

preparing parents for school engagement

A resource for public school families: leading while engaging and advocating for your child's education.

Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

know

The law is clear: As a parent, you keep ultimate authority and responsibility over your child, even when he or she enters the schoolhouse gate.

- **In the 2025 Supreme Court case, *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, the Court affirmed the longstanding right of "parents to direct the religious upbringing of their children."**[1] The Court said the Free Exercise Clause protects those rights against even "subtle forms of interference," including public-school "environment[s] hostile to" parents' religious beliefs, where children "would face 'pressure to conform' to contrary viewpoints and lifestyles." [2]
- **This case reinforced parents' right to opt their child out of instruction** which "substantially interferes with the religious development" of their own child. [3] Minnesota also has an opt-out law (statute) which grants this authority to parents. See the *Equip* section.
- ***Mahmoud* solidifies the Court's strong support for parental authority over their children's education.** The Court rightly recognizes an infringement of that right to be an unacceptable burden on parents' rights to direct religious upbringing.
- **With this in mind, take steps to be intentionally involved in your child's public-school journey.** It is important that you take the time to build strong relationships with teachers and staff and to familiarize yourself with curriculum and classroom activities. These efforts open doors to effective communication in conflict and an overall better understanding of the influences on your child.

equip

Be prepared: As a parent, you need to understand issues and be familiar with processes in place to effectively respond as concerns arise within your school/district.

- **Review Curriculum** both in the classroom (through your child's teacher) or at the school district level (make an appointment through your district office.)
- **Know your district policies and bylaws** found publicly on the ISD website. These govern the school's approach to issues such as facility usage and student privacy, athletics, and bullying. Review and monitor the current policies throughout the year.
- **Work effectively with your school board.** School board members are public officials and can be contacted by email listed on the ISD website. Most school boards vote on district policies during public meetings and publicly post draft policies prior to adoption. Be informed and take advantage of opportunities for public comment prior to a vote, if applicable. School boards often pass policies by a simple majority, not requiring a unanimous vote to amend or adopt new policies.
- **Understand the process to opt your child out of an activity or assignment.** Under Minnesota statute, parents have the right and authority to opt their child out of classroom material, assemblies, guest speakers, and presentations by community organizations without retribution toward you or your student. [4] See opt out example file below. [5] The school is required to work with parents to find an alternative solution, including other topics suggested by parents.
- **Track changes coming at the state level** by following public policy at the Minnesota legislature and news from the Department of Education.

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engage

Honor God as you engage: As Christians, we must be prayerful in our mandate to represent Christ well in school engagement. Strive to be respectful as you raise issues and work to bring about change.

- **Bring your concern to the staff most closely related to the issue** and escalate only as needed. If an issue begins in the classroom, start with the teacher. A teacher might not be aware of how the students relate to or receive the information being taught, and he or she may be willing to take a different approach. If the teacher is not willing, escalate the issue to the principal, superintendent, or school board. You can also request to be put on the agenda of an upcoming public school board meeting to publicly express concern as needed.
- **Be prepared and do your research** prior to raising a concern. Seek understanding by asking good questions and listening well. Be sure you have a complete picture of the situation and are not responding to rumors or hearsay.
- **Contact your state legislators.** Your state representative and state senator serve your community. Feel free to contact them to express your concerns about school policy or share your thoughts on education legislation in discussion. Find who represents you at this state government link below.[6]
- **Engage by stepping into leadership.** Consider stepping into leadership roles in your PTO or curriculum committees, or run for school board. You can impact our schools positively and lead change efforts through your involvement.
- **Connect!** Join Compass at compasslink.org/connect and Minnesota Family Council at mfc.org/subscribe for additional support.

[1] *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, 145 S. Ct. 2332, 2350 (2025) (quoting *Espinoza v. Mont. Dept. of Revenue*, 591 U.S. 464, 486 (2020)(cleaned up))

[2] *Mahmoud*, 145 S. Ct. at 2352 (quoting *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205, 211 (1972))

[3] *Mahmoud*, 145 S. Ct. at 2353

[4] Minnesota Stat. § 120B.215

[5] <https://web.charityengine.net/Default.aspx?tsid=36456>

[6] <https://www.gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/>

need representation?

contact info@truenorthlegal.org

