

R-2270- RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

Public Information

District administration will take the following steps to promote public understanding of policies #2270 and #5880:

1. The policies and these regulations will be posted on the district web site.
2. Administration will prepare summaries of the policies which will be posted in a central location in each school building, and which will be distributed to parents and guardians at the beginning of each school year.
3. Principals will regularly discuss these policies and regulations with their respective parent groups.

Staff In-Service and Information

District administration will take the following steps to promote building administrator and faculty understanding of policies #2270 and #5580:

1. The policies and these 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 policies and these 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 constitutionally permissible, educationally sound, and culturally sensitive.

Teaching of Religion as Part of the Curriculum

Study or presentation about religion or other beliefs will be based upon academic educational objectives and be presented in a balanced manner within the approved curriculum as follows:

1. District administration will review the existing curriculum on an ongoing basis and identify opportunities for discussion of religious, cultural and ethnic holidays, and of the historical, societal and/or cultural significance of religion and religious celebrations.
2. Presentations about religious holidays will focus on the history and generally agreed upon meaning of the holidays.
3. Teachers should be fair, balanced and objective in their treatment of religious holidays; they must never proselytize, denigrate any religion, or elevate one religion above another.
4. Instruction about religion should foster knowledge about religion and should be academic not devotional or testimonial. Such instruction should be designed both to 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.

5. Where appropriate in the context of the curriculum, students may include, incorporate or reflect religious themes or symbols in their work.

6. Teachers may use religious symbols, artifacts and pictures as classroom teaching aides or resources when appropriate to the delivery of instruction. Such displays will be removed once they are no longer relevant to the curriculum being delivered.

7. Teachers should be aware of the major religious/cultural/ethnic holidays represented in our community. It is appropriate to share with students how their classmates' observances will affect their attendance, behaviors and/or appearance in school. These presentations should be designed to promote tolerance and understanding of the various customs and beliefs in our school community.

8. In order to foster student awareness of the major holidays and to promote better tolerance and understanding among all cultures and faiths, school media specialists should discuss with their students the materials contained in the library which could serve as appropriate resource tools.

9. A request by any parent that their children not participate in an aspect of the curriculum because of a religious objection will be made in writing to the principal. All such requests will be handled with sensitivity and appropriate alternate curricular activities will be made available to the child(ren).

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 religious music and to receive instruction in art that is influenced by religion as follows:

1. The teaching of music with a religious text is appropriate when doing so supports the music curriculum, and teaches students about music history, theory, and technique.

2. Instructional units which include religious, ethnic or cultural themes and/or material should not be confined to any specific holiday season, but should also be presented at other times during the school year that are appropriate to the curriculum.

3. Performance of music with a religious text is appropriate when doing so is an outgrowth of the curriculum. However, musical performances shall not be celebrations of particular religious, ethnic or cultural holidays. Accordingly, holiday music (either religious or cultural) shall not be performed during holiday seasons, to avoid the appearance of a holiday celebration, or the appearance or feeling that our students are being required to celebrate holidays other than their own.

4. 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.

5. A request by any parent that their children not participate in an aspect of the music or art curriculum because of a religious objection will be made in writing to the principal. All such requests will be handled with sensitivity and appropriate alternate curricular activities will be made available to the child(ren).

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 will not be celebrated in our schools, per the following guidelines:

1. Displays which celebrate religious, ethnic or cultural holidays will not be erected in common areas.
2. Displays which celebrate religious, ethnic or cultural holidays will not be erected in classrooms, except as appropriate to support the curriculum.
3. Displays which 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 will be secular in nature and should be devoid of religious themes, symbols, artifacts or other items.
 - b. Classroom parties should 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 in good taste ***appropriate for a school setting.***
 - ~~d. Classroom parties before winter and summer vacations are appropriate during the week prior to vacation. As set forth above, such parties should not be celebrations of any religious cultural or ethnic holidays. Rather, they are intended as fun, stimulating social events to mark the close of the respective school terms.~~
 - e. Parents will be given advance notice of any such parties and an opportunity to opt that their children do not participate.
 - f. 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.
 - g. The principal in each building will be the arbiter of what is permissible at a party in his/her building. Questions about the interpretation or implementation of these guidelines in a particular building will be directed to the principal who will in turn seek any necessary guidance from central office administration.
5. Musical concerts or assemblies which take place during holiday seasons will not be "holiday concerts," which celebrate religious, cultural or ethnic holidays. To avoid the appearance of a holiday celebration, the holiday music (cultural or religious) which is traditional to the season in which the concert takes place will not be performed at these concerts.

- a. Such musical concerts or assemblies shall include selections which support the music curriculum, and which showcase instruction received by students in musical theory, history, and technique.
- b. Such musical concerts may celebrate the seasons, or such concepts as family, harmony, community and friendship.
- c. The content of any such concerts will be discussed in advance by the faculty member and the Supervisor of Fine Arts who will confer and mutually agree on the selections for concerts and assemblies.
- d. No music will be assigned to students until the conference between the Supervisor of Fine Arts and faculty member takes place and the selections to be performed are agreed upon and approved by the Supervisor.

Extra Curricular Groups

School Sponsored extra curricular performance groups will present music that is consistent with the goals of these regulations and the goals of policies # 2270 and #5880, as follows:

1. The faculty advisor for extra curricular performance groups will meet annually with the Supervisor of Fine Arts to review and agree upon the musical selections to be performed by that group.
2. No music will be assigned to students until the Supervisor of Fine Arts and the faculty advisor agree upon selections to be performed and that those selections are approved by the Supervisor.
3. Where school sponsored groups are invited to make public appearances off school premises, the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. All invitations will be reviewed by the Supervisor of Fine Arts.
 - b. Students and staff members will participate on a volunteer basis.
 - c. Student participants will have written permission from a parent or guardian.
 - d. Parents will be fully informed in advance and in writing regarding the location of the activity, the occasion being celebrated, and the content of the musical selections.
 - e. Student sponsored groups will be permitted to attend off-premises events upon permission by the Supervisor of Fine Arts.

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:

- a. The district calendar will be prepared so as to minimize conflict with the religious holidays of all major faiths.
- b. Where conflict is unavoidable, care will be given to avoid tests, special projects, introduction of new concepts and other activities that would be difficult to make up.
- c. Students will not be penalized for missing academic or extra-curricular or athletic activities due to observance of religious holidays.
- d. 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 and 5880 may submit a written complaint as follows:

- a. A written complaint shall initially be directed to the building principal.
- b. If there is not satisfactory resolution of the issue at the building level, the concern will be addressed to the Superintendent of Schools.
- c. If there is not satisfactory resolution of the issue at the Superintendent's level, a request for a Board hearing may be made.
- d. 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.
- e. A written Board level response to the complaint/concern will be made in all instances.

Cross Reference: 5880

Issued: