

school

MINISTRIES
OHIO

Released Time Bible Education FAQ

What is “Released Time” Religious Education?

Released Time (“RT”) is the only legal means by which public school students may study their faith academically and devotionally during the school day. Schools may enter into a cooperative arrangement with the community group offering the classes. School personnel are required to remain neutral, neither encouraging nor discouraging students’ participation. While RT is equally available for any faith, School Ministries Ohio helps Christians offer Bible classes for the public school students of their communities.

Who is School Ministries Ohio?

[School Ministries Ohio](#) educates, equips and encourages Christians to offer Bible classes for their public school students (K-12). We are blessed to offer counsel and support as a part of the national [School Ministries](#) association of Released Time Bible Education programs.

Is Released Time constitutional?

Yes! RT has been around for more than a century, and was declared constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1952. In addition, Released Time is the subject of statutes either requiring or permitting RT under specified circumstances in more than half of all U.S. states. See [releasedtime.org](#).

Do these classes violate the principle of the “separation of church and state?”

No. Released time classes honor the judicial doctrine of “separation of church and state” by following constitutional requirements established by the U.S. Supreme Court and affirmed by federal and state courts. The constitutionality of released time was recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1952 and upheld since, as an expression of our right to the “free exercise of religion” protected by the 1st Amendment. Prominent voices across America’s ideological and theological spectrum agree on the constitutionality of Released Time. See content and signatories to “Public Schools and Religious Communities” here:

<https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/publicschools.pdf>.

Recently, a school district’s policy of conferring academic credit for elective released time classes was upheld as a constitutional accommodation of parents’ desires for their children to have access to religious education during the school day. In November 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari, allowing the Federal Court of Appeals’ 4th Circuit decision favorable to released time academic credit to stand. For more information and analysis, visit:

<https://www.becketlaw.org/case/moss-v-spartanburg-county-school-district-no-7/>.

How does Released Time help students?

It can help students find meaning and know they matter in a dark and hurting culture. Released Time is proven to help students academically, behaviorally and in character development. Teachers and volunteers provide much-needed adult mentorship. Studies consistently show that students who take it, thrive.

Is academic credit available for Released Time students?

Yes. [O.R.C. 3313.6022](#) provides that students may earn up to 2 hours of academic credit for high-school level classes meeting the law’s requirements.

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How many Ohio school districts have adopted Released Time policies?

Over 65% of Ohio's more than 600 public school districts now have adopted policies permitting students to be released for religious instruction -- an increase of more than 150% in the number of districts with policies since Ohio's RT law ([O.R.C. 3313.6022](#) Released Time for Religious Instruction) became effective in 2014. Currently, more than two dozen RT groups serve roughly 7000 students in over three dozen school districts.

How can I learn more about Released Time?

Visit releasedtime.org to understand the history and legality of Released Time, as well as state laws and administrative requirements around the nation. See schoolministriesohio.org to learn how Christian leaders in your community can be educated, equipped and encouraged to begin RT Bible classes for your public school students.

Who determines the curriculum?

The organization offering the Released Time classes has the responsibility and right to choose the curriculum. Christian organizations may teach Bible classes and are not required to teach all religions.

Do Released Time Bible education classes interfere with required classes?

No. Released time classes do not interfere with your child's mandatory school courses or after-school activities. The class schedule is set by school personnel in consultation with Released Time staff. Usually the Released Time classes are scheduled for times when other electives are offered.

What are the requirements for my child to attend a Released Time program?

Parents or guardians are required to sign permission forms provided by the local Released Time program. By law, the program must be FREE to schools!

Are Released Time Bible education classes held on school grounds?

No. Released time classes are to be held offsite in a nearby classroom, typically at a local church or community building. If the classroom is not within walking distance, transportation is provided by the Released Time program — buses or vans owned by the local school may only be utilized if appropriate board policies are in place. Contact us to learn more.

How do I find out if Released Time Bible classes are already offered or approved in my area?

We recommend contacting us to learn the landscape and discuss your school district's policy addressing Released Time (read more about finding a policy on our new program checklist page: schoolministriesohio.org/new-program-checklist). Research has shown that more than 400 of 600+ of Ohio public school districts -- over 65% -- have some form of religious instruction policy. Yet fewer than 40 Ohio communities are known to provide Released Time classes. That means 90% of school districts having policies are just waiting for their communities to organize and offer Bible classes. Want to talk details? Does your district lack a policy? Call us at any point to speak to your group, help you think through each step, or ask us to share a recommended model school board policy.