

RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS

The Governing Board recognizes that students' education would be incomplete without an understanding of the role of religion in history. It is both proper and important for teachers to objectively discuss the influences of various religions, using religious works and symbols to illustrate their relationship with society, literature or the arts. The Board expects that such instruction will identify principles common to all religions and foster respect for the multiple creeds practiced by the peoples of the world.

In order to respect each student's individual right to freedom of religious practice, religious indoctrination is clearly forbidden in the public schools. Instruction about religion must not favor, promote or demean the beliefs or customs of any particular religion or sect. Staff shall be highly sensitive to its obligation not to interfere with the religious development of any student in whatever tradition the student embraces.

Staff shall not endorse, encourage or solicit religious or anti-religious expression or activities among students. They shall not lead students in prayer or participate in student initiated prayer. However, staff shall not prohibit or discourage any student from praying or otherwise expressing his/her religious belief as long as this does not disrupt the classroom.

Students may express their beliefs about religion in their homework, artwork and other written and oral reports if the expression is germane to the assignment. Such work shall be judged by ordinary academic standards, free of discrimination based on religious content.

Religious Holidays

Whereas teaching about religious holidays is a permissible part of the educational program, celebrating religious holidays is not allowed in the public schools. School-sponsored programs shall not be, nor have the effect of being, religiously oriented or a religious celebration.

School and classroom decorations may express seasonal themes that are not religious in nature.

**RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND
CUSTOMS (Continued)**

Teaching of Material Which Has Religious Significance

1. When subject matter, which is considered by the governing board to be appropriate for this district, but which is known to be unacceptable to the religious beliefs of one or more students, these alternatives may be utilized.
 - a. The student shall be excused from attending the class while that topic is under study with no penalty of any kind, or
 - b. The student shall attend the class but no examination about the topic will be required of the student and no penalty for not taking the examination will be assessed or
 - c. The student will attend the class and may be tested about the topic just as expected of every other student.
2. Topics known to have religious significance are:
 - a. Sex education
 - b. The theory of evolution of man/creation of the universe
 - c. Dancing
 - d. Awards ceremony
3. In this district the accepted scientific theory regarding the origin of the universe and evolution shall be taught. Each teacher, in introducing such theory, should point out to the student that theories are not to be considered as absolute no matter how overwhelming the evidence, and that there are other explanations for origin of the universe and evolution.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

51240	Excuse from health instruction and family life and sex education due to religious belief
51511	Religious matters properly included in courses of study

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20

6061	School prayer
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**RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND
CUSTOMS (Continued)**

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 42

2000bb-2000bb4

Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993

Management Resources:

“Religion in the Public Schools: A joint Statement of Current Law,” April 1995

“Religious Expression in Public Schools,” United States Department of Education,
August 1995

Lemon v. Kurtzman, (1971) 403 U.S. 602

Walleye v. Gaffer, (1985) 472 U.S. 38