

April 28, 1971

To: Area Public School Administrators
 Re: Released Time Religious Education
 From: Sister Mary Gabriel

It is a very well known fact that our area Catholic School will be closed this June. Due to this fact, we are presently planning ways in which to implement the use of the Michigan Law pertaining to the release of children from public schools for the purpose of attending Religious Instruction Classes. (R 340.71-340.72-340.73.) Adopted by the State Board of Education in 1964. (340.74)

R 340.71 (local public)

1. The board of education or its duly authorized representative, upon written request of the parent, guardian or person having control or charge of any child or children shall release from attendance at the public school any child or children to attend religious instruction classes not to exceed 2 hours (120 minutes) per week.

History: 1954 ACS 40, p. 12.

R 340.72

2. Each written request of the parent, guardian or person having control or charge of any child or children shall be made annually and shall specify the place at which religious instruction shall be given and the total amount of time per week during which release of the child or children from attendance at the public school is requested.

History: 1954 ACS 40, p. 12.

R 340.73

3. Persons or groups intending to hold or conduct religious instruction classes shall notify public school officials of their intent sufficiently in advance of the beginning of such class or classes so that public school officials can comply with the request for release of children from the public school for such purposes.

History: 1954 ACS 40, p. 12

R 340.74

4. A record of attendance at religious instruction classes shall not be maintained by public school officials. Those persons or groups offering or conducting religious instruction classes shall keep records of attendance. The responsibility for attendance at religious instruction classes belongs to the parent, guardian or person having control or charge of any child or children.

History: 1954 ACS 40, p.12

5. No solicitation for attendance at religious instruction classes shall be permitted on public school premises. The staff of the public school system shall neither encourage nor discourage participation in any religious instruction program.

History: 1954 ACS 40, p. 12

OPINION OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Following a request by a State Senator, the Honorable Alvin J. DeGraw, Attorney General Frank J. Kelley, of the State of Michigan, issued a very important opinion on September 30, 1969 on the released time law. The opinion was rendered in response to a request submitted by Senator DeGraw, following several queries by parents after a local public school board of education had determined that children could be required to attend released time classes for a period of 120 consecutive minutes once a week as opposed to two periods of 60 minutes each as requested by the children's parents.

The key statement in the opinion is quoted below:

"Therefore, it is my opinion that a board of education is not authorized by law to determine the days and times when children are to be released to attend religious instruction classes off school property during school hours. They are required to release students at such times and days as requested in writing by their parents or persons standing in the place of parents, provided that classes do not exceed two hour (120) minutes) per week."

The opinion, as submitted to Senator DeGraw - September 30, 1969

Some suggested procedures for setting up a full time released time and pastoral service program.

Step 1 - Request permission from the Diocesan Superintendent of Education to begin planning program.

Step 2 - Assess the need for the program. (You've done this already and have begun negotiations with the pastor and your board and have sisters willing to work in this program)

Step 3 - Initiate local planning session to involve local people to help in planning if you want them to for input. see Step 8.

Step 4 - Contact local school superintendent, and or director of personell for area Public Schools, to discuss the possibility of setting up this program, (just a friendly introduction to your plans) arrange a date at this time if possible, to meet with area principals to discuss days and times.

Step 5 - Meet with local public School Administrators. Have a schedule that would be (convient) for you worked out to hand to them - let them digest it and suggest any time changes that would fit better into their school schedules. Items to have on hand.

- 1) A copy of the Michigan Released time laws to be distributed to administrators, for reference sake - not to beat them over the head as it were.
- 2) An idea of how you will transport pupils - bus/car/ whatever. (A bus type of transportation would be most convenient because all pupils may be bussed at once this way and you need to be prompt in keeping to a schedule in order to make the inconvenience of taking pupils out of schools as convenient to local Public School teachers as possible).
- 3) A proposed time schedule.
 - a. Allow for an hour and a half for these classes if that will fit into your plans, or two hours depending on how long you wish to teach. If you want one hour class periods-ask for an hour and a half for released time. This gives you 15 minutes for coming and going back to the local schools.
 - b. Allow for two hours-the maximum time allotted for released time schedules if you want class periods for an hour and a half. The other half hour will then be for traveling time-15 minutes going and coming. See R 340.71 - R 340.72
 - c. Allow them the freedom to be able to call you about the times and days. They may go back to their schools and find that the schedule won't work for them. Just make sure that they contact you about this and keep you informed.
 - d. Let the principals know that you will present the proposed time schedule at the June Area Public School Board for approval. (This is a formality that courtesy demands, they cannot legally refuse you). R 340.73 See Opinion of Attorney General

Step 6 - Survey of Catholic Students

- a. Keep lists of your own children who will be enrolled in the program.
- b. Keep list of children currently enrolled in your C.C.D. classes.
- c. If possible, and local public school officials will permit it, check current Public School records to locate any other Catholic children who may not currently be enrolled in any program.
 1. Get names of these children
 2. Get parents names as well
 3. Get addresses and phone numbers in order to put them on your mailing list when you send out the registration sheets to families
 4. These last people may respond better if you could visit them to tell them something about the program you are planning.

Step 7 - Texts

Since delivery is such a problem in our area, it might be very good to estimate as well as you can the number of students per grade after step four is completed, and order texts in May or June.

Step 8 - Publicity-Getting parents involved

1. Initiate local planning sessions
 - a. Inform parents at open planning sessions of your plans.
 - b. Ask for groups to form such as:
 1. Those interested in teaching
 2. Those interested in helping with paper work, or being a part of a phone call committee
 3. Those who would be interested in helping to draw up a survey of needs in your area and who would be willing to help write a questionnaire
 4. Those who would be interested in helping with your pastoral service program
 - a. Some of these people may want to do a house to house survey of those who are your senior citizens or, shut ins.
 - b. Those who would be willing to find out how to go about helping the old people who are hospitalized
 - c. Liturgies, days of recollection, social parties, and visiting could be areas of planning here. (Questions for input in this area could be worked out by the group who volunteer to help in this area of the program.)
2. The Survey
 - a. A target day could be set in your area to set aside as Religious Education Sunday
 - b. On this day, the priests could have their homily devoted to what you hope to do in your religious education and Pastoral Service Programs
 - c. The survey could be distributed by the ushers after the homily-to be filled in right there in order to get them back. If your survey is well planned it will or can take but ten minutes time to fill them in.
 - d. The results of this survey will greatly help you with the rest of your planning-and may get you some volunteers to help with the work that have never been around before (It did here)

Step 9 - Teacher training sessions and dates schedules

Sr. Helen has all the answers there

Step 10 - Attendance - R. 34.74

See Sample sheets

- a. absentee sheet
- b. teacher's record sheet should be used for registration blanks
- c. permanent record card