

MINUTE OF SILENCE

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Alexandria City Public Schools respects and celebrates the diversity of our student population. In accordance with the Code of Virginia, one minute of silence is observed in each classroom in the division every day.

During such period of silence, the teacher responsible for each classroom takes care that all pupils remain silent and make no distracting display so that each pupil may, in the exercise of individual choice, meditate, pray, or engage in any other silent activity which does not interfere with, distract, or impede other pupils in the like exercise of individual choice. Teachers respect that some forms of meditation or prayer require movement.

This minute of silence does not replace other times ACPS students may need to individually meditate or pray.

Adopted: July 6, 2000
Amended: September 7, 2000
Amended: January 22, 2015

Legal Refs: Code of Virginia § 22.1-203; Virginia State Board of Education “Guidelines Concerning Religious Activity in the Public Schools;” Wallace v Jaffree, 472 U.S. 38 (1985).

MINUTE OF SILENCE

~~The Alexandria City Public Schools has established a daily classroom observance of one minute of silence. During such minute of silence, teachers shall take care that pupils remain seated and silent and make no distracting display. Each pupil may engage in any silent activity which does not interfere with, distract, or impede others. The teacher of each classroom shall not influence the students' use of the minute of silence.~~

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Commented [1]: I'm curious about the relevancy of this policy in today's time (similar to the idea of the pledge of allegiance in schools). In alignment with our restorative practices, coaching teachers up on a morning meditation, or mindful morning routine may be more relevant and community-oriented than a district-wide moment of silence. Not something to change immediately, but something to consider as ACPS progresses its practices.

Commented [2R1]: And she we be adding something that respects different time of day where students need their "prayer time" or other means of mediation/meditation based on cultural differences?

Commented [3R1]: This is a code policy, so it's a minimum. Added some framing language and noted that this does not replace other times students may need to meditate or pray.

Commented [4]: "...in accordance with Virginia law."

Commented [5R4]: Done

Commented [6]: What if a student's prayer/meditation is usually done not while seated in a chair?

Commented [7R6]: Good point. What if its a drama class and there aren't chairs? The student isn't required to pray so they could perform some other silent activity while seated, and teachers should have sufficient training to recognize when its appropriate to make an exception..

Commented [8R6]: Struck the seated language.

Commented [9]: How are we defining distracting?

Commented [10R9]: That's really left to the teacher but in general the activity shouldn't have any impact on others. That typically implies no sounds and no large motions.

Commented [11R9]: That should be clear. "Discretion" is how bias comes into play. Again, if we respect differences what is distracting to one person may be culturally appropriate for another. I think of our Muslim student who need places th cleanse and pray.

Commented [12R9]: Added a sentence about respecting that some forms of meditation or prayer require movement.

Commented [13]: Updated to reflect the requirements in the legal reference.