

**ADOPT POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS  
FOR STUDENT RELIGIOUS PRACTICES**

**THE GENERAL COUNSEL RECOMMENDS:**

The General Counsel recommends adopting the Policy on Accommodations for Student Religious Practices.

Section 26-1 of the Illinois School Code requires school boards to grant excused absences for students who are unable to attend school on particular days, or at particular times, to accommodate the tenets of the students' religion. Section 26-1 also requires school boards to prescribe rules relative to student absences for religious holidays. Sections 26-1 and 26-2b of the Illinois School Code require school boards to make certain accommodations for students who are unable to attend school during religious holidays.

**TEXT:**

**Student Religious Practices.**

It is the policy of the Chicago Public Schools ("CPS") to accommodate student religious practices provided that such practices can be accommodated in a manner which does not violate the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, and to the extent that the accommodation does not place an undue burden on the school. This policy shall be implemented in a manner that is consistent with: CPS Policy Against Discrimination on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion or Disability; and Board Rule 1-14 which prohibits discrimination or harassment against any employee or student on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability.

**(a) Holidays.**

- (1) Students are entitled to excused absences for the observance of religious holidays.
- (2) Students who are absent for the observance of a religious holiday must have an opportunity to make up any missed work, examination or assignment.
- (3) A student who avails himself or herself of the opportunity to make up any work, examination or assignment missed because of the observance of a religious holiday, shall not be penalized based on that absence.
- (4) A school, through its student handbook, may require parents/legal guardians to notify the principal up to five calendar days prior to any anticipated absence for a religious holiday.

**(b) Other Religious Accommodations**

- (1) Schools shall attempt to make reasonable accommodations for students who have particular religious needs if requested in writing by a parent/legal guardian. Schools are not required to accommodate a religious request if granting such a request would place an undue burden on the school. For example, a high school should grant limited space, if available, and limited time, for prayer, if prayer time and space is requested by a parent in writing. However, the principal need not empty a classroom that is otherwise being occupied in order to accommodate the student. If there is no space available in the building, the principal may deny the request. Prior to denying such request, the principal must obtain approval from the Law Department.

(2) Use of staff time to accommodate students' religious needs is both a burden to the school and support for a particular religious practice which is in violation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Therefore, no staff time shall be required to monitor or supervise a student's religious activities. Requests for accommodations which would require staff supervision should be denied.

(3) In order to be granted a religious accommodation, a student's parent or legal guardian must submit a written request to the principal. The written request must state: (a) the specific accommodation requested; (b) why the accommodation is needed and (c) the time and duration of the accommodation.

(4) To the extent possible, students should fulfill their religious obligations during lunch or a free period. If a student must fulfill a religious obligation during class time, the principal should grant an excused absence for a limited, defined time. Students who are excused from class for religious needs must have an opportunity to make up any work, assignment or test missed as a result of the absence.

**AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION**

**APPROVAL:** Not applicable.

**PERSONNEL  
IMPLICATIONS:**

None.

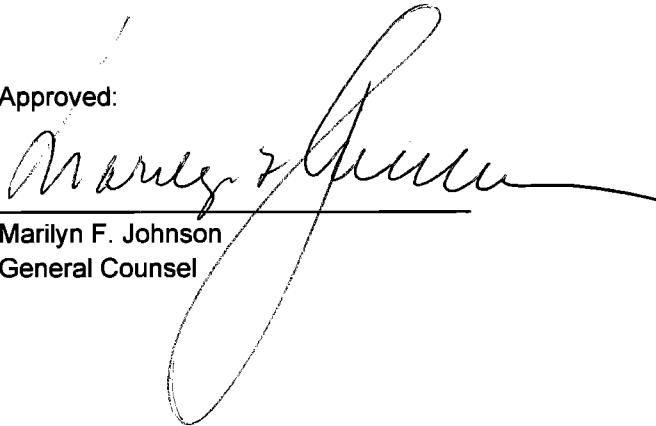
**FINANCIAL  
REVIEW:**

Not applicable.

**LEGAL**

**REVIEW:** This Board Report was drafted by the Law Department pursuant to 105 ILES 5/26-1 and 26-2b.

Approved:



Marilyn F. Johnson  
General Counsel