

Catholic Schools Under Fire From Secularists

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In the past week, there have been several news stories and critical essays, both here and abroad, about a teacher who was fired from an Indiana Catholic school after church officials learned that she was undergoing in vitro fertilization; this is a procedure Pope Francis himself lambasted last Sunday.

In September, when two gay teachers at a Catholic school in St. Louis were asked to resign after they recently wed, news outlets also exploded. Ditto for similar recent stories in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Whether one agrees or not with Catholic rules governing teachers and students, until recently it was seen as no one's business but those who support and run these schools. But no more. In fact, there is a determined effort by secularists to force Catholic schools to tailor their strictures to the wisdom of civil law.

What is particularly disturbing about this development is that it is occurring after the Supreme Court affirmed the doctrine of "ministerial exception" in 2012; the ruling insulates religious entities from most discrimination lawsuits brought by employees.

We decided to investigate whether activists and media outlets interested in policing Catholic schools are just as busy monitoring Muslim and Jewish schools (yeshivas). Our hunch was right: Catholics schools merit the selective scrutiny of militant secularists.

Schools for Muslims and Jews have very strict codes of conduct

that teachers and students must observe. Even visitors are told what is expected of them. Here is an example of the rules these schools have adopted.

MUSLIM SCHOOLS

The American Youth Academy Faculty/Staff Handbook and Student/Parent Handbook are provided to school principals as models on the Islamic Schools League of America website.

The following excerpts are from the American Youth Academy's Faculty/Staff Handbook Policies & Procedures:

Religious and Ethnic Tolerance

Members of AYA's administration, faculty, staff, parents and/or students are not allowed to promote any religious beliefs and/or practices besides those that are accepted and/or taught by AYA while on AYA property, at AYA events or to AYA students and/or staff. Promotion refers to talking about or distributing information about these beliefs and/or on any published medium, including social networking sites.

Dismissing Students, Parents and/or Staff

AYA reserves the right to dismiss a student, parent and/or staff-member whose presence in the school is considered detrimental to the best interest of the student, of fellow students, or of the school in general.

AYA also reserves the right to terminate or not renew a student's enrollment contract if the school concludes that the actions of a parent or guardian make a positive and constructive relationship impossible, or otherwise seriously interfere with the school's accomplishment of its mission.

Faculty and staff are expected to:

- Accept all the consequences of their actions, in the event that the undesirable action/behavior continues after they receive a letter from the

principal/administrator. In that case, there will be full administrative meeting with the teacher/staff member, and a decision will be made to determine the appropriate consequence.

- Be suspended for 1-3 days without pay, if they continue to refuse to abide by the rules and policies.
- Be dismissed from the school.

Excerpts from the American Youth Academy's Student-Parent-Handbook

Uniform & Dress Code

The following are not allowed at any time:

Open-toed shoes; jeans; make-up (including kohl, clear nail polish, lip gloss, etc.)

White Hijab Gr. 5

Hijab for Prayer Gr. 3 & 4

Gr. 6-12 Girls: Navy Blue Abaya or Two-Piece Outfit To be purchased at AYA

White or Gray Plain Hijab

School Visitor Dress Code

Out of respect for the school's dress code/uniform policy and the fact that the school is in such close proximity to the Masjid, school visitors are asked to dress modestly, even Islamically, if possible. For female visitors, this means that clothing should be loose and should not be revealing. A head covering is recommended for Muslim visitors.

Discipline Policy

Reverence for Allah, repentance (Taubah), respect, justice and patience. Reverence and love for Allah will be the guiding principle in correcting and preventing inappropriate behavior. Students will be given opportunities to repent after misbehaving.

Level 2 Behavior & Consequences

Inappropriate Intermingling

Level 3 Behavior & Consequences

A student charged with a Level 3 violation will be subject to an open suspension of up to 10 days and a recommendation for expulsion to the school board and/or legal action.

Immodest Behavior or Physical Contact

Committing acts that are sexual in nature and fall outside the Islamic teaching on this matter including vulgar, lewd, or promiscuous conduct both on-campus or at any school-sponsored activities.

Formal apology required

JEWISH SCHOOLS

The following excerpts are from the Manhattan Day School/Yeshiva Ohr Torah's School Handbook:

Halachic Standards

Our school formulates reasonable and appropriate policies based on Halachic standards. These include dress code, kashrut, and the wearing of Kippah and Tzitzit. It affects other areas as well, such as limiting solo female singing to third grade and below.

Food, parties, and classroom celebrations

Food brought in to the school must have proper rabbinical endorsement. Birthday parties are not celebrated in class beyond the kindergarten level.

Safety

Baseball and other types of cards or collectibles may not be brought to school. Expensive jewelry should not be brought to school.

Visits to School

When visiting the school for celebrations, conferences, or for any other reason, please observe the same rules which we ask our faculty and students to follow regarding mode of dress, or

bringing food into the building. Male visitors must wear a kippah. Women are requested to dress appropriately. Please do not visit any classroom above kindergarten.

We searched in vain for instances where these strictures elicited a strong critical response from those who do not belong to Islam or Judaism. It proves the point we are making: It is not the content of the rules that Catholic schools adopt that triggers such a strong response – it is an animus against Catholicism.

Dr. William Donohue is the president of and CEO of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. The publisher of the Catholic League journal, Catalyst, Bill is a former Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation and served for two decades on the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars. The author of five books, two on the ACLU, and the winner of several teaching awards and many awards from the Catholic community, Donohue has appeared on thousands of television and radio shows speaking on civil liberties and social issues. Read more reports from Bill Donohue – [Click Here Now](#).