

Instruction

Religious Observances and Displays

It is the policy of the Board of Education that no religious belief or non-belief will be promoted by the District or its employees and none will be disparaged. The District will encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views. The District will use all opportunities to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parents, whether it involves race, culture, economic background or religious beliefs. Students and staff members shall be excused from participating in practices that are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it. There will be no benedictions or invocations or other form of group prayer at any school functions or exercises.

The District recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance the student's knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural and historical development of civilization.

Therefore, the practices of the District will be:

- The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and a secular basis may be observed in the schools.
- The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- Music, art, literature and drama having religious themes or basis 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.
- The use of religious symbols such as a Cross, Menorah, Crescent, Star of David, creche, symbols of Native American religions or other symbols that are a part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature. Among these holidays are included Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah, St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving and Halloween.
- The District's calendar should be prepared to minimize conflicts with major religious holidays of all faiths.

It is also the policy of the Board that religious literature, music, drama, and the arts will be included in the curriculum and in school activities provided that it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.

Instruction

Religious Observances and Displays (continued)

The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature and history will only be 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.

Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme will be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

It is further the policy of the Board that dedication ceremonies shall recognize the religious pluralism of the community and be appropriate to those who use the facility.

The Board also believes that a baccalaureate service is traditionally religious in nature. Therefore such services must be sponsored by agencies separate from the district.

(cf. 6115 - Separation of Church and State)

(cf. 9030.1 - Religious Guidelines)

Legal Reference. Connecticut General Statutes

10-16a Silent meditation

10-29a Certain days to be proclaimed by governor. Distribution and number of proclamations

10-230 Flags for schoolrooms and schools

Policy adopted: October 15, 2007

THOMASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Thomaston, Connecticut