

## TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION

Pursuant to state and federal law, the Dent-Phelps R-III School District may teach about religion but may not promote any particular religion or religious belief. Books of a religious nature may be used in the classroom as part of instruction as long as such books are not used in a manner that violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

No course or portion of any course taught in the district will have the primary purpose or effect of illegally advancing or inhibiting religion.

Nothing in this policy is to be construed as inhibiting otherwise constitutionally protected religious expression by any individual.

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***Note: The reader is encouraged to check the index located at the beginning of this section for other pertinent policies and to review administrative procedures and/or forms for related information.***

Adopted: 6-26-14

Revised:

Legal Refs: Mo. Const., art. I, ' ' 5-7  
' 170.340, RSMo.  
U.S. Const., art. I

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Dent-Phelps R-III School District, Salem, Missouri

# Missouri Revised Statutes

## Chapter 160 Schools--General Provisions

[←160.2110](#)

### Section 160.2500.1

[160.011→](#)

August 28, 2016

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#### **Citation of act--discrimination based on religious viewpoint or expression prohibited-- prayer and religious activities in school permitted, when--religious clothing and jewelry permitted--limited public policy forum authorized.**

160.2500. 1. This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Missouri Student Religious Liberties Act".

2. A public school district shall not discriminate against students or parents on the basis of a religious viewpoint or religious expression. A school district shall treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner the district treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular or other viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject and shall not discriminate against the student based on a religious viewpoint expressed by the student on an otherwise permissible subject.

3. Students may express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Homework and classroom assignments shall be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school district. Students shall not be penalized or rewarded on account of the religious content of their work. If an assignment requires a student's viewpoints to be expressed in course work, artwork or other written or oral assignments, a public school district shall not penalize or reward a student on the basis of religious content or a religious viewpoint. In such an assignment, a student's academic work that expresses a religious viewpoint shall be evaluated based on ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance to the course curriculum or requirements of the course work or assignment.

4. Students in public schools may pray or engage in religious activities or religious expression before, during and after the school day in the same manner and to the same extent that students may engage in nonreligious activities or expression, provided that such religious expression or religious activities are not disruptive of scheduled instructional time or other educational activities and do not impede access to school facilities or mobility on school premises. Students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, or other religious gatherings before, during and after school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other noncurricular student activities and groups. Religious groups shall be given the same access to school facilities for assembling as is given to other noncurricular groups without discrimination based on the religious content of the student's expression. If student groups that meet for nonreligious activities are

permitted to advertise or announce meetings of the groups, the school district shall not discriminate against groups that meet for prayer or other religious speech. A school district may disclaim school sponsorship of noncurricular groups and events in a manner that neither favors nor disfavors groups that meet to engage in prayer or religious speech.

5. Students in public schools may wear clothing, accessories and jewelry that display religious messages or religious symbols in the same manner and to the same extent that other types of clothing, accessories and jewelry that display messages or symbols are permitted, as specified in subsection 7 of section 167.166.

6. (1) To ensure that the school district does not discriminate against a student's publicly stated voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, and to eliminate any actual or perceived affirmative school sponsorship or attribution to the district of a student's expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, a school district shall adopt a policy, which shall include the establishment of a limited public forum for student speakers at all school events at which a student is to publicly speak. The policy regarding the limited public forum shall also require the school district to:

(a) Provide the forum in a manner that does not discriminate against a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject;

(b) Provide a method, based on neutral criteria, for the selection of student speakers at school events and graduation ceremonies;

(c) Ensure that a student speaker does not engage in obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd or indecent speech; and

(d) State, in writing, orally, or both, that the student's speech does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position or expression of the district.

(2) The school district disclaimer required by paragraph (d) of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall be provided at all graduation ceremonies. The school district shall also continue to provide the disclaimer at any other event in which a student speaks publicly for as long as a need exists to dispel confusion over the district's nonsponsorship of the student's speech.

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(3) Student expression on an otherwise permissible subject shall not be excluded from the limited public forum because the subject is expressed from a religious viewpoint.

(4) All public school districts shall adopt and implement a local policy regarding a limited public forum and voluntary student expression of religious viewpoints.

7. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to authorize this state or any of its political subdivisions to either:

(1) Require any person to participate in prayer or in any other religious activity; or

(2) Violate the constitutional rights of any person.

8. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to limit the authority of any public school to do any of the following:

(1) Maintain order and discipline on the campus of the public school in a content and

viewpoint neutral manner;

(2) Protect the safety of students, employees and visitors of the public school;

(3) Adopt and enforce policies and procedures regarding student speech at school, provided that the policies and procedures do not violate the rights of students as guaranteed by law.

9. The provisions of section 1.140 are applicable to this section.

(L. 2014 H.B. 1303)

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Missouri General Assembly

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