



EXEMPTION FROM REQUIRED INSTRUCTION

The curriculum of Regional School Unit-24 (RSU) is designed to reflect the learning expectations for all students in all content areas of the Maine System of Learning Results (MSLR), as well as other statutory and regulatory requirements and content areas specified by the RSU Board (RSUB).

The RSUB acknowledges that from time to time individual students may be exposed to some ideas and materials with which they or their parent(s)/legal guardian disagree. Students and their parent(s)/legal guardian cannot be required to adopt ideas with which they disagree, but such disagreement alone is not a sufficient basis to exempt a student from the prescribed RSU curriculum. Exemptions from the required curriculum should be minimized because they can detract from the overall instruction provided to the class as a whole and the educational objectives sought to be achieved by the curriculum.

The RSUB recognizes, however, that there could be topics in the curriculum which may be objectionable to individual students and/or parent(s)/legal guardian based on their particular sincerely held religious, moral or philosophical beliefs. Exemption from instruction which infringes on such beliefs may be requested by the parent(s)/legal guardian.

Requests for exemption from instruction must be made in writing to the Building Administrator (BA) and are subject to the approval of the BA. The BA shall notify the Superintendent as soon as practicable of any request for exemption from instruction and of his/her decision. If the BA denies an exemption request, the parent(s)/legal guardian may appeal to the Superintendent.

In considering requests for exemption, factors that the BA should consider may include:

- A. The alignment of the curriculum with the MSLR;
- B. Whether the course or content area is required by state law or RSUB policy;
- C. The educational importance of the material or instruction from which exemption is requested;
- D. Evidence regarding the sincerity of the belief on which the request is based;
- E. Whether the RSU has a legal obligation to accommodate the exemption request;
- F. The effect of exemption or accommodation on the validity of the local assessment system; and
- G. Other factors that bear upon the particular request.

Exemption from required instruction does not excuse the student from meeting the requirements of the MSLR or from total credit hours or other requirements for graduation, or from performing alternative work.

When the BA determines that the curriculum that has been aligned with the MSLR conflicts with sincerely held religious beliefs of a student or his/her parent or legal guardian, reasonable accommodation in the curriculum shall be made for the student, within the scope of existing resources. Alternative instruction may be provided by the RSU or through approved independent study. Any alternative instruction shall be approved in advance by the BA in consultation with appropriate instructional staff and shall meet the standards and objectives of the part of the curriculum that is being replaced. When requests for exemption from required curriculum are made for religious reasons, a parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with the BA's decision may appeal to the Superintendent. If the accommodation in the curriculum that is requested is so great that the validity of the local assessment system is compromised, the Superintendent will determine how to address the situation, subject to the approval of the Commissioner.

When a student is exempted from any portion of the regular curriculum for other than religious reasons (exemption based on sincere philosophical or moral beliefs), the staff will make reasonable efforts, within the scope of existing resources, to accommodate alternative instruction for the student. Alternative instruction may be provided by the RSU or through approved independent study. Any alternative instruction shall be approved in advance by the BA in consultation with the classroom teacher, and shall meet the standards and objectives of the part of the curriculum that is being replaced. When requests for exemption are made for philosophical or moral reasons, a parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with the BA's decision may appeal to the Superintendent, whose decision shall be final.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 6209
 LD 1536, Chap. 51 Resolves
 Ch.. 127 § 3.07 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)
 Ch. 131 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)

Cross Reference: ADF – School District Commitment to Learning Results
 IJJ – Instructional and Library Material Selection
 IMB – Teaching About Controversial/Sensitive Issues
 IMBAA – Alternatives to Biological Dissection

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