



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WEEKLY
from
Americans for Freedom of Religion

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America's Public Schools are not God-Free Zones

Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: May 15, 2023

With the new school year well underway, this is a good time for parents, teachers and public-school students to review the rights of students to live their faith in many ways throughout their school days as set forth by the U.S. Department of Education.

The Students of Faith program, explained under the link to "School Prayer" on the website of Catholics for Freedom of Religion (cfor.org), has been used to teach thousands of students their protected rights to exercise their faith throughout the many hundreds of days they will spend in our public schools.

- 1) As long as the prayer is student-initiated, student-led and non-disruptive students may pray alone or with other students at many non-instructional times throughout the school day.
- 2) If other non-curricular clubs are allowed, students may form prayer groups and religious clubs and advertise their meetings and events as do the other clubs.
- 3) Teachers, administrators, and other school employees may not encourage or discourage private prayer or other religious activities.
- 4) Students may wear clothing and jewelry with religious messages to the same extent other non-religious messages are permitted.
- 5) Students have many other opportunities to practice their faith in public schools as put forth in the Dept of Education document linked below.

Although the Constitution forbids public school officials acting in their official capacities from directing or favoring prayer, students and teachers do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate". Read at link below. Read the Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools as of May 15, 2023:

<https://bit.ly/46royYm>
https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/religionandschools/prayer_guidance.html