



Religious Exercises Administrative Procedure 1.A.121

1.0 School Administration
1.A. Foundations

Board Governance Policy Cross Reference: 1, 2, 3, 16

Legal Reference: *The Public Schools Act*, S. 84 (1, 8), *Manitoba Regulation 554/88*, S. 1, 3, 4(2), 4(3)

Date Adopted: February 2005

Date Amended: November 2006; February 2007, February 2019, September 2024

Religious Exercises (prayer, meditation, etc.) may only be conducted where a petition asking for such exercises is signed by the parents/guardians of 75% of the students in the case of a school having fewer than 80 students, or by the parents/guardians of at least 60 students in schools having an enrolment of 80 or more students and presented to the Board. These are the requirements set out in subsection 84(8) of *The Public Schools Act*.

- petitions must be presented to the Board each school year and be done on a school by school basis
- the Board should direct parents to this procedure if questions arise but are not to take any action that would be seen as initiating or prompting implementation of religious exercises
- the process must be grass roots driven, with parents/guardians taking the initiative to have religious exercises implemented
- the content of any religious exercise being petitioned for must be defined; it is important that those persons being approached to sign the petition know exactly what they are being asked to sign, and that the Board clearly understands what is being requested
- schools also should play no role in the petition process, and act on a petition only when so advised by the Board
- assuming the numerical requirements above are met, it is conceivable that parents of a variety of faith groups could petition for their own religious exercises;

Once the Board receives such petition, the school identified must institute religious exercises.

- only those children whose parents/guardians have signed the petition may participate
- it is reasonable for schools to advise parents, through school newsletters or other means, that religious exercises are in place in the school and that those parents wishing to have their children participate can do so by notifying the principal in writing; it must be an **opt-in** process
- schools should not send out permission slips or the like to parents/guardians to record whether or not they wish their children to participate in religious exercises

Exercises

- parents/guardians making the petition will be responsible for providing whatever prayer book, literature, etc., are essential to the conducting of the religious exercises
- teachers and other staff are not compelled to conduct or supervise religious exercises; participation by staff must be voluntary
- if teachers and other staff choose not to conduct or supervise such exercises, alternate arrangements must be made; this may involve requesting members of the parents' group petitioning for the exercises to conduct the activity themselves; the principal will be responsible for determining the appropriate supervisory arrangements
- the Division shall not, as part of the hiring or promotion process, inquire of applicants/ candidates as to their willingness to participate in, conduct, or supervise religious exercises
- religious exercises are to be held each teaching day, and shall be no longer than ten (10) minutes in duration
- the exercises are not to be held during regular instructional; instructional time is to be preserved and religious exercises held either prior to the start of the school day or during noon recess
- it is recommended that those participating in religious exercises congregate in a common area; by holding religious exercises before the beginning of regular classes in the morning, or during the noon hour, the separation of participating and nonparticipating students can be minimized
- non - participating students should not be asked to relocate to accommodate religious exercises