April 2012

States with Moment of Silence or School Prayer Legislation

The codes below are current as of this publication. However, state laws can change at any time. Please verify with your state for accuracy.

**ALABAMA**  Ala. Code § 16-1-20.4


Period of quiet reflection. (a) The Legislature of Alabama finds that in the hectic society of today all too few citizens are able to experience even a moment of quiet reflection before plunging headlong into the activities of daily life. Young citizens are particularly affected by the absence of an opportunity for a moment of quiet reflection. The Legislature finds that our young, and society as a whole, would be well served if students in the public schools were afforded a moment of quiet reflection at the beginning of each school day and at the opening of school athletic events and graduation ceremonies.

(b) At the opening of school every day in each public school classroom, the teacher in charge shall conduct a brief period of quiet reflection for 60 seconds with the participation of every pupil in the classroom.

(c) At the beginning of every school athletic event and graduation ceremony, the principal of the school, or his or her designee, shall conduct a brief period of quiet reflection for 60 seconds.

(d) The moment of quiet reflection authorized by subsection (b) and subsection (c) is not intended to be and shall not be conducted as a religious service or exercise, but shall be considered an opportunity for a moment of silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day or event.


**ARIZONA**  Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 15-342

thru 2013  http://www.azleg.state.az.us/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/15/00342.01.htm&Title=15&DocType=ARS

The governing board may: Require a period of silence to be observed at the commencement of the first class of the day in the schools. If a governing board chooses to require a period of silence to be observed, the teacher in charge of the room in which the first class is held shall announce that a period of silence not to exceed one minute in duration will be observed for meditation, and during that time no activities shall take place and silence shall be maintained.

15-342. *Discretionary powers*. L11, Ch. 344, sec. 12. Eff. until 7/1/13. However, this stays in effect “as is” on 7/1/13.

**ARKANSAS**  Ark. Code Ann. § 6-10-115


The teacher in charge of each public school classroom may, or if so directed by the board of directors of the school district in which the teacher is employed, shall, at the opening of school on each school day, conduct a brief period of silence with the participation of all students in the classroom who desire to participate.

Sec. 10-16.a Silent meditation. Each local or regional board of education shall provide opportunity at the start of each school day to allow those students and teachers who wish to do so, the opportunity to observe such time in silent meditation.

P.A. 75-367, S. 2; P.A. 78-218, S. 13. History: P.A. 78-218 substituted "Each local or regional board of education" for "The board of education of each town and of each regional school district".

(b) During the initial period of study on each school day all students in the public schools in Delaware may be granted a brief period of silence, not to exceed 2 minutes in duration, to be used according to the dictates of the individual conscience of each student. During that period of silence no other activities shall take place.

History.—s. 138, ch. 2002-387.

Brief period of quiet reflection authorized; nature of period
(a) In each public school classroom, the teacher in charge shall, at the opening of school upon every school day, conduct a brief period of quiet reflection for not more than 60 seconds with the participation of all the pupils therein assembled.

(b) The moment of quiet reflection authorized by subsection (a) of this Code section is not intended to be and shall not be conducted as a religious service or exercise but shall be considered as an opportunity for a moment of silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.

(c) The provisions of subsections (a) and (b) of this Code section shall not prevent student initiated voluntary school prayers at schools or school related events which are nonsectarian and nonproselytizing in nature.


Silent Reflection and Student Prayer Act Sec. 1. In each public school classroom the teacher in charge shall observe a brief period of silence with the participation of all the pupils therein assembled at the opening of every school day. This period shall not be conducted as a religious exercise but shall be an opportunity for silent prayer or for silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day. (Source: P.A. 95-680, eff. 10-11-07.)
INDIANA Two codes: IC 20-30-5-4.5 and IC 20-10.1-7-11

2005 IC 20-30-5-4.5 http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/title20/ar30/ch5.html

Sec. 4.5. (a) In order that: (1) the right of each student to the free exercise of religion is guaranteed within the schools; and (2) the freedom of each student is subject to the least possible coercion from the state either to engage in or to refrain from religious observation on school grounds; the governing body of each school corporation shall establish the daily observance of a moment of silence in each classroom or on school grounds.

(b) During the moment of silence required by subsection (a), the teacher responsible for a classroom shall ensure that all students remain seated or standing and silent and make no distracting display so that each student may, in the exercise of the student's individual choice, meditate, pray, or engage in any other silent activity that does not interfere with, distract, or impede another student in the exercise of the student's individual choice.


Voluntary religious observance; silent period

Sec. 11. Voluntary Religious Observance - Silent Period. In each public school classroom, at the opening of each school day the teacher in charge may or, if directed by his governing body, shall conduct a brief period of silent prayer or meditation with the participation of all students assembled. This silent prayer or meditation is not a religious service or exercise and may not be conducted as one, but is an opportunity for silent prayer or meditation on a religious theme for those so inclined or a moment of silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.

(Formerly: Acts 1975, P.L.240, SEC.1.)

KANSAS Stat Ann. Sec 72-5308a

1969 http://kslegislature.org/li/m/statute/072_000_0000_chapter/072_053_0000_article/072_053_0008a_section/072_053_0008a_k.pdf

72-5308a. "Periods of silence" authorized. In each public school classroom the teacher in charge may observe a brief period of silence with the participation of all the pupils therein assembled at the opening of every school day. This period shall not be conducted as a religious exercise but shall be an opportunity for silent prayer or for silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.

History: L. 1969, ch. 310, § 24; July 1.


2000 http://lrc.ky.gov/KRS/158-00/175.PDF

158.175 Recitation of Lord's prayer and pledge of allegiance -- Instruction in proper respect for and display of the flag -- Observation of moment of silence or reflection.

(1) As a continuation of the policy of teaching our country's history and as an affirmation of the freedom of religion in this country, the board of education of a local school district may authorize the recitation of the traditional Lord's prayer and the pledge of allegiance to the flag in public elementary schools. Pupil participation in the recitation of the prayer and pledge of allegiance shall be voluntary. Pupils shall be reminded that this Lord's prayer is the prayer our pilgrim fathers recited when they came to this country in their search for freedom. Pupils shall be informed that these exercises are not meant to influence an individual's personal religious beliefs in any manner. The exercises shall be conducted so that pupils shall learn of our great freedoms, including the freedom of religion symbolized by the recitation of the Lord's prayer.

(5) At the commencement of the first class of each day in all public schools, the teacher in charge of the room may announce that a moment of silence or reflection not to exceed one (1) minute in duration shall be observed.


1998 http://lrc.ky.gov/KRS/158-00/183.PDF

158.183 Prohibited acts by students -- Rights of student -- Administrative remedies.

(1) A student shall have the right to carry out an activity described in any of paragraphs

(a) to (d) of subsection (2) of this section, if the student does not:

(a) Infringe on the rights of the school to:

1. Maintain order and discipline;
2. Prevent disruption of the educational process; and
3. Determine educational curriculum and assignments;

(b) Harass other persons or coerce other persons to participate in the activity; or

(c) Otherwise infringe on the rights of other persons.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
KENTUCKY continued

(2) Subject to the provisions of subsection (1) of this section, a student shall be permitted to voluntarily:
(a) Pray in a public school, vocally or silently, alone or with other students to the same extent and under the same circumstances as a student is permitted to vocally or silently reflect, meditate, or speak on nonreligious matters alone or with other students in the public school;

Effective: July 15, 1998

LOUISIANA Rev. Stat §2115


Silent prayer or meditation; pledge of allegiance
A. Each parish, city, and other local public school board in the state shall permit the proper school authorities of each school within its jurisdiction to allow an opportunity, at the start of each school day, for those students and teachers desiring to do so to observe a brief time in silent prayer or meditation. The allowance of a brief time for silent prayer or meditation shall not be intended nor interpreted as state support of or interference with religion, nor shall such time allowance be promoted as a religious exercise and the implementation of this Section shall remain neutral toward religion.
B. Each parish and city school board in the state shall also permit the proper authorities of each school to allow the opportunity for group recitation of the "Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag". Such recitation shall occur at the commencement of the first class of each day in all grades and in all public schools.


MARYLAND ED Code Ann. § 7-104

2012 http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/mdcode/

§ 7-104. Daily period of silent meditation
(a) Silent meditation. -- Principals and teachers in each public elementary and secondary school in this State may require all students to be present and participate in opening exercises on each morning of a school day and to meditate silently for approximately 1 minute.
(b) Praying or reading holy scripture permitted. -- During this period, a student or teacher may read the holy scripture or pray.


MASSACHUSETTS General Laws ch 71-1A

Copyright 2012 http://www.masslegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartII/TitleXI/Chapter71/Section1A
Section 1A. At the commencement of the first class of each day in all grades in all public schools the teacher in charge of the room in which each such class is held shall announce that a period of silence not to exceed one minute in duration shall be observed for personal thoughts, and during any such period, silence shall be maintained and no activities engaged in.

Section 1B. The school committee of any city or town may permit any child attending its public schools to participate in voluntary prayer with the approval of such child’s parents before the commencement of each daily school session. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, no city or town which permits such prayer shall be denied any funds for school purposes to which it may be entitled from the commonwealth.
MAINE


02/01/2012 Data extracted  http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec4805.html

2. Period of silence. The school board of a school administrative unit may require, at the commencement of the first class of each day in all grades in all public schools in their unit, that the teacher in charge of the room in which each class is held shall announce that a period of silence shall be observed for reflection or meditation and during that period silence shall be maintained and no activities engaged in.

1981, c. 693, §§5, 8 (NEW)

MICHIGAN 380.1565 Act 451

1977  http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(w5thxbmwswe0mk4524b13syf))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-3801565&highlight=silent

Providing opportunity to observe time in silent meditation; guidelines. Sec. 1565. The board of education of a school district may by resolution provide the opportunity during each school day to allow students who wish to do so, the opportunity to observe time in silent meditation. The state board shall develop guidelines which a school board may use in the implementation of this section.


Current through the 2011 Regular Session  http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/mscode/

Voluntary participation in prayer generally - It shall be lawful for any teacher or school administrator in any of the schools of the state which are supported, in whole or in part, by the public funds of the state, to permit the voluntary participation by students or others in prayer. Nothing contained in this section shall authorize any teacher or other school authority to prescribe the form or content of any prayer. The provisions of this section shall not be construed to amend or repeal the provisions of Section 37-13-4.1 but shall be considered as supplemental and in addition to the provisions of Section 37-13-4.1.


MONTANA Stat 20-7-112


Sectarian publications prohibited and prayer permitted. A publication of a sectarian or denominational character may not be distributed in any school. Instruction may not be given advocating sectarian or denominational doctrines. However, any teacher, principal, or superintendent may open the school day with a prayer. This section does not prohibit a school library from including the Bible or other religious material having cultural, historical, or educational significance.

History: En. 75-7521 by Sec. 392, Ch. 5, L. 1971; R.C.M. 1947, 75-7521; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 367, L. 1989.

NEVADA NRS 388.075

1977  http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-388.html#NRS388Sec075

Every school district shall set aside a period at the beginning of each school day, during which all persons must be silent, for voluntary individual meditation, prayer or reflection by pupils.

(Added to NRS by 1977, 634)
NEW HAMPSHIRE  Two codes Section 189:1-b and 194:15


189:1-b Freedom of Assembly; Freedom of Religion. –
I. On each school day, before classes of instruction officially convene in the public schools of this sovereign state, a period of not more than 5 minutes shall be available to those who may wish to exercise their right to freedom of assembly and participate voluntarily in the free exercise of religion.
II. There shall be no teacher supervision of this free exercise of religion, nor shall there be any prescribed or proscribed form or content of prayer.


194:15-a Lord's Prayer in Public Elementary Schools. – As an affirmation of the freedom of religion in this country, a school district may authorize the recitation of the traditional Lord's prayer in public elementary schools. Pupil participation in the recitation of the prayer shall be voluntary. Pupils shall be reminded that this Lord's prayer is the prayer our pilgrim fathers recited when they came to this country in their search for freedom. Pupils shall be informed that these exercises are not meant to influence an individual's personal religious beliefs in any manner. The exercises shall be conducted so that pupils shall learn of our great freedoms, which freedoms include the freedom of religion and are symbolized by the recitation of the Lord's prayer.


UPDATED THROUGH P.L. 2012, ch. 4, and JR 10 of 2011 http://lis.njleg.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/om_isapi.dll?clientID=220729404&Depth=2&TD=WRAP&advquery=1%20minute%20period%20of%20silence&depth=4&expandheadingswithhits=on&headingswithhits=on&infobase=statutes.nfo&rank=&record={8106}&softpage=Doc_Frame_PG42&wordsaroundhits=2&x=0&y=0&zz=

18A:36-4. Period of silence
Principals and teachers in each public elementary and secondary school of each school district in this State shall permit students to observe a 1 minute period of silence to be used solely at the discretion of the individual student, before the opening exercises of each school day for quiet and private contemplation or introspection.


2011 http://www.conwaygreene.com/nmsu/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&2.0

Moment of silent meditation.
Students in the public schools may voluntarily engage in student-initiated moments of silent meditation

Statutes are current through the First Session of the Fiftieth Legislature (2011)

NEW YORK Educ. Law § 3029-a

http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/LAWSSEAF.cgi?QUERYTYPE=LAWS+&QUERYDATA=$$EDN3029-A$$@TXEDN03029-A+$&LIST=SEA2+&_BROWSER=BROWSER+$&TOKEN=10468141+$&TARGET=VIEW

3029-a. Silent meditation in public schools. 1. In each public school classroom, the teacher in charge may, or if so authorized or directed by the board of education by which he is employed, shall, at the opening of school upon every school day, conduct a brief period of silent meditation with the participation of all the pupils there in assembled.

2. The silent meditation authorized by subsection one of this act is not intended to be, and shall not be conducted as, a religious service or exercise, but may be considered as an opportunity for silent meditation on a religious theme by those who are so disposed, or a moment of silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day. As used in subdivision one of this section the term "participation" shall be construed to permit seated participation and not to require any pupil to stand.
NORTH CAROLINA § 115C-47

http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_115C/GS_115C-47.html

… local boards of education shall have the power or duty: (29) To Authorize the Observance of a Moment of Silence. – To afford students and teachers a moment of quiet reflection at the beginning of each day in the public schools, to create a boundary between school time and nonschool time, and to set a tone of decorum in the classroom that will be conducive to discipline and learning, each local board of education may adopt a policy to authorize the observance of a moment of silence at the commencement of the first class of each day in all grades in the public schools. Such a policy shall provide that the teacher in charge of the room in which each class is held may announce that a period of silence not to exceed one minute in duration shall be observed and that during that period silence shall be maintained and no one may engage in any other activities. Such period of silence shall be totally and completely unstructured and free of guidance or influence of any kind from any sources.

NORTH DAKOTA Cent. Code § 15.1-19-03.1

Recitation of prayer - Period of silence
1. A student may voluntarily pray aloud or participate in religious speech at any time before, during, or after the school day to the same extent a student may voluntarily speak or participate in secular speech.
2. A school board, school administrator, or teacher may not impose any restriction on the time, place, manner, or location of any student-initiated religious speech or prayer which exceeds the restriction imposed on students’ secular speech.
3. A school board may, by resolution, allow a classroom teacher to impose up to one minute of silence for meditation, reflection, or prayer at the beginning of each school day. Current April 28, 2011

OHIO Rev. Code Ann. § 3313.601

3313.601 Moment of silence - free exercise or expression of religious beliefs.

The board of education of each school district may provide for a moment of silence each school day for prayer, reflection, or meditation upon a moral, philosophical, or patriotic theme. No board of education, school, or employee of the school district shall require a pupil to participate in a moment of silence provided for pursuant to this section. No board of education shall prohibit a classroom teacher from providing in the teacher’s classroom reasonable periods of time for activities of a moral, philosophical, or patriotic theme. No pupil shall be required to participate in such activities if they are contrary to the religious convictions of the pupil or the pupil’s parents or guardians. No board of education of a school district shall adopt any policy or rule respecting or promoting an establishment of religion or prohibiting any pupil from the free, individual, and voluntary exercise or expression of the pupil’s religious beliefs in any primary or secondary school. The board of education may limit the exercise or expression of the pupil’s religious beliefs as described in this section to lunch periods or other noninstructional time periods when pupils are free to associate.

Effective Date: 08-01-2002

OKLAHOMA Stat. tit. 70, § 11-101.1 and 11-101.2

The board of education of each school district shall permit those students and teachers who wish to do so to participate in voluntary prayer. Nothing in this act shall be construed to be in conflict with Section 70-11-101 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

Historical Data: Laws 1980, HB 1608, c. 72, § 1, emerg. eff. April 14, 1980


Section 11-101.2 - Minute of Silence in Public Schools - Attorney General Authorized to Intervene
Cite as: 70 O.S. § 11-101.2 (OSCN 2012 The board of education of each school district shall ensure that the public schools within the district observe approximately one minute of silence each day for the purpose of allowing each student, CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
in the exercise of his or her individual choice, to reflect, meditate, pray, or engage in any other silent activity that does not interfere with, distract, or impede other students in the exercise of their individual choices.

The Attorney General of the State of Oklahoma is hereby authorized to intervene in any legal proceeding to enforce the provisions of this act and shall represent any school district or employee named as a defendant therein. Any school district or employee named as a defendant in any proceeding to enforce the provisions of this act shall within five (5) days of receiving service of summons notify the Attorney General of the State of Oklahoma of the pendency of the action.

Historical Data Added by Laws 2002, SB 815, c. 353, § 1, eff. August 23, 2002


(a) In each public school classroom, the teacher in charge may, or if so authorized or directed by the board of school directors by which he is employed, shall, at the opening of school upon every school day, conduct a brief period of silent prayer or meditation with the participation of all the pupils therein assembled.

(b) The silent prayer or meditation authorized by subsection (a) of this section is not intended to be, and shall not be conducted as, a religious service or exercise, but shall be considered as an opportunity for silent prayer or meditation on a religious theme by those who are so disposed, or a moment of silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.

**RHODE ISLAND** R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-12-3.1

16-12-3.1 Period of silent meditation. – At the opening of every school day in all grades in all public schools the teacher in charge of the room in which each class is held shall announce that a period of silence not to exceed one minute in duration shall be observed for meditation, and during this period silence shall be maintained and no activities engaged in.

**SOUTH CAROLINA** S.C. Code Ann. § 59-1-443

SECTION 59-1-443. Schools shall provide minute of mandatory silence at beginning of each school day.

All schools shall provide for a minute of mandatory silence at the beginning of each school day.

**HISTORY:** 1995 Act No. 145, Part II, Section 80. The unannotated South Carolina Code on the General Assembly's website is now current through the 2011 session.
**TENNESSEE**  
**Code Ann. § 49-6-1004**

2012  
http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/tncode/

49-6-1004. Period of silence or prayer.

(a) In order for all students and teachers to prepare themselves for the activities of the day, a period of silence of approximately one (1) minute in duration shall be maintained in each grade in public schools at the beginning of each school day. At the opening of the first class each day, it is the responsibility of each teacher in charge of each class to call the students to order and announce that a moment of silence is to be observed. The teacher shall not indicate or suggest to the students any action to be taken by them during this time, but shall maintain silence for the full time. At the end of this time, the teacher shall indicate resumption of the class in an appropriate fashion, and may at that time make school announcements or conduct any other class business before commencing instruction.

(b) It is lawful for any teacher in any of the schools of the state that are supported, in whole or in part, by the public funds of the state, to permit the voluntary participation by students or others in prayer. Nothing contained in this section shall authorize any teacher or other school authority to prescribe the form or content of any prayer.

(e) Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (b), nonsectarian and nonproselytizing voluntary benedictions, invocations or prayers that are initiated and given by a student volunteer or student volunteers may be permitted on public school property during school-related noncompulsory student assemblies, school-related student sporting events and school-related commencement ceremonies. Such permission shall not be construed to indicate any support, approval or sanction by the state or any governmental personnel or official of the contents of the benedictions, invocations or prayers or to be the promotion or establishment of any religion, religious belief or sect.

*** CURRENT THROUGH THE 2011 REGULAR SESSION ***

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**TEXAS**  
**Educ Code Ann § 25.082**

2011  
http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/DocViewer.aspx?K2DocKey=odbe%3a%2f%2fTCAS%2fASUPUBLIC dbo.vwTCAS%2fED%2fS%2fED.25%40TCAS2&QueryText=25.082&HighlightType=1

Sec. 25.082. SCHOOL DAY; PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE; MINUTE OF SILENCE. (a) A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

(b) The board of trustees of each school district shall require students, once during each school day at each school in the district, to recite:

(1) the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag in accordance with 4 U.S.C. Section 4, and its subsequent amendments; and

(2) the pledge of allegiance to the state flag in accordance with Subchapter C, Chapter 3100, Government Code.

(c) On written request from a student's parent or guardian, a school district shall excuse the student from reciting a pledge of allegiance under Subsection (b).

(d) The board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the observance of one minute of silence at each school in the district following the recitation of the pledges of allegiance to the United States and Texas flags under Subsection (b). During the one-minute period, each student may, as the student chooses, reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity that is not likely to interfere with or distract another student. Each teacher or other school employee in charge of students during that period shall ensure that each of those students remains silent and does not act in a manner that is likely to interfere with or distract another student.


...current through the 1st Called Session of the 82nd Legislature, July 2011
53A-11-901.5. Period of silence. A teacher may provide for the observance of a period of silence each school day in a public school.

Renumbered and Amended by Chapter 10, 1997 General Session

§ 22.1-203. Daily observance of one minute of silence.

In order that the right of every pupil to the free exercise of religion be guaranteed within the schools and that the freedom of each individual pupil be subject to the least possible pressure from the Commonwealth either to engage in, or to refrain from, religious observation on school grounds, the school board of each school division shall establish the daily observance of one minute of silence in each classroom of the division.

During such one-minute period of silence, the teacher responsible for each classroom shall take care that all pupils remain seated and silent and make no distracting display to the end that each pupil may, in the exercise of his or her 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.

The Office of the Attorney General shall intervene and shall provide legal defense of this law.

(Code 1950, § 22-234.1; 1976, c. 103; 1980, c. 559; 2000, c. 1022.)