



National Association
of Episcopal Schools
Excellence Through Association

Principles of Good Practice for the Study of Religion in Episcopal Schools

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Introduction

As an outgrowth of the strong commitment to intellectual development that so characterizes Episcopal schools, the study of religion within the curricular offering is a crucial dimension of the identity of a school as well as an anchor in a strong and balanced academic program. In other editions of the *Principles of Good Practice*, NAES makes frequent mention of the importance of keeping the Episcopal identity of a school strong and viable in all aspects of the life of that institution. That is certainly the case for the academic program as well, and the study of religion remains an essential component of that identity.

Be it called religion, religious studies, religious education, Christian education, or sacred studies, the growth and development of this area of academic study goes hand in hand with the establishment and enhancement of an excellent academic program. It is also a reflection of a balanced expression of Episcopal identity.

In keeping with the need to highlight the role that Episcopal identity plays in all aspects of school life, NAES has developed this set of *Principles of Good Practice for the Study of Religion in Episcopal Schools*. These *Principles* are intended to:

- support the efforts of all schools to come to a clearer understanding of what can be a difficult task of placing and valuing the academic study of religion within the broader perspective of the total curriculum;
- help departments of religion, chaplains, rectors, deans of faculty, and directors of studies to assess the quality of instruction, determine areas of improvement within this academic discipline, and help measure the scope and sequence of offerings against a larger perspective;
- assist schools when searching for new chaplains or teachers of religion as they consider candidates and determine what they want from those persons who will join their colleagues on the faculty in this capacity;
- serve to highlight the distinctions to be found between Episcopal parishes and Episcopal schools, recognizing that the two serve different functions yet also maintain important and common bonds.

Nowhere in the expression of Episcopal identity in our diverse school membership is there more variety in the style, content, and struc-

ture than in the study of religion. For some schools it consists of formal academic instruction modeled along the lines of other academic departments; in other institutions it is offered as a special addition to the curriculum, where a chaplain or religion teacher visits a classroom at regular intervals and offers instruction on an ungraded basis.

These *Principles of Good Practice for the Study of Religion in Episcopal Schools* are not meant to be prescriptions for exactly how religion should be a part of a school's curriculum. The structure of that offering will vary greatly. As with all of those sets of *Principles* produced in this series, we do not offer a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Rather, these *Principles* are offered to highlight the crucial components of a comprehensive, serious, and age appropriate approach to religious study in a school, as well as to emphasize just how important it is to the Episcopal identity of the school and the development of our students into global citizens.

We take, as our starting points, the important perspectives on the teaching of religion to be found under the subtitle, "Academic Life," in the earlier pamphlet, *Principles of Good Practice for Furthering Episcopal Identity in Episcopal Schools*, published by NAES in 2005. The three important principles contained therein provide us with a core of important areas of exploration as well as the groundwork for the expanded work we have done in this pamphlet.