



Policy: Religious Exercises & Instruction

Policy Number: JC

Policy Type: Students

Policy

As a Manitoba public school division, the Hanover School Division is obligated to comply with the provisions of *The Public Schools Act* and provincial guidelines governing the implementation of religious exercises and religious instruction. *The Public Schools Act* states that public schools must be non-sectarian. Religious exercises and religious instruction in public schools may only be implemented by school boards in a manner consistent with the Act and departmental guidelines after a parent petition is presented to the school board. Petitions must be submitted annually. The Hanover School Division will continue to provide for appropriate religious exercises and instruction consistent with provincial and divisional guidelines.

Definition: "Religion is broadly accepted by the Commission to include a diversity of faiths and traditions, such as non-deistic belief systems, such as the spiritual faiths/ practices of Indigenous cultures, as well as authenticated newer religions (which are assessed on a case-by-case basis)." (Responding to Religious Diversity in Manitoba's Schools: A Guide for Educators (2018))

Guideline

Religious Exercises

1. If the appropriate number of parents of children in a particular school (parental signatures for 60 students) petition for religious exercises of a specific nature for their school, the board will authorize the implementation of religious exercises for that school for that year.
2. Petitions must be presented to the board on an annual basis. This applies to adherents of all religions presenting a petition with the appropriate number of signatures.

In order for this to be administratively possible, the original petition must be submitted to the Hanover School Division Administrative Office by April 30th. Late submissions will be reviewed at the discretion of the Board. The division encourages electronic submissions but signed paper copy petitions will also be accepted.

3. No divisional personnel or board members will be involved in the petitioning process, other than to provide information pertaining to the provincial guidelines governing this process and the presence of enabling by-laws where appropriate petitions are received in a timely manner. No school personnel will be involved in follow-up with students or their families in situations where parents have not joined a petition.
4. In cases where the board has authorized implementation of religious exercises in a school, based on qualifying annual petitions, schools will provide information to the school community through official communication in June and September, indicating that the board has received a petition(s) and passed the required by-law and that parents wishing for their children to participate would need to add their name to the petition(s) by sending in a signed note. New registrants during the year will be informed of the status of religious exercises and their voluntary nature in their school by provision of copies of all of the school communications published year-to-date.
5. Each school will provide appropriate space for religious exercises prior to the official start of the school day. Exercises will be led by volunteers from the school staff, from the community or from parents requesting the

exercises. Attendance will not be taken, nor will school staff enforce attendance or non-attendance, other than to inform parents where appropriate.

6. Students with permission to participate (parents have signed either the original petition or have added their name to the petition with a signed note) will meet in the designated area during the designated non-instructional time.

At no time will religious exercises be broadcast in the school via the PA system or held in a general assembly.

Students not participating would not be required to report for classes until the instructional day begins.

Non-participating students at school due to transportation arrangements will be provided with a designated classroom space and will be supervised by a teacher.

After religious exercises all students will be expected to be in their homerooms for the beginning of the school day. Attendance will be taken, as well as, lates are recorded at this time. O Canada and school announcements will be broadcast, at which time regular instruction will commence.

Religious Instruction

1. If the appropriate number of parents of children in a particular school (parental signatures for 25 students) request religious instruction of a specific nature for their school, the board will pass a by-law permitting this.

This applies to adherents of all religions presenting a petition with the appropriate number of signatures.

In order for this to be administratively possible, the original petition must be submitted to the Hanover School Division Administrative Office by April 30th. The division encourages electronic submissions but signed paper copy petitions will also be accepted.

2. No divisional personnel or board members will be involved in the petitioning process, other than to provide information pertaining to the provincial guidelines governing this process and the presence of enabling by-laws where appropriate petitions are received in a timely manner. No school personnel will be involved in follow-up with students or their families in the case that parents have not joined the petition.
3. In cases where by-laws have been duly passed by the board based on qualifying petitions, schools will provide information to the school community in June and September, indicating that the board has received a petition(s) and passed the required by-law and that parents wishing for their children to participate would need to add their name to the petition(s) by sending in a signed note. New registrants during the year will be informed of the status of religious instruction and the voluntary nature of this instruction in their school by provision of copies of all of the school communications published year-to-date.
4. The school will provide appropriate space for religious instruction and classes will be scheduled for a single half-hour class per week during the regular instructional day for any given class, based on the availability of appropriate volunteer instructors.
 - 4.1. Schools may limit religious instruction to the last hour of the school day, may designate a specific day of the week for all religious instruction and may set the total length of the instructional block so that it will not extend the entire academic year.
 - 4.2. Volunteer instructors for the individual schools will provide parents with a schedule in advance of the commencement of religious instruction each year.
5. Students with permission to participate (parents have signed either the original petition or have added their name to the petition with a signed note) will meet in the designated area during the designated religious instruction time.

6. Volunteers must use an approved body of materials that meet the requirements of the division and school mission statements and are appropriate to the age of the students. Volunteer teachers must submit a Criminal Records check and a Manitoba Child Abuse Registry check to HSD in advance of the commencement of the instructional block, in order to qualify.
7. Any use of extra materials for home study is restricted to those students participating in religious instruction during the approved block of religious instruction. This material may only be distributed in the school by designated volunteer instructors as part of the religious instruction class and collected by the same volunteers. Markers of such materials are not authorized to access the students directly through the school.
8. Students not participating in religious instruction will be in a regular classroom supervised by a teacher and will be working on the regular Manitoba curriculum for their grade. This work will be supplementary in the sense that it will not create homework or missed essential learning for the students opting in to religious instruction, nor will it create extra busy work or homework for those students not opting in.

Date Policy Created	August 22, 1995
Date of last Review:	May 5, 2026
Reference(s):	<p>Manitoba Human Rights Commission, Policy # I-13, Section 9(2)(d)</p> <p>The Public Schools Act, sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 84(1) Public schools shall be non-sectarian. ● 84(8) If a petition asking for religious exercises, signed by the parents or guardians of 75% of the pupils in the case of a school having fewer than 80 pupils or by the parents or guardians of at least 60 pupils in the case of a school having an enrollment of 80 or more pupils, is presented to the school board, religious exercises shall be conducted for the children of those parents or guardians in that school year." <p>School Administration Handbook (2000):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Religious Exercises – Topic R2 ● Religious Instruction – Topic R <p>Responding to Religious Diversity in Manitoba's Schools: A Guide for Educators (2018)</p>
Related Procedure:	SA 46 Volunteer Check Procedure
Related Forms:	