

## INSTRUCTION

### Religious-Related Activities and Practices

#### A. Observance of Religious Holidays

The practice of the District shall be as follows:

1. The several holidays throughout the year that have a religious and secular basis may be observed in the public schools.
2. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
3. Music, art, literature, and drama having religious themes or bases are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.
4. The temporary use of a religious symbol such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, symbols of Native American religions, or other symbols that are a part of a religious holiday is permitted. Religious symbols, if used, shall be displayed in conjunction with a variety of secular holiday symbols so the total presentation emphasizes the cultural rather than religious significance of the holiday. Displays shall be sensitive to those with contrary beliefs. Some of these special occasions are Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah, St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, and Halloween.
5. School and District calendars should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.
6. Musical, artistic, or dramatic selections in particular programs should be justified on the basis of their particular musical, artistic, or dramatic value and/or traditional non-religious usage and presented in balanced context with other such works that are non-religious in nature.

#### B. Religion in the Curriculum

Religious institutions and orientations pervade human experience, past and present. An education excluding such a significant aspect would be incomplete. It is essential that the teaching about – and not of – religion be conducted in a factual, objective, and respectful manner.

Therefore, the practice of the District shall be as follows:

1. The District supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama, and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.
2. The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, music, drama, literature, and history, for example, should be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.
3. Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments that reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme shall be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech, and debate if responsive to the questions or assignments.
4. Religious services or programs will not be conducted in school facilities during school hours or as part of a school-sponsored activity.
5. Student-initiated, student-directed noncurriculum-related student religious groups may meet before and after school pursuant to Policy and Procedure 2153 and 20 USC § 4071-4074.

C. Dedication and Commencement

Traditions are a cherished part of the community life and the District expresses an interest in recognizing those traditions that have had a historical significance. Such ceremonies should recognize the religious pluralism of the community.

Therefore, the practice of the District shall be as follows:

1. A dedication ceremony should recognize the religious pluralism of the community and be appropriate to those who use the facility. An open invitation should be extended to all citizens to participate in the ceremony.
2. Commencement exercises shall be free from sectarian influence, including invocations and benedictions.
3. Because the baccalaureate service is traditionally religious in nature, it is to be sponsored by agencies separate from the District.

- a. Spoken or written information regarding the service(s) made within the schools shall identify the sponsor(s) and that baccalaureate is a religious event.
- b. The principal shall be responsible for communicating guidelines concerning baccalaureate to the sponsors(s).
- c. Neither staff nor students will be required to participate.
- d. Simple accommodation by the District to the sponsor(s) is allowable. The school providing a list of graduating students to the sponsor(s) shall not violate this policy. The registration or acceptance of funds by District personnel on school time shall not be allowed under this policy.
- e. Except as incidental to the implementing of the above, school personnel shall not use school time to plan or prepare such baccalaureate event(s).

D. Student Prayer

As a matter of individual liberty, a student may of his/her own volition engage in private, non-disruptive prayer at any time not in conflict with learning activities. School staff shall neither encourage nor discourage a student from engaging in non-disruptive oral or silent prayer.

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