

INSTRUCTION

SUBJECT: Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

The Governing Board recognizes that students' education would be incomplete without an understanding of the role of religion in history. It is both proper and important for teachers to objectively discuss the influences of various religions, using religious works and symbols to illustrate their relationship with society, literature, or the arts. The Board expects that such instruction will identify principles common to all religions and foster respect for the multiple creeds practiced by the peoples of the world.

In order to respect each student's individual right to freedom of religious practice, religious indoctrination is clearly forbidden in the public schools. Instruction about religion must not favor, promote, or demean the beliefs or customs of any particular religion or sect. Staff shall be highly sensitive to its obligation not to interfere with the religious development of any student in whatever tradition the student embraces.

Staff shall not endorse, encourage, or solicit religious or anti-religious expression or activities among students. They shall not lead students in prayer or participate in student-initiated prayer. However, staff shall not prohibit or discourage any student from praying or otherwise expressing his/her religious belief as long as this does not disrupt the classroom.

Students may express their beliefs about religion in their homework, artwork, and other written and oral reports if the expression is germane to the assignment. Such work shall be judged by ordinary academic standards, free of discrimination based on religious content.

Religious Holidays

Whereas teaching about religious holidays is a permissible part of the educational program, celebrating religious holidays is not allowed in the public schools. School-sponsored programs shall not be, nor have the effect of being, a religious celebration.

School and classroom decorations may express holiday themes that are not religious in nature.

Recognition of Religious Events

The board believes that recognition of religious holidays, anniversaries, and events can be a culturally and educationally enriching experience for students. Such recognitions are encouraged at all grade levels in the District.

Any program or recognition related to religion which is carried on in the district shall be for the purpose of broadening student understanding of religion and its place in society. Any attempt to recruit membership in any religious organization is prohibited.

Legal Reference

EDUCATION CODE

51240

51511

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20

6061

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 42

2000bb-2000bb4

Lemon v. Kurtzman, (1971) 403 U.S. 602

Walleye v. Gaffer, (1985) 472 U.S. 38