



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
REGION III
SCHOOLS DIVISION OFFICE OF BATAAN

JAN 30 2026

DIVISION ADVISORY

NO. 034 s. 2026

To: Assistant Schools Division Superintendent
Chief Education Supervisors
Education Program Supervisors
Public Schools District Supervisors
Public and Private School Heads
All DepEd Personnel
All Other Concerned

This Office disseminates DM-OUOPS-2026-12-08134 titled *Reiteration of Upholding and Respecting Religious Diversity in Public Schools*, issued on January 20, 2026, restating the Department of Education's commitment in **upholding and respecting the religious beliefs, convictions, and practices of learners and school personnel**, in accordance with the 1987 Constitution and Existing DepEd Policies.

Attached is the copy of the Memorandum for reference.

For information and compliance.


CAROLINA S. VIOLETA, EdD, CESO V
Schools Division Superintendent

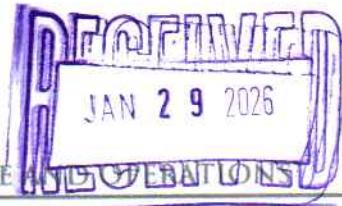
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January 29, 2025



Republika ng Pilipinas

Department of Education

OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETARY FOR GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS



MEMORANDUM

DM-OUOPS-2026-L-08134

TO : ALL REGIONAL DIRECTORS
ALL SCHOOLS DIVISION SUPERINTENDENTS
ALL SCHOOL HEADS
ALL OTHERS CONCERNED

FROM :
MALCOLM S. GARMA
Undersecretary for Governance and Operations



JOCELYN DR ANDAYA
Regional Director, NCR
Concurrent Officer-in-Charge, Office of the
Assistant Secretary for Governance and Operations

SUBJECT : REITERATION OF UPHOLDING AND RESPECTING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DATE : JAN

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BY:

This Memorandum is issued to reiterate the Department of Education's commitment in **upholding and respecting the religious beliefs, convictions, and practices of learners and school personnel**, in accordance with the 1987 Philippine Constitution and existing DepEd policies. Article III, Section 5 of the Constitution provides that "No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed.", while Article XIV, Section 3(3) mandates that "At the option expressed in writing by the parents or guardians, religion shall be allowed to be taught to their children or wards in public elementary and high schools within the regular class hours by instructors designated or approved by the religious authorities of the religion to which the children or wards belong, without additional cost to the Government."

In line with these constitutional principles, **DepEd Order (DO) No. 53, s. 2001**, **DepEd Memorandum No. 3, s. 2010**, and **DO No. 105, s. 2010** provide that public schools shall respect the diverse religious beliefs and non-belief of learners and personnel, participation in any religious activity shall be strictly voluntary, and no individual shall be compelled, coerced, or pressured to participate in religious practices or be subjected to discrimination for declining to do so. These issuances likewise emphasize that the conduct of religious activities within school premises must not disrupt regular classes nor infringe upon the rights and convictions of others.

All DepEd officials, school heads, teachers, and personnel are hereby enjoined to **foster an inclusive, respectful, and non-discriminatory school environment** where the religious beliefs, convictions, and practices of all members of the school community are recognized and protected. Schools are further directed to exercise prudence in the planning and implementation of school activities to ensure that no act, policy, or practice directly or indirectly undermines the freedom of religion of learners and personnel.

Immediate dissemination of and strict compliance with this Memorandum are hereby directed.

JORIC MOSENDE CASPE

Bahay, San Policarpo
Eastern Samar, 6821
joric.caspe@deped.gov.ph
November 12, 2025

Hon. Juan Edgardo "Sonny" M. Angara

Secretary
Department of Education
DepEd Complex, Meralco Avenue
Pasig City

Subject: Respect for Religious Freedom of Jehovah's Witnesses and Other Faiths

Dear Secretary Angara,

Good day, Secretary Angara.

I am writing to respectfully bring to your attention the importance of upholding and promoting religious freedom among students and teachers, particularly those belonging to the Jehovah's Witnesses faith. Jehovah's Witnesses are well known for their respect for authority and their adherence to the laws of the land. We fully support education and encourage our young people to be diligent, respectful, and law-abiding learners who contribute positively to their schools and communities.

However, due to our Bible-based beliefs, we conscientiously refrain from participating in certain activities such as the flag salute and pledge, fiesta celebrations, birthday observances, Christmas festivities, and the giving of monetary donation to priests or ministers during school religious services.

This decision is not rooted in disloyalty or disrespect, but in sincere religious conviction and a conscientious effort to live in harmony with what we believe the Bible teaches. We deeply respect the rights of others to participate in these activities, and we humbly request that the same respect and understanding be extended to us in return.

It is also worth noting that the Supreme Court of the Philippines, in the landmark **case *Ebralinag v. The Division Superintendent of Schools of Cebu (G.R. No. 95770, March 1, 1993)***, affirmed the right of Jehovah's Witnesses students and teachers to abstain from the flag ceremony on religious grounds. *The ruling emphasized that freedom of religion is protected under our 1987 Constitution, particularly Article III, Section 5, which guarantees that "no law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."*

In the case of *Alejandro Estrada v. Soledad Escritor (A.M. No. P-02-1651, June 22, 2006)*, the **Supreme Court of the Philippines** upheld the right to **religious freedom** of Soledad Escritor, a court interpreter and a member of Jehovah's Witnesses, who was charged with **immorality** for living with a man without being legally married. The Court ruled in her favor, applying the **benevolent neutrality** approach, which respects sincere religious beliefs unless a compelling state interest is proven. *This landmark decision affirmed that religious freedom can, in certain cases, exempt individuals from general laws when such exemptions do not harm public welfare.*

In the case of *Denmark S. Valmores v. Dr. Cristina Achacoso*, the **Supreme Court** ruled in favor of Denmark Valmores, a Seventh-day Adventist student who was denied graduation honors because he refused to attend Saturday classes and activities, as his religion observes the Sabbath from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. The Court held that Valmores' right to freedom of religion under the Constitution must be respected and that schools should make reasonable accommodations for sincerely held religious beliefs. Citing the **principle of benevolent neutrality**, the *Court emphasized that the State must protect religious exercise unless a compelling reason justifies otherwise, thereby reaffirming the right of students to practice their faith without academic penalty.*

In *DepEd Memorandum No. 3, s. 2010* and *DepEd Order No. 105, s. 2010* were issued by the Department of Education to uphold and protect the constitutional right to freedom of religion in schools. These directives remind all public and private educational institutions to respect the religious beliefs and practices of students, especially those who, for reasons of faith, cannot participate in certain school activities such as flag ceremonies, holiday celebrations, or similar observances. Both issuances aim to ensure that no student and teachers are coerced to act against their religious convictions, promoting an inclusive and respectful learning environment in line with the Philippine Constitution.

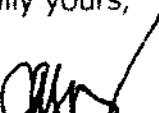
Despite the existence of clear statutory and constitutional mandates, instances persist wherein students and teachers experience misunderstanding or coercion to conform, particularly during school activities involving religious or cultural observances. Teachers who are members of Jehovah's Witnesses, in particular, have been subjected to situations where their conscientious decisions are misunderstood or disrespected, at times resulting in embarrassment when they are compelled to repeatedly explain their non-participation in such activities to school authorities.

In view of the foregoing, I respectfully request that your esteemed office consider the issuance or reinforcement of a Department of Education memorandum reiterating the policy of upholding and respecting the religious beliefs, convictions, and practices of Jehovah's Witness students and personnel, as well as those of other faiths who may have similar conscientious objections. The promulgation of such directive would serve to

reaffirm the Department's commitment to the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion and belief, and to ensure that all learners and educators are treated with fairness, dignity, and understanding – free from any form of discrimination or administrative reprisal.

Thank you very much, Secretary Angara, for your time and kind attention to this matter. Your continued dedication to inclusive and compassionate education is deeply appreciated.

Respectfully yours,



JORIC MOSENDE CASPE
Teacher I

Copy furnished:
Civil Service Commission
Commission on Human Rights

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