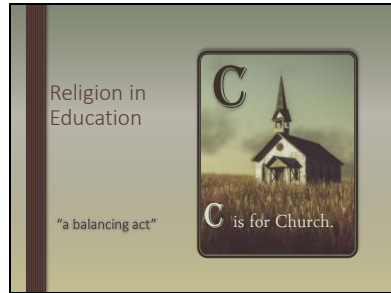
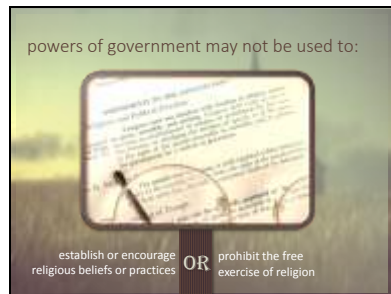


Slide 1



Addressing the issue of religion in the context of the public education system is a delicate balancing act requiring constant vigilance. The balancing act places educators in the position of assuring a separation of church and state while respecting the individual's right to exercise one's religious beliefs.

Slide 2



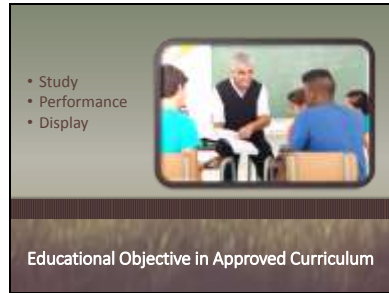
The state and federal constitutions prohibit the use of the powers of government to encourage or discourage religious beliefs or practices, or to repress rights of conscience.

Slide 3



Given their unique relationship to children attending the public schools, school officials, meaning: administrators; teachers; support staff; and employees; must all be particularly careful to remain neutral in matters relating to religion, while striving to accommodate the religious beliefs and practices and the freedom of conscience of students and their parents.

Slide 4



The inclusion of the topic of religion as a part of classroom studies is not entirely prohibited.

A study, performance, or display which includes examination of or presentations about religion, religious thought or expression, or the influence thereof in music, art, literature, law, politics, history, or any other portion of the curriculum may be undertaken in the public schools so long as it is designed to achieve permissible educational objectives and is presented within the context of the approved curriculum.

The objective study of comparative religions is permissible. However, when studying comparative religions in a class such as humanities or geography, no particular religious tenet, belief, or denomination may be given inappropriate emphasis.

Slide 5

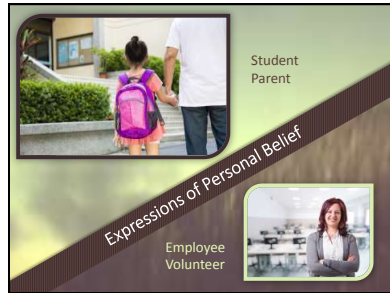


So, learning activities may include the study of religion if: the instruction or activity has an educational objective which clearly fits within the approved curriculum.

The activity:

- Must be designed to achieve a secular (non-religious) educational objective;
- Cannot be included or excluded just because it is concerning religion
- The way it is presented cannot endorse, promote, or disparage a particular religious belief

Slide 6

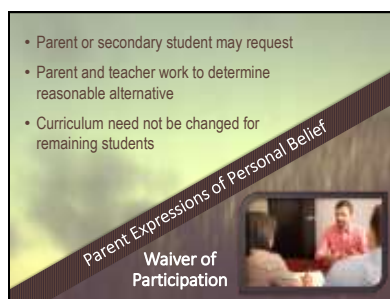


Employees and volunteers working with students must be cautious to avoid the appearance of affirming or denying a religious belief when presenting religious content in the course of instruction.

However, the reality is that students, employees, and volunteers in school are humans. To many, religious belief is an integral part of daily life. So, how do we assure that schools do not support the establishment of religion, and at the same time, not deny individuals the right of free exercise of their individual religious beliefs?

The acceptable expression of personal belief is different for students and parents as opposed to employees and volunteers. Let's take a look at how the rights of students attending public schools and their parents to express personal religious beliefs in the school setting differs from the rights of public school employees and volunteers.

Slide 7



Due to the sensitive nature of religious beliefs, and in light of the fact that parents are compelled by law to send their children to school, Utah law provides parents with the opportunity to request a "Waiver of Participation" for their child's participation in any portion of the curriculum or school activity which the parent believes to be an infringement upon a right of conscience or the exercise of religious freedom. In requesting a waiver, the parent must work with the teacher to determine an appropriate alternative learning activity that will achieve the

objectives of the portion of the curriculum or activity for which waiver is sought.

Keep in mind, the parent's objection does not require the curriculum be modified for the entire class, only that the child of that parent be exempted from studying the particular curriculum.

Slide 8

Classroom discussion, presentation, assignment

- Fits assigned parameters of assignment/topic
- No unreasonable disruption
- No threats to others

Discretionary Time

- No unreasonable interference with order and discipline

Student Expressions of Personal Belief

A student participating in a classroom discussion, presentation, or assignment, or in a school sponsored activity, cannot be prohibited from expressing personal beliefs of any kind nor be penalized for doing so unless the conduct:

- Unreasonably interferes with order or discipline;
- Threatens the well-being of persons or property; or
- Violates concepts of civility or propriety appropriate in a school setting.

During discretionary time, that time before or after school, when a student is not required to be actively engaged in learning activities, a student may initiate and conduct religious activities that do not unreasonably interfere with order and discipline of the school. An example of this might be the prayer around the flagpole activity that students may annually plan and carry out.

Slide 9

Employees and Volunteers MAY NOT advocate:

- Religion
- Non-religion
- A particular religious viewpoint

NOR

Attempt to influence a student regarding the student's religious beliefs or lack thereof.

Employee Expressions of Personal Belief

Employee
Volunteer



Employees and volunteers are more limited than students in expressing their personal beliefs in the school environment. We have already defined the parameters while presenting religious content in the course of instruction.


In addition, an employee may not “proselytize” toward any student regarding atheistic, agnostic, sectarian, religious, or denominational doctrine. In other words, while that employee or volunteer is acting in their official capacity, the employee or volunteer cannot advocate their own personal religious beliefs in attempting to get a student to feel the same. They cannot advocate that to have or not have religious beliefs is best, nor can they advocate a particular set of religious beliefs is more appropriate. They cannot attempt to influence a student regarding the student’s own religious beliefs or lack thereof.

Slide 10

Respond to a spontaneous question from a student;
and
Exercising due caution, may explain or define personal religious beliefs or perspectives, or opinions about the rightfulness or wrongfulness of his/her own, or any other person's religious beliefs or lack thereof.

Employee Expressions of Personal Belief

Employee
Volunteer



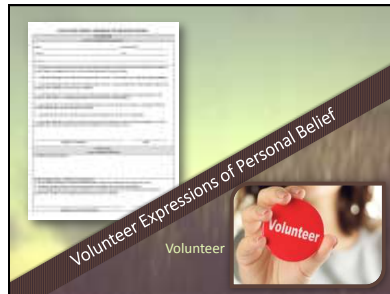
There is carved out a very narrow exception to when an employee or volunteer may discuss his or her own personal religious convictions with students:

An employee may respond in an appropriate manner to a spontaneous question from a student regarding the employee’s personal belief or perspective so long as they do not advocate or encourage acceptance of their beliefs but rather, “by exercising due caution, may explain or define

personal religious beliefs or perspectives, or opinions about the rightfulness or wrongfulness of his/her own, or any other person's religious beliefs or lack thereof.

Disclosing personal beliefs is never mandatory. An employee or volunteer may simply state that he or she prefers not to disclose such private information to students.

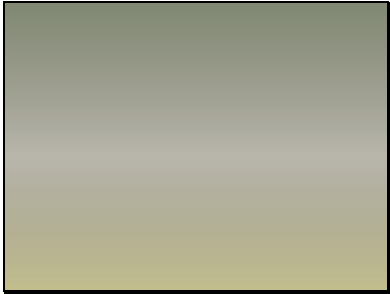
Slide 11



Volunteers are held to this same standard as employees. You may ask, How will volunteers know this? Before a parent, community member may volunteer, which may include speaking to a group of students, working with a class, club, or team, etc., they should be required to sign a Volunteer Agreement. It is available on the Policy Website under the Community Relations/Volunteer Policy.

The policy requires that all volunteers maintain strict neutrality regarding religion while performing volunteer services for a school and the Agreement specific reflects their agreement to abide by this provision. Their conversations with students may not in any way be proselytizing or advocate a particular religious belief. Especially important when inviting guest speakers or presenters.

Slide 12



Questions?