



# Religion Policy

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## PREAMBLE

The Ethembeni Enrichment Centre recognizes the particular value of the rich and diverse religious heritage of our school community. While we acknowledge that the school has an educational responsibility for teaching and learning about religion and religions, and for promoting these, we understand that we should do so in ways that are different from the religious instruction and religious nurture provided by the home, family, and religious community.

This policy has been developed with reference to the following:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996
- South African School Act, Act 84 of 1996
- Eastern Cape Provincial School Education Act, Act 12 of 1997
- Department of Education Report of the Ministerial Committee on Religious Education of 2003
- Eastern Cape Religion in Education Information Document for Schools

## RELIGION POLICY

The South African Schools Act (Act 94 of 1996) upholds the constitutional rights of all citizens to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion, and freedom from unfair discrimination on any grounds whatsoever, including religion, in public education institutions.

Within this constitutional framework, and as a public school, we have a responsibility to promote the core values of a democratic society, through the curriculum, through extracurricular activities, and in our approach in general. These core values include equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability, and social honour.

**Equity:** The education process in general, as well as this policy, must aim at the development of a national democratic culture with respect for the value of all of our people's diverse cultural, religious and linguistic traditions.

**Tolerance:** Religion in education must contribute to the advancement of inter-religious tolerance and interpersonal respect among adherents of different religious or secular worldviews in a shared civil society.

**Diversity:** In the interest of advancing informed respect for diversity, as an educational institution we have a responsibility to promote multi-religious knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of religions in South Africa and the world.

**Openness:** Schools, together with the broader society, play a role in cultural formation and transmission, and we must promote a spirit of openness in which there shall be no overt or covert attempt to indoctrinate into any particular belief or religion.

**Accountability:** As systems of human accountability, religions cultivate moral values and ethical commitments that can be recognized as resources for learning and as vital contributions to nation-building.

**Social Honour:** While honouring the linguistic, cultural, religious or secular backgrounds of all learners, we cannot allow the overt or covert denigration of any religion or secular world-view.

The spirit of the policy is to embrace the religious diversity of South Africa, allowing everyone the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

## **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES**

The Ethembeni Enrichment Centre will, where possible, make provision for important holy days in regard to the setting of examinations and tests, to ensure that learners are not prejudiced by their attendance at religious observances.

Religious observances may be conducted on the school premises and during activities provided that it is conducted on an equitable basis and that attendance by learners and members of the staff is free and voluntary.

In terms of the Act, the governing body has the mandate to determine the religious observances of the school. As the vast majority of the learners are of the Christian faith, the governing body has approved Bible readings and Christian singing at ceremonies, assemblies and meetings.

The intrinsic value of other religious groups shall however be respected and opportunity shall be given to them to participate at assemblies as well provided the religious practice is not in conflict with the Ethembeni's religious values, nor violate other people's human rights. As it is logistically impossible for the school to cater for all religious groups' requirements, a suitable alternative must be provided by the parents of the affected learners.

This policy, therefore, makes allowance for meetings of religious societies or groups, as well as the provision of religious instruction by religious bodies and other accredited groups outside the formal school curriculum on school premises, provided that opportunities be afforded in an equitable manner to all religious bodies represented in a school, that no denigration or caricaturing of any other religion take place, and that attendance at such instruction be voluntary. Persons offering Religious Instruction would do so under the authority of the religious body, and would not be required to be registered with the South African Council for Educators.

Teaching should, at all times, engender a sense of acceptance, security, and respect for learners with differing values, cultural backgrounds, and religious traditions.

Educators must ensure that all, irrespective of race, creed, sexual orientation, disability, language, gender, or class, feel welcome, emotionally secure, and appreciated.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our policy for religion in education, therefore, is designed to support unity without uniformity, and diversity without divisiveness.