

## **DRAFT POLICY—OCT 3, 2023**

### **Religious and Cultural Observances**

We respect and protect the constitutional rights of our students, families, and employees to practice and observe their religion or to practice no religion at all. We also respect and protect our students, families, and employees' rich and diverse cultural observances and practices. At all times, we seek to balance those important individual rights with the constitutional requirement that PPS, as a public school district, may not favor or promote a particular religion over another. And at all times, we encourage all students, families, and staff to show respect, tolerance, and curiosity about religious and cultural practices that differ from their own. These differences and our acceptance of them make our school community an inclusive and welcoming community in which all students can authentically thrive.

### **Excused Absences & Other Accommodations**

Students and families may request accommodations to enable them to observe their religious and cultural practices. Those accommodations may include excused absences for religious instruction or holiday observances. Requests for absences or other accommodations should be in writing from a student's parent/guardian directed to a teacher and/or principal at the student's school.

**Classes.** Students may be excused from classes for their individual religious or cultural practices without penalty. Students who have missed an assignment or assessment must be given a reasonable opportunity to make up that test or assessment. Make-up opportunities will not be required of a student on the school day immediately after a student is absent from school to observe a religious or cultural holiday.

**Co-Curricular and Extracurricular activities.** Students may also be excused from co-curricular and extracurricular activities for their individual religious or cultural practices without penalty.

### **Identification of Major Religious Holidays and Cultural Observances**

As part of the annual school calendar creation and adoption process, the Superintendent shall identify major religious and cultural holidays in our community using legally acceptable methods to do so. The District and each of its schools should avoid scheduling grade-, school- or district-wide events (e.g., Back-to-School nights, all-school assemblies, parent-teacher conferences, School Board meetings) on those dates. Such events can be scheduled on major religious holidays only if such scheduling is reasonably necessary to carry out the proper functioning of a school program, course of study, or to avoid an unreasonable burden on other students; or if such scheduling is outside the control of District employees. Staff will inform students and parents of plans as far in advance as possible so that conflicts with religious or cultural observances can be avoided if possible and otherwise accommodated if not.

### **Non-District-Sponsored Events**

When school or District events are scheduled and controlled by organizations other than the District (e.g., OSAA, Outdoor School, national testing organizations), the District shall advocate with those organizations that such events are not held on major religious or cultural holidays.