

RELIGIOUS-BASED EXCLUSION FROM A SCHOOL PROGRAM

Parents who wish to have their child excluded from a school program because of religious beliefs must inform the superintendent. The board authorizes the administration to allow the exclusion if it is not disruptive to the education program and it does not infringe on a compelling state or educational interest. Further, the exclusion must not interfere with other school district operations. Students who are allowed to be excluded from a program or activity which violates their religious beliefs are required to do an alternate supervised activity or study.

In notifying the superintendent, the parents will abide by the following:

- The notice is in writing;
- The objection is based on religious beliefs;
- The objection will state which activities or studies violate their religious beliefs;
- The objection will state why these activities or studies violate their religious beliefs; and
- The objection will state a proposed alternate activity or study.

The superintendent will have discretion to make this determination. The factors the superintendent will consider when a student requests to be excluded from a program or activity because of religious beliefs include, but are not limited to, staff available to supervise a student who wishes to be excluded, space to house the student while the student is excluded, available superintendent-approved alternative course of study or activity while the student is excluded, number of students who wish to be excluded, whether allowing the exclusion places the school in a position of supporting a particular religion, and whether the program or activity is required for promotion to the next grade level or for graduation.

Decisions will be made consistent with applicable laws.

NOTE: Paragraph one of this policy reflects Iowa law regarding parents removing their children from parts of the education program. The rest of the policy is a process so boards can adapt but it's merely recommended, not mandatory.

Legal Reference: U.S. Const. amend I.
Lee v. Weisman, 112 S. Ct. 2649 (1992).
Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602 (1971).
Graham v. Central Community School District of Decatur County, 608 F. Supp. 531 (S.D. Iowa 1985).
Iowa Code §§ 256.11 (6); 279.8

Cross Reference: 603.8 Teaching About Religion
603.8R1 Teaching About Religion-Regulation-Religious Holidays
606.2 School Ceremonies and Observations

Approved: September 16, 2013 Reviewed: October 20, 2025 Revised: September 21, 2026