

REGULATIONS – POLICY 2270
Revised 5/9/05 – by Brian O’Leary

Public Information

District administration will take the following steps to promote public awareness and understanding of policy #2270:

1. The policy and these regulations will be posted on the district web site.
2. Central office administration will prepare a summary of the policy and these regulations. Each building principal will post the summary in a central location open to parents and visiting members of the community. In addition, building principals will ensure that the summary is distributed to parents and guardians at the beginning of each school year.
3. Principals will provide for at least annual discussion of this policy and regulations in building-level parent groups (e.g., PTAs, HSAs, CHS Music Parents Association, etc.).

Staff In-Service and Information

District administration will take the following steps to promote building administrator and faculty understanding of policy #2270:

1. The policy and regulations will be distributed to all new staff members at the annual new staff orientation. The policies and regulations will be summarized as part of the orientation presentation.
2. The policy and regulations will be distributed annually to all staff and discussed with staff to insure that the subject of religion is presented in school in a manner that is educationally sound, culturally aware and constitutionally permissible.

Teaching of Religion as Part of the Curriculum

Study or presentation about religion or other beliefs will be based upon curricular objectives. Within the approved curriculum, instruction will be provided in a balanced manner, following these guidelines:

1. As with all instruction, presentation and discussion of religious, cultural and ethnic traditions and of the historical, societal and/or cultural significance of religion and religious celebrations must emanate from Board-approved curriculum.

2. In concert with staff, district administration will review the existing curriculum on an ongoing basis and identify opportunities to strengthen or improve the presentation and discussion of religious, cultural and ethnic traditions. Changes and additions to the curriculum may be proposed to the Board of Education and implemented after adoption by the Board.
3. Instruction about religion must be curricular in nature, fostering an improved understanding of religions and religious traditions. Such instruction may not be presented in a way that appears devotional or as a testimonial. Appropriate instruction will inform students about the diversity of religious practice and cultural views, as well as teach students about the significance of religion from a historical standpoint.
4. Where appropriate in the context of the curriculum, students may include, incorporate or reflect religious themes or symbols in their work.
5. Teachers may use religious symbols, artifacts and pictures as classroom teaching aides or resources when appropriate to the delivery of curriculum. Such displays will be removed once they are no longer relevant to the curriculum being delivered.
6. At least annually, the district administration will take steps to make staff aware of the major religious/cultural/ethnic holidays represented in our community. Teachers will be asked to share with students relevant information about how religious beliefs may affect their classmates' attendance, behaviors and/or appearance in school. Staff presentations will be designed to promote understanding and tolerance of the various customs and beliefs in our school community.
7. Presentations about any religious holidays will focus on the educationally significant aspects of the holiday, including its history and the generally agreed-upon meaning of the holiday.
8. In presenting information about a religious holiday or tradition, staff are expected to act in a fair, balanced and objective manner. Presentations that appear to proselytize, denigrate any religion or elevate one religion above another are not permitted.
9. In order to foster student awareness of the major holidays and to promote understanding and tolerance among all cultures and faiths, school media specialists will inform students about library materials that could serve as appropriate resource tools.
10. Parents may ask that their children not participate in an aspect of the curriculum because of a religious objection. Such requests must be made in writing to the principal, who will handle all such requests with sensitivity. Appropriate alternate curricular activities will be made available to any children whose beliefs preclude participation.

Religion as part of the Music and Art Curricula

Many important and educationally relevant pieces of music and art have a basis and background in religion. It is appropriate to teach, study and perform such music and to receive instruction in art that is influenced by religion as follows:

1. As with all instruction, presentation and discussion of music with a religious text is appropriate when the selection emanates from Board-approved curriculum. Staff and administration will work together to identify selections that the Board may consider and adopt. Standards for curricular balance, breadth and inclusiveness will apply.
2. Such selections must support the music curriculum and demonstrably teach students about music history, theory or technique. While certain religious, ethnic or cultural themes and/or materials are associated with specific holiday season, teaching about them will take place at a time during the school year that is appropriate to the adopted curriculum.
3. Performance of music with a religious text is appropriate when doing so is a part of a Board-approved curriculum. However, holiday music (either religious or cultural) performed during the instructional day shall not be presented in a way that creates the appearance of a celebration of particular religious, ethnic or cultural holidays or the appearance or feeling that students are required to celebrate holidays other than their own.
4. Holiday music (cultural or religious) that is considered traditional to the season in which a concert takes place may be performed at assemblies only when such selections are part of a Board-approved music curriculum. Each selection must be introduced with a brief explanation of its historical, musical and religious significance.
 - a. Such musical concerts may celebrate the seasons or concepts such as family, harmony, community and friendship.
 - b. Assemblies or concerts may also showcase instruction received by students in musical theory, history, and technique. In doing so, the theory, history or technique should be shared with all students before each selection is performed.
 - c. The content of concerts performed during the instructional day will be discussed in advance by the faculty member in charge and the Supervisor of Fine Arts, who will confirm that the selections for concerts and assemblies are part of a music curriculum adopted by the Board of Education.
 - d. No music will be assigned to students until the Supervisor of Fine Arts confirms that the selections are part of a music curriculum adopted by the Board of Education.

5. Teaching about religious art is appropriate when done in the context of the educational curriculum and when doing so is consistent with and supports the goals of the curriculum.

Celebration of Religious Holidays Prohibited

Although curriculum-based instruction about religion and religious holidays is appropriate and promotes tolerance and understanding among members of our school community, religious holidays may not be celebrated in our schools, per the following guidelines:

1. Displays that celebrate religious, ethnic or cultural holidays may not be erected in common areas.
2. Displays that celebrate religious, ethnic or cultural holidays may not be erected in classrooms, except as appropriate to support the curriculum.
3. Displays that celebrate the seasons or concepts such as family, harmony, community and friendship are permissible and encouraged.
4. Classroom parties are permitted under the following guidelines:
 - a. All classroom parties must be secular in nature and should be devoid of religious themes, symbols, artifacts or other items.
 - b. Classroom parties may not be holiday parties and should not be extensions of instruction about religious, cultural or ethnic holidays.
 - c. Regardless of their historic origins, several holidays (e.g. Halloween, Valentine's Day) have evolved into national cultural holidays, secular in nature. Parties to celebrate these holidays are permissible, however all party costumes, refreshments, games and music shall be appropriate for a school setting.
 - d. Teachers will provide parents with advance notice of any such parties and offer an opportunity to ask that their children do not participate.
 - e. The request of any parent that their child not participate in a classroom party will be handled with sensitivity, and children who decline to participate in a classroom party will be provided an alternative appropriate curricular opportunity.
 - f. Questions about the interpretation or implementation of these guidelines in a particular building will be directed to the principal, who may seek guidance from central office administration.

Sensitivity to Community Observance of Religious Holidays

As a school district, the diverse cultural and religious observances of our school community will be granted the utmost respect and consideration as follows:

1. The district calendar will be prepared so as to minimize conflict with the religious holidays of all major faiths.
2. Where conflict is unavoidable, care will be given to avoid scheduling tests, special projects, introduction of new concepts and other activities that would be difficult to make up.
3. Students will not be penalized for missing academic or extra-curricular or athletic activities due to observance of religious holidays.
4. The office of the Superintendent of Schools will publish an annual list of the major religious holidays to assist building administration and faculty in being aware of such holidays and in complying with the provisions of these regulations.

Forum for School and Community Concerns

Any student, staff member, parent/guardian or community member who believes that a particular school program, practice or employee may have violated or misapplied policies #2270 may submit a written complaint as follows:

1. A written complaint shall initially be directed to the building principal
2. If there is not satisfactory resolution of the issue at the building level, the concern will be addressed to the Superintendent of Schools.
3. If there is not satisfactory resolution of the issue at the Superintendent's level, a request for a Board hearing may be made.
4. The Board, in its sole discretion, will determine whether to grant a hearing, or whether to reply to the complaint/concern based on the information supplied to it by administration.
5. A written Board level response to the complaint/concern will be made in all instances.