

Accommodating Religious Beliefs and Holidays

The Augusta School Department is committed to fostering an environment where all students are supported as learners and as individuals. This policy ensures that students are free to celebrate religious holidays with their families and community. By supporting the students and their families in their celebration of religious holidays, this policy helps build cooperation and good rapport with the communities and institutions of the school district.

1. **Multicultural school calendar:** Augusta School Department shall list religious holidays for Christians and Eastern Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus along with the official school calendar distributed to parents, faculty, staff, and administrators each year. These holidays shall also be listed on the Augusta School Department website and district-wide electronic calendars.
2. **Excused absences:** Missing a school day or school activity to celebrate a religious holiday shall be considered and treated as an excused absence for purposes of making up school work, sports and extracurricular activities, and other relevant school functions. The Augusta School Department will also accommodate student absences for the observance of religious beliefs which are not included in Paragraph 1 above.
3. **Consideration of holidays:** To the best of their abilities, the Augusta School Department administrators, school principals and teachers will take into consideration religious holidays when planning school events.

4. **Religious fasting:** Students who are fasting for religious purposes will be allowed to spend lunch outside of the cafeteria at a location to be determined by the school principal.
5. **Religious prayer space:** Students may request a private or semi-private place to pray or for quiet reflection during times when they are not in scheduled classes such as recesses, lunch breaks or study halls. The Augusta School Department will provide access to such spaces as available.
6. **Food events:** Individual teachers will take into consideration religious dietary restrictions when scheduling activities that involve food, particularly during the observance of religious holidays.
7. **Parent Notification:** It is the parents/guardians' responsibility to provide the teacher, coach or advisor with advance notice of a student's absence for observance of a religious holiday.

Cross Reference: JEA – Compulsory Attendance

Adopted: _____