

1 **Livingston School District**

2
3 **INSTRUCTION**

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4
5 Religion and Religious Activities

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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 by students to open or deliver a prayer at graduation. The
37 District may not prefer the beliefs of some students over the beliefs of others, coerce dissenters
38 or nonbelievers, or communicate any endorsement of religion.

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40 Baccalaureate Ceremonies

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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

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4 any religious services.

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6 Assemblies, Extracurricular and Athletic Events
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8 District officials may not invite or permit members of the clergy, staff members, or outsiders to
9 give prayers at school-sponsored assemblies and extracurricular or athletic events. District
10 officials also may not organize or agree to student requests for prayer at assemblies and other
11 school-sponsored events. Furthermore, prayer may not be broadcast over the school public
12 address system, even if the prayer is nonsectarian, nonproselytizing, and initiated by students.
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14 Student Religious Expression and Assignments
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16 Students may express their individual religious beliefs in reports, tests, homework, and projects.
17 Staff members should judge their work by ordinary academic standards, including substance,
18 relevance, appearance, composition, and grammar. Student religious expression should neither
19 be favored nor penalized.
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21 Religion in the Curriculum
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23 Staff members may teach students about religion in history, art, music, literature, and other
24 subjects in which religious influence has been and continues to be felt. However, staff members
25 may not teach religion or advocate religious doctrine or practice. The prohibition against
26 teaching religion extends to curricular decisions which promote religion or religious beliefs.
27

28 School programs, performances, and celebrations must serve an educational purpose. The
29 inclusion of religious music, symbols, art, or writings is permitted, if the religious content has a
30 historical or independent educational purpose which contributes to the objectives of the approved
31 curriculum. School programs, performances, and celebrations cannot promote, encourage,
32 discourage, persuade, dissuade, or discriminate against a religion or religious activity and cannot
33 be oriented to religion or a religious holiday.
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35 Student Religious Clubs
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37 Students may organize clubs to discuss or promote religion, subject to the same constitutionally
38 acceptable restrictions the District imposes on other student-organized clubs.
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40 Distribution of Religious Literature
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42 Students may distribute religious literature to their classmates, subject to the same
43 constitutionally acceptable restrictions the District imposes on distribution of other non-school
44 literature. Outsiders may not distribute religious or other literature to students on school
45 property, consistent with and pursuant to the District policy on solicitations (Policy 4321).
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Religious Holidays

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

Policy History:

Adopted on:

Reviewed on:

Revised on: February 12th, 2013