HOPE
Learning Academy of Toledo

Policy on Religious Expression

POLICY NUMBER:	EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/10/23	APPOINTING AUTHORITY APPROVAL: Hope Learning Academy of Toledo School Board

Hope Learning Academy recognizes and respects the rights of students and staff to exercise their constitutionally protected rights of religious expression while attending or working within the district's public schools. The district is committed to ensuring that these rights are upheld in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

Policy Statement:
Hope Learning Academy recognizes and respects the rights of students and staff to exercise their constitutionally protected rights of religious expression while attending or working within the district's public schools. The district is committed to ensuring that these rights are upheld in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

This policy applies to all students and staff within the Hope Learning Academy and encompasses all school-sponsored activities and events.

1. **Freedom of Religious Expression**: Students and staff have the right to engage in religious expression, including prayer, religious attire, religious speech, and other forms of religious observance, as long as it does not disrupt the educational process or infringe upon the rights of others.

2. **Equal Treatment**: All religious beliefs and practices with respect and fairness and shall not discriminate against or promote any particular religion.

3. **Voluntary Nature**: Religious expression must be voluntary and initiated by the student. No one should be coerced, pressured, or discouraged from participating or refraining from religious expression.

4. **Non-Endorsement**: Hope shall not endorse or promote any religious belief or practice, and school personnel shall remain neutral on religious matters.

Guidelines:
1. Religious Attire: Students and staff have the right to wear clothing or symbols that reflect their religious beliefs, provided that it complies with the school's dress code and does not disrupt the educational environment.

2. **Prayer:** Students may engage in voluntary, non-disruptive, and non-coercive individual or group prayer during non-instructional time, such as before or after school, during lunch, or during designated times for silent reflection. Staff members may also engage in private prayer during non-instructional time.

3. **Religious Expression in Schoolwork**: Students may express their religious beliefs and viewpoints in their school assignments and projects as long as they meet academic requirements and are respectful of the diverse beliefs of others.

4. **Student-Led Religious Clubs**: Students have the right to form and participate in student-led religious clubs,, provided that the club meets the same requirements and follows the same procedures as other student organizations.

5. **Non-Disruption**: Religious expression must not disrupt the orderly conduct of school activities, infringe on the rights of others, or create a hostile environment.

Review and Revision:
This policy shall be reviewed periodically to ensure its compliance with applicable laws and to address any emerging issues related to religious expression in Ohio public schools.