

Five Ways to Pray in Public Schools

Adapted from an article by Jennifer A. Marshall

Meet for prayer before school, at lunch, or after school. Any non-instructional time will do. Students should be courteous and careful not to disrupt school procedures.

1. **Form a prayer group.** If students can meet at school to play chess or chase butterflies, they can also meet to pray. Student religious groups must be allowed the same access to school facilities as other groups not directly related to the curriculum.
2. **Pray before sporting events.** Members of a sports team can gather teammates for a prayer huddle before the game begins. They should make it open to anyone who would like to participate.
3. **Distribute prayer materials with friends.** Students can distribute written prayers, tracts, or religious books in the same way that schools allow them to hand out non-religious materials.
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5. **Participate in a released-time program.** Released-time programs allow students to attend off-campus religious instruction of their choice. Released-time is legal in all fifty states (some states have policies governing the implementation of such programs), but most districts and schools do not take advantage of this freedom. Released-time education activities are discussed in the Family Research Council's resource: [Time for God: Accommodating Religious Free Exercise through Released-Time Education](http://www.frc.org/get/if01k1.cfm).

(SOURCE: Family Research Council: <http://www.frc.org/get/if01k1.cfm>)

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HAWAII FAMILY FORUM

August, 2003

Students' Rights of Religious Speech and Expression: Guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution

Students MAY pray, evangelize, read Scripture, distribute literature, and invite fellow students to participate so long as such actions are truly initiated by the student, are truly voluntary, and are not disruptive or coercive.

Students MAY express their religious views during a class discussion, in written or oral reports, or as a part of an assignment so long as the expression is relevant to the subject under consideration and meets the requirements of the assignment.

Students MAY study the Bible and perform religious songs as a part of a secular program of education if the school chose these as a part of its curriculum.

Students MAY form religious clubs if the school allows at least one other non-curriculum-related club to meet during non-instructional time and must be given full access to all school facilities, resources, and equipment used by secular student clubs.

Students MAY wear clothing or jewelry displaying religious message to the same extent other messages are permitted.

All these principles apply to events such as "See you at the Pole" (SYATP), which is set this year for Wednesday, September 17, 2003. SYATP is a student-organized, student-led gathering at the school flagpole where students will pray for their families, friends, teachers, schools, government and nation. See YOU at the Pole!

In the Supreme Court's on words, it is a fundamental principle of constitutional law that a governmental body may not suppress or exclude the speech of private parties just because the speech is religious or contains a religious perspective. Good News Club v. Milford Central School District, 533 U.S. 98 (2001).

"[T]here is a crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion, which the Establishment Clause [of the First Amendment] forbids, and private speech endorsing religion, which the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses [of the First Amendment] protect." Board of Education v. Mergens, 496 U.S. 226, 250 (1990).

"[N]othing in the Constitution as interpreted by this Court prohibits any public school student from voluntarily praying at any time before, during, or after the schoolday." Santa Fe Independent. School District. v. Doe, 530 U.S. 290, 313 (2000).

"It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." Tinker v. Des Moines Independence Community School District, 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1968).

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