

**RELEASED TIME COURSES**

The board of education will approve released time courses for elective credit. A released time course is defined by law as a period of time during which a student is excused from school to attend a course in religious or moral instruction taught by an independent entity off school property. Any independent entity that would like to offer a course to be considered for elective credit shall discuss the proposal with the superintendent or superintendent's designee. The proposal shall include a course syllabus, a calendar of when the course will be offered, the methods of assessment utilized in the course, the qualifications of the course instructor, and a template written consent form that will be provided by the independent entity to parents or legal guardians for student's enrollment in the released time program. The school superintendent, principal for the school site where the student is enrolled, or their designees shall have reasonable discretion over the scheduling and timing of released time courses.

The superintendent shall then present the item to the board of education to consider at a lawfully convened meeting under an appropriately worded agenda item.

At the board meeting, the board of education will evaluate the course in a neutral and secular manner that does not involve any test for religious content or denominational affiliation. The secular criteria utilized to evaluate the released time course is limited to:

1. The amount of classroom instructional time.
2. The course syllabus which reflects requirement and materials utilized in the course.
3. Methods of assessment that will be utilized in the course.
4. The qualifications of the course instructor.

If a course is approved for elective credit, students may be excused from school to attend the released time course for no more than three class periods per week or a maximum of 125 class periods per school year. In order for the student to be eligible to participate in the released time program and receive an excused absence, the following must occur:

1. The student's parent or legal guardian must provide written consent prior to the student's participation in the released time course.
2. No school funds may be expended, and no school district personnel, equipment or resources may be involved in providing the instruction.
3. The independent entity must maintain attendance records for students and make them available to the school district and board of education.
4. Transportation provided to and from the place of instruction is the sole responsibility of the independent entity, the student, or the student's parent or legal guardian.
5. The independent entity or the student's parent or legal guardian indemnifies the school district and holds it harmless with regard to any conduct that does not occur on school property under the control or supervision of the school district and the independent entity maintains adequate insurance for that purpose.

**RELEASED TIME COURSES (CON'T)**

6. The student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork as a result of the excused absence.
7. The student may not be excused to participate in a released time course during any class in which the subject matter being taught is subject to state assessments.

Students who participate in released time courses are considered in attendance in the school district and the time is calculated as a part of the school day. Upon successful completion of the course elective credit will be provided to students when the work completed is substantiated by a transcript from the independent entity providing the course.

The school district, board of education and school employees shall not be liable for any claim arising or occurring as a result of a student's participation in a released time program when the student is not under the control or supervision of the school district.

**Legal Reference: 70 O.S. Section 11-101.3**