) prayer rooms are under the supervision of a teacher; and
 - (c) group student religious expression or group prayers are not conducted in a public, disruptive or confrontational manner.
- (2) Individual students may
- (a) pray publicly, or
 - (b) say grace or prayers before meals, or
 - (c) say prayers before tests or exams,
- as long as these activities are done quietly in a non-disruptive and non-confrontational manner.

Enforcement of religious/conscientious obligations

- 5(1)** Enforcement of religious/conscientious obligations is the responsibility of parents, not teachers.
- (2) For this reason, principals and teachers must not enforce a student's compliance with religious observances or requirements.
- (3) However, a parent may request that their student be excused for participation in certain activities that are contrary to their religious beliefs or conscientious practices.

Religious objects

- 6(1)** Students may wear faith-based jewellery, objects, and articles of clothing at school and during school sponsored activities, as long they are worn discretely, do not have a proselytising message, and meet the requirements of Administrative Regulation 6010 - Standards of Dress and Grooming.
- (2) Faith-based articles are not considered weapons unless they are used to

inflict or threaten to inflict bodily harm on a person or to intimidate a person, in which case the student's behaviour must be addressed under Administrative Regulation 6001 - School Discipline.

Guest speakers

- 7** Teachers may invite guest speakers to assist with study about religion as long as
- (a) the teacher first determines that the guest speaker understands that they are presenting an instructional, objective and scholarly focus to the historical period and religion being studied, and that they are not making a faith-based presentation; and that
 - (b) the requirements of Administrative Regulation 1014 - School Participation in Programs - Outside Speakers are met to the satisfaction of the school principal.

References

- Legal References:**
 - School Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. S-3, preamble and section 3
- Governance Policy References:**
 - E-5: Character
 - EL-1: General Executive Constraint
 - EL-6: Instructional Program
- Administrative Regulation References:**
 - 1014 - School Participation in Programs - Outside Services
 - 3079 - Aboriginal Education
 - 6001 - School Discipline
 - 6010 - Standards of Dress and Grooming
- Other References:**
 - The Calgary Board of Education: "The Role of Religion in the CBE, Questions and Answers"
 - For Multi-Faith Calendar information consult the School Information Package
- Contact Person:**
 - Director, Educational Support Services

The Role of Religion in the CBE Questions and Answers

Further clarification of specific issues related to religion is offered in the form of Q and A's below. Questions and answers were gathered from a variety of sources, including parents, teachers, principals and administration.

Q When we hold an assembly or conduct opening exercises for an event such as a sports banquet or other school sponsored events like graduation, are we allowed to offer a prayer?

A "Openings" may include a moment of silence, a song, a reading, a prayer or a thought for the day that may be selected by teachers or students from a variety of secular sources. "Openings" should not be treated as acts of worship.

Q Should we allow our students to receive a Gideon Bible, and take part in the presentation?

A Schools should consider this activity as voluntary and occurring after regular school hours. Schools need to respect diversity, and must not offer opportunities for proselytizing (to induce someone to convert to one's own religious faith).

Q Can a teacher state his or her religious beliefs if questioned by students?

A No. Teachers are in a position of authority, and the opportunity to influence students about their personal religious beliefs should be treated in the same way that questions about political and moral beliefs, views on human sexuality and orientation are treated.

Teachers are encouraged to involve students in the objective discussion of religious, moral and spiritual topics whenever such topics become relevant in the curriculum without stating their own personal religious beliefs.

Q How should our school respond if asked to participate in Samaritan's Purse Christmas Shoe Box Project?

A The Samaritan's Purse must be presented to students as a voluntary activity, and information about the project should not be presented during instructional time. The Calgary Catholic School Board does not allow Samaritan's Purse to operate in its schools at all, but the Calgary Board of Education has left it to the discretion of the principal, in consultation with staff and School Council.

Q How should we address a request to provide a prayer room?

A Administrative Regulation 3067 states that principals may authorize student-initiated, informal, voluntary group opportunities for personal religious expression provided that:

- a) there is a voluntary teacher supervisor for religious clubs and prayer groups,
- b) prayer rooms are under the supervision of a teacher, and
- c) group student religious expression or group prayers are not conducted in a public, disruptive or confrontational manner.

Q Administrative Regulation 3067 notes that, when considering which religious holidays to celebrate, there is nothing in the AR meant to suggest any reduction in, or cancellation of, Christmas and Easter celebrations at school. What criteria should we use to guide our decisions?

A Reasonable efforts should be undertaken on the part of the school to communicate and consult with the school council and community to reflect the celebrations and major religious holidays of that community. Decisions to celebrate should not reflect the individual beliefs of teachers or principals, but should take into consideration the demographics of the community, and the instructional time available to conduct these celebrations.

Q What should I do if a parent asks me to enforce a student's religious observation? (e.g. ensure a student does not take part in an assembly)

A AR3067 states that enforcement of religious obligations is the responsibility of the parents, not teachers. Principals and teachers must not monitor a student's compliance with religious observances or requirements.

Our research has led us to some very sound guidelines for the study about religion as referenced below:

Education About Religion in Ontario Public Schools, Ministry of Education, Ontario

The school may sponsor the **study** of religion, but may not sponsor the **practice** of religion.

The school may **expose** students to all religious views, but may not **impose** any particular view.

The school's approach to religion is one of **instruction**, not one of **indoctrination**.

The function of the school is to **educate** about religions, not to **convert** to any one religion.

The school's approach is **academic**, not **devotional**.

The school should **study** what all people believe, but should not **teach** a student what to believe.

The school should strive for student **awareness** of all religions, but should not press for student **acceptance** of any one religion.

The school should seek to **inform** the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to **conform** him or her to any one belief.