

PRAYER IN SCHOOLS/RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

The Evangeline Parish School Board shall permit school authorities of each school to allow an opportunity, at the start of each school day, for those students and teachers desiring to do so to observe a brief time in silent prayer or meditation.

Public schools shall be prohibited from adopting or using any official or standard prayer. Voluntary, student-initiated, student-led prayer in accordance with the religious views of the student offering the prayer may be permitted; however, no student attending the school shall be required to participate in any religious activity at school.

No law, rule or policy shall deny to any student attending a public elementary or secondary school the right to participate in voluntary, student-initiated, student-led prayer during school or on school property, before or after school or during free time. Athletic teams shall not be prohibited from engaging in voluntary, student-initiated, student-led prayer.

No law, rule or policy shall prevent any student who attends a public elementary or secondary school and who is responsible for or presiding over a meeting of a school organization or assembly from calling upon a student volunteer to offer an inspirational quotation or statement, offer a voluntary prayer, or lead in silent meditation, at the sole option of the student volunteer.

A student organization shall not be denied recognition or any privilege or benefit solely because it is religious in nature, has a religious affiliation, or has no religious affiliation.

School officials shall be prohibited from censoring for religious content the speech of a high school student invited to speak at a commencement ceremony at the school he/she is attending.

When student volunteers are called upon to offer an inspirational quotation or statement, offer a prayer, or lead in silent meditation, such students shall be selected at random by a student from among student volunteers without respect to their individual religious beliefs or lack thereof. No student shall be called upon to offer an inspirational quotation or statement, offer a voluntary prayer, or lead in silent meditation unless the student has volunteered to do so.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Students shall have the same right to engage in individual or group prayer and religious discussion during the school day as they do to engage in other comparable activities; they shall also have the same access to facilities and meeting as is given to any other student activity.

As is true of all activities conducted *during school hours*, however, certain guidelines shall be followed:

1. The time and place of the meeting shall be designated by the school principal.
2. The activity shall not be disruptive or offensive.
3. Participation shall be on a volunteer basis; school officials shall ensure that no student is in any way coerced to participate.
4. Students shall not be denied the right to participate.
5. Activity shall be initiated and led by students.
6. Participation on the part of teachers and/or administrators is strictly on a volunteer basis.

Students may also participate in *before or after school* events with religious content on the same terms as they may participate in other non-curriculum activities on school premises *during non-instructional time*. These events shall, however, be entirely student-led and student-initiated.

Ref: La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§17:2115, 17:2115.1, 17:2115.2, 17:2115.3, 17:2115.4, 17:2115.5, 17:2115.6, 17:2115.7, 17:2115.8, 17:2115.9, 17:2115.10; Board minutes, 2-3-99.