

# Religion in schools

Religion



Religion is a set of beliefs and practices often organized around supernatural and moral claims, and often codified as prayer, ritual, and religious law. Religion also encompasses ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history, and mythology, as well as personal faith and mystic experience.

The term “ religion” refers to both the personal practices related to communal faith and to group rituals and communication stemming from shared conviction.([http://en. wikipedia. org/wiki/Religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion)). All different ethnicities have different religion views that they have been raised with or have simply decided to research other religions to decide which one is right for them and where they want to practice their religion.

However, what happens when religion is not only taught in Church, the issue of religion being taught in schools has been brought up to the School Board and to the students parents. This controversial issue has made parents step up to give their own point of views as to why students should not be taught religion in schools. The way I plan to do my research on the topic is by looking up information on the Internet because I will not find the answers in a book.

Should religion be taught in school? What should parents do to not allow religion in schools? What should constitute acceptable “ prayer” or moments of silence in public schools? What procedures should the school board take on the issue? Should students be able to voice their opinions on this issue? These questions will help me find the answers that I need to understand the topic.

Parents are the proper agents to determine what religion, if any, their children are exposed to. Public schools have no right to usurp parental authority by imposing religion on school children. Mandatory prayer, Bible reading, or other religious activities sponsored by public schools are fundamental violations of the right of conscience.

Public school students have the right to pray on their own in a non-disruptive fashion, and schools may teach about religion as a part of objective instruction, but public schools must not sponsor religious worship. That job belongs to America's houses of worship.([http://www. au. org/site/PageServer? pagename= issue\\_publicschools](http://www. au. org/site/PageServer? pagename= issue_publicschools)). The presence and extent of religion in public schools is one of the most difficult and contentious issues when it comes to the separation of church and state.

On the one hand are those who sincerely believe that a lack of religion in the schools " teaches" atheism or secular humanism, resulting in a decline in morality and performance. On the other hand are those who sincerely believe that state sanctioned religion and state supported religious observances infringe upon the religious liberties of all students.([http://atheism. about. com/library/FAQs/cs/blcs\\_sch\\_index. htm](http://atheism. about. com/library/FAQs/cs/blcs_sch_index. htm)).

Religious messages on T-shirts and the like may not be singled out for suppression. Students may wear religious attire, such as yarmulkes and head scarves, they may not be forced to wear gym clothes that they regard, on religious grounds, as immodest.(<http://www. ed. gov/Speeches/04-1995/prayer. html#4>).

Students have the right to distribute religious literature to their schoolmates, subject to those reasonable time, place, and manner or other constitutionally-acceptable restrictions imposed on the distribution of all non-school literature.

Thus, a school may confine distribution of all literature to a particular table at particular times. It may not single out religious literature for burdensome regulation. (<http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/04-1995/prayer.html#4>).

Should religion be taught in school? Public schools are not permitted to sponsor worship, but that does not mean that they must be “ religion-free zones.” ([http://www.au.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issues\\_publicschools](http://www.au.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issues_publicschools)).

Local school authorities have “ substantial discretion” to impose rules of order but may not structure the rules to discriminate against religious activity or speech. Teachers and administrators are prohibited from either encouraging or discouraging religious activity and from participating in such activity with students. Public schools may not provide religious instruction but may teach about religion.

The history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature (either as a separate course or within some other existing course), are all permissible public school subjects. (<http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/04-1995/prayer.html#4>). Schools may actively teach civic values and morals, even if some of those values also happen to be held by religions.

([http://adherents.com/misc/fed\\_guidelines.html](http://adherents.com/misc/fed_guidelines.html)). What should parents do to not allow religion in schools? Parents are the proper agents to determine

what religion, if any, their children are exposed to. Public schools have no right to usurp parental authority by imposing religion on schoolchildren.

Mandatory prayer, Bible reading or other religious activities sponsored by public schools are fundamental violations of the right of conscience. ([http://www. au. org/site/PageServer? pagename= issues\\_publicschools](http://www.au.org/site/PageServer?pagename=issues_publicschools)).

What should constitute acceptable “ prayer” or moments of silence in public schools? School officials may not mandate or organize prayer at graduation, nor may they organize a religious baccalaureate ceremony. ([http://www. ed. gov/Speeches/04-1995/prayer. html#4](http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/04-1995/prayer.html#4)).

School officials, employees or outsiders must not offer prayers at school assemblies. Even if attendance is voluntary, students may not deliver prayers at school assemblies either. ([http://www. adl. org/religion\\_ps\\_2004/prayer. asp](http://www.adl.org/religion_ps_2004/prayer.asp)). Should students be able to voice their opinions on this issue? Students 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 activity.

Students may attempt to persuade peers about religious topics as they would any other topics, but schools should stop such speech that constitutes harassment. Students may participate in before- or after-school events with religious content, such as “ see-you-at-the-flagpole” gatherings, on the same terms they can participate in other noncurricular activities on school premises. Students may express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork and other written and oral assignments.

The work should be judged by ordinary academic standards and against other “legitimate pedagogical concerns.” Students may distribute religious literature on the same terms other literature unrelated to curriculum can be distributed. Students may display religious messages on clothing to the same extent they may display other comparable messages. ([http://adherents.com/misc/fed\\_guidelines.html](http://adherents.com/misc/fed_guidelines.html)).

Finally, the issue of the role of religion in the public schools continues to be the subject of great controversy. ([www.adl.org/religion\\_ps\\_2004](http://www.adl.org/religion_ps_2004)). Being a high school student I believe that religion is an important subject that should be taught in the privacy of each church.

However, the only time that religion can be taught in the classrooms is when the subject will be discussed while studying a piece of literature; but if it is not related to literature, then it should not be brought up because some students may be offended and can result in the parents, school board, and teachers be in meetings discussing the issue and it probably would end up in maybe the teacher getting fired.

One way that the subject can be prevented from going to the school board is by having the parents get more involved with teachers, asking them questions about what their children will be learning during the year. The subject of religion in schools does not only go to high school students, it goes to all grade levels, with the exception of colleges and universities because students are old enough to make decisions on what religion is right.