

Book	Policy Manual
Section	Issue 1 of 2025 March PDQ (Revised - REQUIRING DISTRICT CUSTOMIZATION)
Title	Released Time for Religious Instruction
Code	JEFB
Status	
Adopted	November 20, 2023
Last Revised	May 19, 2025

### **Released Time for Religious Instruction**

The Board permits students to be released from school for religious instruction consistent with law. The Board collaborates with a sponsoring entity of a released time for religious instruction program to identify a time to offer the course during the school day. Absence during the school day for religious instruction is permitted, provided:

1. the student's parents or guardians submits a written request to the building principal and consents to participation in the released time course in religious instruction;
2. the sponsoring entity providing instruction maintains attendance records and makes them available to the District;
3. the sponsoring entity makes provisions for and assumes liability for the student and
4. the student is not absent from core curriculum subject courses.

The District is not responsible for transportation to and from the place of instruction. Transportation to and from the place of instruction, including transportation for students with disabilities, is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring entity, parent or student. Regular classroom instruction missed as a result of a student's absence for religious instruction will not be made up and students assume responsibility for any missed schoolwork. Students are not considered absent from school while attending a released time course in religious instruction. The District does not aid, assist or enforce attendance in a religious instruction program. The District does not discriminate against students who participate in such program.

No public funds are expended and no public school personnel are involved in providing religious instruction. This policy does not constitute an endorsement of any particular faith or religious denomination and shall not be interpreted as promoting, favoring or affiliating the District with any religious organization or belief system.

The Board requires the sponsoring entity to provide verification on an annual basis to the District that it has:

1. Requested the superintendent of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation to conduct a criminal records check with respect to any individual who serves as an instructor or volunteer of the sponsoring entity providing the religious instruction. If that individual does not present proof that the individual has been a resident of Ohio for the five-year period immediately prior to the date upon which the criminal records check is requested or does not provide evidence that within a five-year period the Superintendent has requested information about the individual from the FBI in a criminal records check, the sponsoring entity shall request that the Superintendent obtain information from the FBI as a part of the criminal records check for the individual.

2. Not permitted any individual to serve as an instructor or volunteer of the sponsoring entity providing the religious instruction if the individual has previously been convicted of or pleaded guilty to an offense described in Ohio Revised Code (RC) 3319.31(B)(2) or (C) or RC 3319.39(B)(1).

#### Legal References

U.S. Constitution Amend. I  
ORC 3313.20  
ORC 3313.47  
ORC 3313.6022  
ORC 3313.6030  
ORC 3321.04

#### Cross References

IGAC, Teaching About Religion  
JED, Student Absences and Excuses  
KJA, Distribution of Materials in the Schools

**NOTE:** House Bill 8 (2024) modifies Ohio Revised Code 3313.6022 now requiring all boards to adopt a policy for released time for religious instruction. If a board wants to require background checks of any individual who serves as an instructor or volunteer of the sponsoring entity providing the religious instruction, language must be included in policy requiring this and defining the parameters. Districts also may choose to add language to this policy authorizing high school students to earn elective credit toward graduation through released time courses, provided statutory requirements are met when evaluating the course for credit. The decision to award credit for a released time course of religious instruction must be neutral to, and cannot involve any test for religious content or denominational affiliation. Districts should work with board counsel to implement such programs.

Districts also should review Ohio Attorney General opinion 2019-015 on released time for religious instruction, which focuses on what a school district's policy may permit or prohibit, and the implementation of these policies.

The opinion analyzes and resolves several specific questions and scenarios. Districts are cautioned to keep in mind that these scenarios and questions are fact-specific and rely on certain assumptions. As the facts change, so may the answer. Districts should work with board counsel to assure legal compliance when implementing these policies.

#### **THIS IS A REQUIRED POLICY**

#### Legal

[U.S. Constitution Amend. I](#)  
[ORC 3313.20](#)  
[ORC 3313.47](#)  
[ORC 3313.6022](#)  
[ORC 3313.6030](#)  
[ORC 3321.04](#)