



Document Name:	Religion in the Curriculum & School Sponsored Activities
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## 1.0 Purpose

The Board of Trustees (“Board”) of Wasatch Waldorf Charter School (the “School”) recognizes the diversity of culture and religious background of its student body. The Board recognizes the necessity for sensitivity as to the needs and rights of the students regarding religion and religious freedom. This policy is intended to meet the provisions of the Utah Code 53G-10-202 through -205 and Utah Administrative Code R277-105 et seq and allow student and employee religious expression and freedom of speech within the parameters of existing state and federal law.

## 2.0 Definition

- 2.1 "Conscience" means a standard based upon learned experiences, a personal philosophy or system of belief, religious teachings or doctrine, an absolute or external sense of right and wrong which is felt on an individual basis, a belief in an external Absolute, or any combination of the foregoing.
- 2.2 "Discretionary time" for students means school-related time that is not instructional time. It includes free time before and after school, during lunch and between classes or on buses, and private time before athletic and other events or activities.
- 2.3 "Exercise of religious freedom" means the right to choose or reject religious, theistic, agnostic, or atheistic convictions and to act upon that choice.
- 2.4 "Guardian" means a person who has been granted legal guardianship of a child in accordance with state law.

2.5 "Instructional time" means time during which the School is responsible for a student and the student is required or expected to be actively engaged in a learning activity. It includes instructional activities in the classroom during regularly scheduled hours, required activities outside the classroom, and counseling, private conferences, or tutoring provided by school employees or volunteers acting in their official capacities during or outside of regular school hours.

### 3.0 Policy Content

#### 3.1 Religion in the Curriculum

- 3.1.1 Consistent with Utah law, a study, performance, or display which includes examination of or presentations about religion, religious thought or expression, or the influence thereof in music, art, literature, law, politics, history, or any other portion of the curriculum may be undertaken in the School, so long as it is designed to achieve permissible educational objectives and is presented within the context of the approved curriculum. The objective study of comparative religions is permissible, but no religious tenet, belief, or denomination may be given inappropriate emphasis. No aspect of cultural heritage, political or moral theory, or societal value may be either included or excluded from consideration in the School primarily because it explicitly or implicitly contains theistic, agnostic, or atheistic assumptions. An analysis of religion, deity, an absolute moral principle, or any other concept that may contain a theistic, agnostic, or non-theistic assumption, may be presented when included as an appropriate component or aspect of a broader study, display, presentation, or discussion regarding cultural heritage, political theory, moral theory or a societal value.
- 3.1.2 The School may not sponsor prayer or religious devotionals.
- 3.1.3 School officials and employees may not use their positions to endorse, promote, or disparage a particular religious, denominational, sectarian, agnostic, or atheistic belief or viewpoint.

- 3.1.4 Unless granted a waiver in accordance with requirements of section 3.2 below, students may be required to visit church-owned facilities when religious services are not being conducted if the visit is intended solely for the purpose of pursuing permissible educational objectives such as those relating to art, music, architecture, or history.

### 3.2 Waivers of Participation

- 3.2.1 A parent or legal guardian may request a waiver of participation in any portion of the curriculum or school activity that he or she believes to be an infringement upon the student's right of conscience or the exercise of religious freedom. In order to obtain a waiver of participation, the claimed infringement must rise to a level of belief that the school requirement violates a superior duty which is more than personal preference.
- 3.2.2 A parent or a legal guardian of a student may request a waiver of participation in any portion of the curriculum or school activity which the requesting party believes to be an infringement upon a right of conscience or the exercise of religious freedom in any of the following ways:
  - 3.2.2.1 It would require an affirmance or denial of a religious belief or practice, or right of conscience;
  - 3.2.2.2 It would require participation in a practice forbidden by a religious belief or practice, or right of conscience; or
  - 3.2.2.3 It would bar participation in a practice required by a religious belief or practice, or right of conscience.
- 3.2.3 In making a request for a waiver of participation, a parent or guardian may suggest an alternative that requires reasonably equivalent performance by the student of the objective of the curriculum or activity that is believed to be objectionable.

- 3.2.4 Requests for waiver of participation shall be submitted in writing to the School's Executive Director.
- 3.2.5 In responding to a request for a waiver of participation, the School may:
  - 3.2.5.1 Waive participation by the student in the objectionable curriculum or activity, with no penalty;
  - 3.2.5.2 Provide a reasonable alternative as suggested by the parent or guardian, or other reasonable alternative developed in consultation with the requesting party, that will achieve the objectives of the portion of the curriculum or activity for which waiver is sought; or
  - 3.2.5.3 Deny the request. Waivers of participation shall be reviewed by the Executive Director and the Pedagogical Director. The School's decision regarding a waiver of participation shall be provided to the parent or guardian in writing, delivered via email.
- 3.2.6 A request for waiver of participation shall not be denied unless the Executive Director, in consultation with the Pedagogical Director, determines that requiring the participation of the student is the least restrictive means necessary to achieve a specifically identified educational objective, in furtherance of a compelling School interest.
- 3.2.7 In responding to a request for waiver of participation, the School shall not require a student to accept a substandard or educationally deficient alternative.
- 3.2.8 By permitting parents to submit requests for waivers of participation, and by providing reasonable alternatives, the School intends to facilitate appropriate protection and accommodation of a requesting party's asserted right of conscience or exercise of religious freedom. The School's provision of reasonable alternatives to curriculum and school activities shall not be considered to be an attempt by a school official to endorse, promote or disparage a particular religious or non-religious viewpoint.

- 3.2.9 If any portion of any curriculum or activity is repeatedly alleged to interfere with the rights of conscience or exercise of religious freedom of students, parents or legal guardians, such curriculum or activity shall be evaluated by the Pedagogical Director to determine whether the educational objectives could be achieved by less intrusive means. The Executive Director shall provide an annual report to the Board containing the number of requests for waivers of participation received during the school year, the curriculum or school activities to which the requests relate, and the School's response to each request. The Board may request that the Pedagogical Director evaluate curriculum materials or school activities for potential interference with the rights of conscience or exercise of religious freedom.

### 3.3 Student Expression

- 3.3.1 A student participating in a classroom discussion, presentation, or assignment, or in a school sponsored activity, shall not be prohibited from expressing personal beliefs of any kind nor be penalized for so doing, unless the conduct unreasonably interferes with order or discipline, threatens the well-being of persons or property, or violates concepts of civility or propriety appropriate in a school setting.
- 3.3.2 Students may initiate and conduct voluntary religious activities or otherwise exercise their religious freedom on school grounds during discretionary time. Individuals not currently enrolled as students in the school may neither conduct nor regularly attend the activities. School officials may neither conduct nor actively participate in the activities, but may be present as necessary to ensure proper observance of school rules and may limit or prohibit student activities under this section that interfere with order or discipline, threaten the well-being of persons or property, or violate concepts of civility or propriety appropriate in a school setting. Any limitation on student expression or exercise during discretionary time shall be by the least restrictive means necessary to protect the School's interests.

- 3.3.3 The School shall provide written notice to a student's parent or guardian if the School denies a request to participate in religious activities or the exercise of religious freedom during discretionary time and the reason(s) therefor.

### 3.4 Employee Expression

- 3.4.1 School employees may not proselyze any student regarding atheistic, agnostic, sectarian, religious, or denominational doctrine while the employee is acting in the employee's official capacity, nor may an employee attempt to use his or her position to influence a student regarding the student's religious beliefs or lack thereof.
- 3.4.2 School employees may respond in an appropriate and restrained manner to spontaneous questions from students regarding the employee's personal belief or perspective. Nevertheless, because of the special position of trust held by School employees, employees may not advocate or encourage acceptance of a belief or perspective; but may, by exercising due caution, explain or define personal religious beliefs or perspectives, or opinions about the rightfulness or wrongfulness of his/her own, or any other person's religious beliefs or lack thereof.
- 3.4.3 School officials are responsible to monitor the behavior and interactions of volunteers while they are serving in the School or participating in school activities. Volunteers who fail to comply with the provisions of this policy shall be asked to leave the school or activity.

### 3.5 Supervision and Training

- 3.5.1 At the beginning of each school year, the Executive Director ("Director") shall review this policy with the teachers and staff.

### 3.6 Complaint Procedure

- 3.6.1 A student, parent, or guardian who is dissatisfied with a decision by the Director or school officials under this policy, may appeal that decision within ten (10) days to the Board. An appeal must be made in writing, directed to the President

of the Board. The Board shall review the complaint or request of the student, parent or guardian and the decision of the Director and may modify the Director's decision. The Board must keep a written record of every appeal and the decision made regarding the appeal. Information about the complaint may be requested from teachers and staff of the school, the parent or legal guardian, the student, and patrons. If the Board decides to request additional information, the student and the student's parent or legal guardian shall be notified. Before permitting participation by parents or patrons, the Board President must explain to the student and student's parent or legal guardian that they are waiving their privacy rights under state and federal law. This decision must be documented.

3.6.2 The decision of the Board shall be final.

3.6.3 Once a student, parent, or guardian has requested a waiver of participation or substitution of another activity, the student shall not be compelled to participate in any curriculum or activity pending the resolution of the appeal unless the Board President has determined that requiring the participation of that particular student is the least restrictive means necessary to achieve a specifically identified educational objective in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest.

### 3.7 Policy Dissemination

3.7.1 A copy of this policy shall be posted on the School's website and made available upon request at the School's office. In addition, parents and guardians shall be notified of this policy, and directed to its location on the website, annually in the school newsletter.

## 4.0 Relevant Procedures, Guidelines & Restrictions



## 5.0 Appendices