

Released Time Course Requirements Summary

The 135th General Assembly enacted House Bill 8, which requires school district boards of education to adopt policies that allow students to be excused from school to attend released time courses in religious instruction. Before the enactment of House Bill 8, school district boards of education were permitted, but not required, to adopt such a policy. Beginning April 9, 2025, school districts are required, under Ohio Revised Code section 3313.6022, to adopt released time course policies.

Released Time

Released time is defined under ORC 3313.6022 as “a period of time during which a student is excused from school to attend a course in religious instruction conducted by a private entity off school district property.” As such, a student attending a released time course is not considered absent from school.

Requirements for the Policy

Section 3313.6022 specifies several conditions for the released time course policy:

- (1) The student’s parent or guardian gives written consent.
- (2) The sponsoring entity maintains attendance records and makes them available to the school district the student attends.
- (3) Transportation to and from the place of instruction is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring entity, parent, guardian, or student.
- (4) The sponsoring entity makes provisions for and assumes liability for the student.
- (5) No public funds are expended and no public school personnel are involved in providing the religious instruction.
- (6) The student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork.

Additionally, the statute requires a school district board of education to collaborate with a sponsoring entity of a released time course in religious instruction to identify a time to offer the course during the school day. A student may not be released from a core curriculum subject course to attend a course in religious instruction.

If a student participates in a released time course pursuant to a plan adopted by a school district board of education under [ORC 3313.6022](#) and is provided a school meal for consumption during the released time instruction, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce will provide federal reimbursement to the school that provides the meals and requests reimbursement.

To be reimbursable, the school meals must meet all USDA meal pattern and nutrition standards requirements. Meals served off-site should be subject to especially stringent sanitary and precautionary measures to avoid contamination and spoilage.

A school district board of education may include in its policy a requirement for a criminal records check of any instructors or volunteers of a private sponsoring entity providing a released time course in religious instruction to the school district’s students. See Ohio Revised Code section 3313.6030.