

## **Instruction**

### **School Ceremonies and Observances**

The Amity Board of Education believes that religion has been a vital part of the history, culture, and institutions of this country, and that it will continue to play such a part. We further believe that the free existence of different religious beliefs has been a major factor in the development of the democratic principles of the United States of America.

We also recognize the fact that controversy and even persecution have been occasioned by existence of different religions in violation of certain fundamental elements of belief common to our different religions. The public schools, in attempting to provide equal opportunity for those of different race and creed while preserving individual freedoms and rights, must not be party to controversy.

However, the study of religions in connection with study of the history and culture of this country and of the world may be pursued freely in the Amity Regional Schools as appropriate to the subject area. This study will be nonsectarian in approach.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States established the principle: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof....." The emphasis here is on the neutrality that government must observe in the matter of religion. Neutral means neither opposing nor promoting religion. Therefore, the schools must show no preference for one religion over another and must refrain from the promotion of any or all religions.

The Amity Board of Education holds that no student should be penalized for the reason that he/she is unable, because the tenets of his/her religion forbid secular activity on a particular day or days or at a particular time of day. Any student, because of such reasons as the above, shall be excused from any classes, athletic practice sessions on games, or any examinations, study or work assignments on such particular day or days.

The following guidelines should be observed regarding holidays of religious significance:

1. In planning the school year calendar and activities for the school year, the actual dates of religious holidays should be considered before commitments are made. No games, performances, or other public events shall be scheduled on the following dates: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter.
2. The public schools must maintain objectivity in presenting historical information about religious holidays. A program or observance related to a religious holiday in theme or timing should be evaluated as to its purpose and effect. If either the purpose or effect is to indoctrinate students in a religious belief, then the activity is not acceptable.

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### **School Ceremonies and Observances** (continued)

3. As in all school activities, the primary criterion shall be the educational value derived from preparing and presenting a program or other observance of a holiday. Any such program or observance under the jurisdiction of the school is part of the instructional program.
4. If students choose to create art work in commemoration of a religious event, person, or ceremony, they may do so, but the teacher must not direct the creation of such work in such a way as to violate the purpose or spirit of the guideline.
5. Teachers and coaches should be sensitive to the feelings, beliefs, and religious sensibilities of each student under their supervision in planning activities.
6. School administration must work with the school staff and be aware of program planning to ensure that school activities reflect the intent of the guidelines and do not violate Federal or State law.

### **United States Flag**

The Board of Education through its Superintendent shall provide a United States Flag for appropriate display in each classroom and on the exterior flagstaff of each building in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes. These flags shall be displayed on each day when school is in session.

The exterior flag of any building shall be displayed at half-staff on the following occasions:

1. The Proclamation of the President of the United States;
2. The Proclamation of the Governor of Connecticut;
3. The death of any current student or employee; or
4. The Proclamation of or official notification by the First Selectman of a Regional town when flags are being displayed at half-staff on other buildings of such town.

### **Opening Exercises**

The morning opening exercises will include the Pledge of Allegiance. Those students who have made the personal decision not to recite the "Pledge" may be excused from participating.

The Board of Education shall provide opportunity at the start of each day to allow those students and teachers who wish to do so, the opportunity to observe such time in silent meditation.

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### **School Ceremonies and Observances (continued)**

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

PA 02-119, An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools and Concerning the Pledge of Allegiance

No Child Left Behind Act

Policy adopted: August 13, 2007

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5  
Woodbridge, Connecticut