

RESPECT PROJECT

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. PROJECT – Proposal Religious Expression Supports Positive Equity-Centered Teaching

Background

Welcoming students to connect their faith to their learning will advance your school district’s focus on equity. In response to the pandemic, students’ faith can be an important anchor to help them deal with issues of trauma and learning loss. Educators can lawfully and appropriately leverage students’ religious upbringing as an asset for emotional, mental, and behavioral support. Amid all they are facing, we have an opportunity to support students’ religious faith as a learning and coping asset.

Among the various options for student growth, helping them apply their religious upbringing as a support is part of whole child education. It addresses the often-overlooked value of students’ religion in a school district’s focus on equity, family engagement and cultural responsiveness.

RESPECT Overview

RESPECT focuses on improving student performance and teacher practice by increasing awareness of students’ freedom of religious expression and the appropriate ways to leverage it as a social, emotional, and learning asset.

Suggested Objectives

1. By [date], all teachers will learn the research related to students’ religious upbringing as an SEL asset and will know the key points of the U.S. Department of Education’s *Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Elementary and Secondary Schools*
2. By [date], all students and their parents/guardians will have been informed of the U.S. Department of Education’s Guidance.
3. By [date], schools will have intentionally welcomed students to express their religious beliefs in class.
4. By the end of the school year there will be a ___% increase in family engagement in school activities
5. _____
6. _____

Implementation Options



The district can utilize one or more levels of RESPECT implementation.

| | Description of Work | Start and End Dates |
|-----------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Level One: ADVISE | <p>Assessment – We ask questions of a school district’s administrative leadership to determine the best steps for helping the district meet its strategic goals by using an equitable approach to students’ religious upbringing. This includes a review of past legal challenges, current school board policy and administrative regulations. It also includes a review of the school district’s relationship with the faith community.</p> <p>Recommendations – Based on our assessment, we will recommend a range of actions such as updating school board policy, informing teachers, students, and parents about the U.S. Department of Education’s Guidance on religious expression, and engaging the faith community and their public-school families.</p> | |

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| <p>Level Two: INFORM</p> | <p>Informing – Staff will complete a 30-minute online instructional module covering research on students’ religious upbringing as a learning asset, reviewing the Federal Guidance on religious expression, and introducing practical ways to make classrooms more welcoming for students’ religious expression. Staff will also have links to teaching resources.</p> <p>All stakeholders will receive information on religious expression in school. This includes staff, students, and parents. If necessary, school board policy and administrative regulations can be updated.</p> | |
| <p>Level Three: ENGAGE</p> | <p>Community Engagement – Gateways will work with local church and school ministry leaders so they can encourage their students to connect their faith to their conduct and learning at school and encourage parents to be more engaged in their children’s schools to help the district meet its goals related to student flourishing and family engagement. This will include Gateways hosting a luncheon with the Superintendent and faith leaders to inspire more community engagement with the schools.</p> | |

Project Budget – The cost is \$1.00 per staff member.

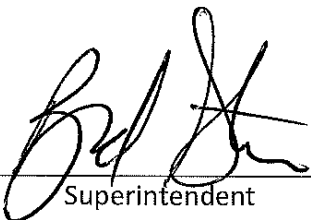
Key Stakeholders

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| <p>Superintendent</p> |  |
| <p>School Board Members</p> |  |
| <p>Project Manager</p> | |
| <p>RESPECT Consultant</p> | |

Monitoring and Evaluation

At the end of each level, progress will be reviewed and analyzed based on the goals that are set for that level.

Approval Signatures

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|  <p>Superintendent</p> | <p>Project Manager</p> | <p>RESPECT Consultant</p> |
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