"Released time" or "released time course" is "a period of time during which a student is excused from school to attend a course in religious moral instruction taught by an independent entity off school property."¹

The Knox County Board of Education authorizes a student to be excused from school to attend a released time course in religious instruction, provided that each of the following applies:

1. The student's parent or guardian gives written consent prior to course participation;

2. The sponsoring entity maintains attendance records and makes them available to the individual school the student attends;

3. The course occurs off school property and transportation to and from the place of instruction, including transportation for students with disabilities, is the complete responsibility of the sponsoring entity, parent, guardian, or student;

4. The sponsoring entity makes provisions for and assumes liability for any and all students while under the control of the sponsoring entity;

5. No public funds are expended and no Knox County Schools personnel are involved in providing the religious instruction; and

6. The student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork. A teacher is not required to re-teach material missed due to a released time course.

While in attendance in a released time course in religious instruction, a student shall not be considered absent from school. No student may be released from a core curriculum subject course to attend a religious instruction course.

Released time courses shall only occur at a maximum frequency of once per month. The head principal shall determine the classes from which students are able to attend released time courses, provided the principal is able to account for such courses in the school day without disturbing core curriculum subject courses (see above). If more than one entity is providing a release time course at a school, parents will have a choice between courses and the courses will all occur at the same time.

Proposed entities requesting to provide a religious moral instruction course shall provide the Director of Schools with documentation of liability insurance and TBI/FBI fingerprint or equivalent background checks with no indications on it performed on entity individuals who will have student contact.

¹ Source: "Released Time Religious Instruction Policy" by Knox County Board of Education.
Disclaimer

Knox County Schools, individual schools, the Knox County Board of Education, individual Board Members, and school district employees are not liable in damages in a civil action for any injury allegedly arising during a student's transportation to or from a place of instruction when private transportation is used under a released time policy, or any injury allegedly arising during the time spent at the released time policy place of instruction. All releases will have the following language: "I understand that I am waiving any right or privilege I may have to hold the school (name of individual school), Knox County Schools (KCS), the Knox County Board of Education (KCBOE), any and all employees of the school and KCS and KCBOE, and/or the State of Tennessee liable for my child participating in the released time course." ²

In addition to the above-mentioned disclaimer, the Knox County Schools standard advertising disclaimer shall also be used. Said disclaimer is: “The Knox County Board of Education and the Knox County Schools do not sponsor or endorse this advertisement or solicitation.” ³

This policy shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the principle of equal access. This policy is not intended and shall not be implemented or construed in any way, to affiliate Knox County Schools with, nor express the district's preference for, any faith or religious denomination.

Legal References:

¹ T.C.A. § 49-2-130.
² T.C.A. § 49-2-130(d).
³ Cross reference Board Policy C-180

Approved as to Legal Form 11/21/2019
By the Knox County Law Department
/Gary T. Dupler/Deputy Law Director