

# OSBA Model Sample Policy

Code:  
Adopted:

ICB

## Religious and Cultural Holidays\*\*

*{Optional policy. The district could adopt portions of the policy or make changes to better meet the district's needs. If the district adopts this policy, OSBA encourages the district to engage the community to determine what the major holidays are in your community.}*

### Accommodation for Religious Instruction and Cultural Observance

The district recognizes each student's individual right to free exercise of religion. The district may accommodate students' religious or cultural<sup>1</sup> observance, while neither promoting one religion or culture over another nor preferring religion over non-religion. Specific requests for religious or cultural accommodation should be directed to the student's teacher or principal in accordance with Board policy IGBHD, Program Exemptions.

### Release Time for Religious and Instruction and Cultural Holidays

The district will permit elementary and secondary school students to be released from school each week consistently for religious instruction in accordance with Oregon law and Board policy JEF - Release Time for Religious Instruction.

### Accommodation of Absences for Religious and Cultural Reasons

Any student unable to attend classes on a particular day due to religious beliefs or cultural observance shall be excused from attendance requirements for that day. No such absence shall be counted against a student in determining eligibility for educational benefits, exclusion from programs, reduction of grades or failure.

### Scheduling Around Major Religious and Cultural Holidays

For purposes of this policy, "major religious or cultural holidays"<sup>2</sup> are holidays, observance of which: (1) is common among adherents of a student's religion or culture; (2) include ritual or worship obligations or practices that cannot reasonably be fulfilled during school activities;<sup>3</sup> and (3) fulfillment of such obligations or practices would necessarily conflict with scheduled school activities.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An example of a major non-religious cultural holiday would be the Chinese New Year.

<sup>2</sup> Districts are encouraged to engage with the community to identify holidays that are observed by students, staff and community members that would be considered major religious or cultural holidays.

<sup>3</sup> For example, holiday-related dietary restrictions may still be observed while at school, but group prayer or ritual hymns may not.

<sup>4</sup> If such obligations occur in the evening, then there would be no constraints on scheduling such activities during the school day, so long as the students will be timely released to engage in such evening activities.

1. **Schoolwide and Gradewide Events.** Schools should avoid scheduling important events that by their nature cannot be made up (such as picture day, open house, prom, graduation, and Outdoor School) on days that conflict with major religious or cultural holidays that may impact student attendance or participation. Such events shall be scheduled on major religious or cultural holidays only if such scheduling is reasonably necessary to carry out the proper functioning of a school program or course of study, to avoid an unreasonable burden on other students, or if such scheduling is outside the control of school employees.

The district will make a good faith effort to identify major religious or cultural holidays observed in the local community by consulting generally accepted sources of information. Students and families may request that one or more holidays from their religious or cultural tradition be included on the district's list of major religious or cultural holidays under this policy.

2. **Field Trips, Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities.** When scheduling other special events such as field trips, try-outs, plays, concerts and major co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, staff must consider the potential for students to experience conflicts on major religious or cultural holidays. Staff will inform students and parents of plans as far in advance as possible, so that conflicts with major religious or cultural holidays can be avoided, if it is possible to do so without making burdensome demands on programs or other students, and otherwise accommodated if not. Parents and students are encouraged to communicate their need for accommodation to the school, for major religious or cultural holidays not already recognized by the district.

The field trip approval process will include a question about scheduling and major religious or cultural holidays. For a field trip to be scheduled on a major religious or cultural holiday, an administrator must review and approve the request. Administrator approval is also required to schedule a major co-curricular or extra-curricular activity on a major religious or cultural holiday when scheduling is within the control of the school or district.

3. **Tests and Assignments.** Any tests and assignments a student misses because of religious instruction or religious or cultural observances shall be given to the student at another time. Teachers shall provide students a meaningful opportunity and reasonable time to make up missed classwork, tests, quizzes, and final exam reviews, and to complete homework due on that day or the following school day. When scheduling tests, staff must consider the potential for students to experience conflicts on major religious or cultural holidays. Make-up opportunities will not be required of a student on the school day immediately after a student is absent from school to observe a major religious or cultural holiday.
4. **Final Exams.** Final exams are scheduled based on the district-adopted calendar. The Board should consider the likely resulting exam schedule and possible conflicts with major religious or cultural holidays as they consider calendar options.

### **Communication**

The superintendent will prepare guidelines implementing this policy, including a list of major religious holidays and cultural holidays, which will be communicated to staff. School staff will be informed at least twice per year of dates of major religious or cultural holidays. Parents will be informed at least annually about this policy and their student's right to request accommodation. Information including a list of major religious or cultural holidays will be made available on the district website. Parents are encouraged to communicate their student's need for accommodation to the school.

The superintendent shall reconsider the scope of this policy and recommend changes to the Board as needed if the total number of school days identified as major religious or cultural holidays is likely to impose an unreasonable burden on the district's ability to schedule important school events.

END OF POLICY

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**Legal Reference(s):**

ORS 336.035(2)

ORS 336.465

ORS 336.615

ORS 336.625

ORS 336.635

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OAR 581-021-0009

OAR 581-021-0071

OAR 581-022-2050

OAR 581-022-2110

OAR 581-022-2505