

Your guide to religious liberty in public schools

**Students
can pray
in school.**

🍎 Prayer is a constitutional right, but it cannot be forced on others. Prayer also cannot be performed in a manner that could be taken as a school endorsement of the prayer. Voluntary, student-initiated prayer is permitted if it is not disruptive, but school-sponsored prayer is not allowed.

🍎 Religion may be taught as an academic, objective subject. For example, teachers can teach about the role of religion in history, literature and culture. Religion should not be taught from a devotional or worship perspective. Teachers may not proselytize or teach biblical creationism as science.

**Teachers
can teach
about religion.**

**Students can
wear religious
clothing and
accessories.**

🍎 Religious messages on clothing are permissible to the same extent that other messages are allowed. If a school has a dress code that does not permit any words on any clothing, then that also applies to religious words. Generally, if words or symbols are allowed, then religious words and symbols cannot be excluded.

🍎 Students are free to pray, read Scripture, make religious comments in class (when relevant to a subject being discussed) and even share their faith with others at school. Students cannot disrupt a classroom or harass others, but they have the right to talk about their beliefs.

**Students
may express
their faith in
school.**

**Religious groups
can meet on
school grounds.**

🍎 Events that are student-initiated and meet when class is not in session (like prayer around a flagpole before school begins) are constitutional. Schools also are required to give religious groups the same access to school grounds as they do other groups that are not related to school curriculum. Students cannot force a captive audience to participate in a religious exercise, and school personnel cannot encourage, discourage or participate in religious groups or events.

🍎 The Baptist Joint Committee's website has downloadable issue guides for parents and teachers. Find us on the web at www.BJOnline.org, go to the **Resources** tab, select **Documents**, and look at the section called "Public Schools." You will find a host of helpful pamphlets and brochures, including one that shows how schools and religious communities can work together to enhance the mission of public education while respecting constitutional guidelines.

**Visit
www.BJOnline.org
for more
information.**