



4804 – Religion in the Curriculum

ADOPTED: April 9, 2021

REVISED:

MONITORING: Annually

The Commission recognizes the significant role that religious events, beliefs, and figures have played in world history, including the founding of the United States and the state of Tennessee. The Commission is committed to providing appropriate, accurate, and comprehensive instruction in the social studies and affirms that educational content consisting of religious themes shall be presented in a factual, objective, and respectful manner. Each authorized charter school shall approach religion in the curriculum with the understanding that:

- Religious themes shall be permitted in the curriculum provided they are essential to the learning experience in the various fields of study;
- These fields of study may include history, music, art, literature, or drama;
- Inclusion of religion in academic standards, curriculum, instructional materials, teaching materials, textbooks, and teaching aids shall be for educational purposes only¹;
- An emphasis on religious themes shall be only as extensive as necessary for a comprehensive study of the curriculum;
- Teachers and school personnel are prohibited from using religion to proselytize, promote, or show bias toward one particular religion or attempt to indoctrinate or establish any religion or religious belief over another; and
- Teachers and school personnel are prohibited from using studies of religion to demean any religion or religious beliefs.

Protecting Religious Expression in Schools

Authorized charter schools shall have no policy or procedure that prevents, or otherwise denies participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary and secondary schools. All teachers, staff, and students have a right to religious expression, including a right to engage in prayer, so long as the school does not compel others to participate in or otherwise affirm that religious expression, and so long as the religious expression is not a part of the official activity of the school.

Protection for religious expression includes, but is not limited to:



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- Private religious expression by students
- Religious expression in student groups
- Religious expression at school events
- Religious expression in assignments
- Religious expression by public school employees

Authorized charter schools shall maintain ordinary discipline and are required to protect students from targeted harassment in accordance with Commission LEA Policy 6304.

Authorized charter schools shall ensure that administrators, teachers, coaches, and support staff are trained properly on guidance surrounding Constitutionally Protected Prayer Guidance.

Legal References:

¹ T.C.A. § 49-6-1005
Hazing

Cross References:

LEA Policy 6304 Bully Harassment