

Accommodations of Sincere Beliefs in Required Instruction

The curriculum of RSU 40 is designed to reflect the learning expectations for all students in all content areas of the system of Learning Results, as well as other statutory and regulatory requirements and content areas specified by the Board of Directors.

The Board recognizes that there could be topics in the curriculum that may be objectionable to individual students and/or parent(s)/legal guardian based on their particular sincerely held religious, moral or philosophical beliefs. Exemption from instruction that infringes on such beliefs may be requested by the parent(s)/legal guardian.

Requests for exemption from instruction must be made in writing to the building principal and are subject to the approval of the principal. The principal will notify the Superintendent as soon as practicable of any request for exemption from instruction and of their decision. If the principal denies an exemption request, the parent(s)/legal guardian may appeal to the Superintendent.

In considering requests for exemption, factors that the principal should consider may include:

- A. The alignment of the curriculum with the system of Learning Results;
- B. Whether the course or content area is required by state law or Board policy;
- C. The educational importance of the material or instruction from which exemption is requested;
- D. Evidence regarding the sincerity of the belief on which the request is based;
- E. Whether the school has a legal obligation to accommodate the request;
- F. The effect of exemption or accommodation on the validity of the local assessment system; and
- G. Other factors that bear upon the particular request.

Exemption from required instruction does not excuse the student from meeting the requirements of the Learning Results or from total credit hours or other requirements for graduation, or from performing alternative work.

When the principal determines that the curriculum that has been aligned with the System of Learning Results conflicts with sincerely held religious beliefs of a student or their parent or legal guardian, reasonable accommodation in the curriculum will be made for the student, within the scope of existing resources. Alternative instruction may be provided by the school or through approved independent study. Any alternative instruction must be approved in advance by the principal in consultation with appropriate instructional staff and must meet the standards and objectives of the part of the curriculum that is being replaced. If the accommodation in the curriculum that is requested is so great that the validity of the local assessment system is compromised, the Superintendent will determine how to address the situation, subject to the approval of the Commissioner.

When a student is exempted from any portion of the regular curriculum for religious, philosophical or moral reasons the staff must make reasonable efforts, within the scope of existing resources, to accommodate alternative instruction for the student. Alternative instruction may be provided by the school or through approved independent study. Any alternative instruction must be approved in advance by the Principal and the parent/guardian in consultation with the classroom teacher, and must meet the standards and objectives of the part of the curriculum that is being replaced.

When requests for exemption are made for religious, philosophical, or moral reasons, a parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with the Principal's decision may appeal to the Superintendent. In the event that a parent/guardian is dissatisfied with the Superintendent's decision, an appeal may be made to the Board, whose decision will be final.

Legal Reference: 20-A M.R.S. §6209
LD 1536, Chap. 51 Resolves
Ch. 127 § 3.07 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)
Ch. 131 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)

Adopted: February 14, 2008

Reviewed: December 7, 2017