

**1 Ovando School District #11**

2

**3 INSTRUCTION**

2332

4

page 1 of 3

5 Religion and Religious Activities

6

7 In keeping with the United States and Montana Constitutions and judicial decisions, the District  
8 may not support any religion or endorse religious activity. At the same time, the District may  
9 not prohibit private religious expression by students. This policy provides direction to students  
10 and staff members about the application of these principles to student religious activity at school.

11

12 Student Prayer and Discussion

13

14 Students may pray individually or in groups and may discuss their religious views with other  
15 students, as long as they are not disruptive or coercive. The right to engage in voluntary prayer  
16 does not include the right to have a captive audience listen, to harass other students, or to force  
17 them to participate. Students may pray silently in the classroom, except when they are expected  
18 to be involved in classroom instruction or activities.

19

20 Staff Members

21

22 Staff members are representatives of the District and must “navigate the narrow channel between  
23 impairing intellectual inquiry and propagating a religious creed.” They may not encourage,  
24 discourage, persuade, dissuade, sponsor, participate in, or discriminate against a religious activity  
25 or an activity because of its religious content. They must remain officially neutral toward  
26 religious expression.

27

28 Graduation Ceremonies

29

30 Graduation is an important event for students and their families. In order to assure the  
31 appropriateness and dignity of the occasion, the District sponsors and pays for graduation  
32 ceremonies and retains ultimate control over their structure and content.

33

34 District officials may not invite or permit members of the clergy to give prayers at graduation.  
35 Furthermore, District officials may not organize or agree to requests for prayer by other persons  
36 at graduation, including requests from students. The District may not prefer the beliefs of some  
37 students over the beliefs of others, coerce dissenters or nonbelievers, or communicate any  
38 endorsement of religion.

39

40 Baccalaureate Ceremonies

41

42 Students and their families may organize baccalaureate services, at which attendance must be  
43 entirely voluntary. Organizers of baccalaureate services may rent and have access to school  
44 facilities on the same basis as other private groups and may not receive preferential treatment.  
45 The District may not be identified as sponsoring or endorsing baccalaureate services. District  
46 funds, including paid staff time, may not be used directly or indirectly to support or subsidize

1

1

2

3

4any religious services.

5

6Assemblies, Extracurricular and Athletic Events

7

8District officials may not invite or permit members of the clergy, staff members, or outsiders to

9give prayers at school-sponsored assemblies and extracurricular or athletic events. District

10officials also may not organize or agree to student requests for prayer at assemblies and other

11school-sponsored events. Furthermore, prayer may not be broadcast over the school public

12address system, even if the prayer is nonsectarian, nonproselytizing, and initiated by students.

13

14Student Religious Expression and Assignments

15

16Students may express their individual religious beliefs in reports, tests, homework, and projects.

17Staff members should judge their work by ordinary academic standards, including substance,

18relevance, appearance, composition, and grammar. Student religious expression should neither

19be favored nor penalized.

20

21Religion in the Curriculum

22

23Staff members may teach students about religion in history, art, music, literature, and other

24subjects in which religious influence has been and continues to be felt. However, staff members

25may not teach religion or advocate religious doctrine or practice. The prohibition against

26teaching religion extends to curricular decisions which promote religion or religious beliefs.

27

28School programs, performances, and celebrations must serve an educational purpose. The

29inclusion of religious music, symbols, art, or writings is permitted, if the religious content has a

30historical or independent educational purpose which contributes to the objectives of the approved

31curriculum. School programs, performances, and celebrations cannot promote, encourage,

32discourage, persuade, dissuade, or discriminate against a religion or religious activity and cannot

33be oriented to religion or a religious holiday.

34

35Student Religious Clubs

36

37Students may organize clubs to discuss or promote religion, subject to the same constitutionally

38acceptable restrictions the District imposes on other student-organized clubs.

39

40Distribution of Religious Literature

41

42Students may distribute religious literature to their classmates, subject to the same

43constitutionally acceptable restrictions the District imposes on distribution of other non-school

44literature. Outsiders may not distribute religious or other literature to students on school

45property, consistent with and pursuant to the District policy on solicitations (Policy 4321).

46

1

1

2

3

4Religious Holidays

5

6Staff members may teach objectively about religious holidays and about religious symbols,  
7music, art, literature, and drama which accompany the holidays. They may celebrate the  
8historical aspects of the holidays but may not observe them as religious events.

9

10

11

12Policy History:

13Adopted on: 10/08/2012

14Reviewed on: 09/10/2012

15Revised on: 09/10/2012