Policy Title: ***Religion Based Exclusion from School Program*** Code No. ***602.12***

Parents who wish to have their child excluded from a school program because of religious beliefs must inform the superintendent. The board authorizes the administration to allow the exclusion if it is not disruptive to the educational process and it does not infringe on a compelling state or educational interest. Further, the exclusion must not interfere with other school district operations. Students who are allowed to be excluded from a program or activity which violates their religious beliefs are required to do an alternate supervised activity or study. The superintendent shall determine alternate activity or study for the student.

In notifying the superintendent or designee, the parents shall abide by the following:

- the notice shall be in writing;
- the objection shall be based on religious beliefs;
- the objection shall state which activities or studies violate their religious beliefs;
- the objection will state why these activities or studies violate their religious beliefs;
- the objection shall state a proposed alternate activity or study.

The superintendent or designee shall have discretion to make this determination. The factors considered when a student requests to be excluded from a program or activity because of religious beliefs include, but are not limited to:

- availability of staff to supervise a student who wishes to be excluded;
- availability of alternative course of study or activity;
- the number of students who wish to be excluded;
- concern that allowing the exclusion places the school in the position of supporting a particular religion,
- whether the program or activity is required for promotion to the next grade level or for graduation.

Decisions will be made consistent with applicable laws as stated below:

I. Leadership and Staff Notification It is the policy of the Cedar Falls CSD shall annually distribute the most recent version of the "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression" produced by the U.S. Department of Education, and distributed by the Iowa Department of Education, to each principal and teacher (including making available to substitute and student teachers).

II. Protected Prayer It is the policy Cedar Falls CSD to allow students and staff to engage in constitutionally protected prayer within the district schools consistent with applicable statutory or case law pertaining to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Accordingly, no board policy will prevent, or otherwise deny participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in district schools, consistent with federal law.

III. Grading Standards It is the policy of Cedar Falls CSD that religious content in student assignments will be evaluated using the same academic grading standards applied to secular work.

IV. Student Organizations It is the policy of Cedar Falls CSD that religious student organizations have the same rights, access to facilities, and institutional support as secular student clubs.

V. Professional Development It is the policy of Cedar Falls CSD to offer professional development opportunities to each employee of the school district or charter school regarding constitutionally protected prayer and religious expression in public elementary and secondary schools.

VI. Concerns may be directed to the district civil rights coordinator.

Date of Adoption:

May 8, 1989

Dates of Revision:

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March 10, 2003
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September 14, 2026