

Education Programs

Religion

I. Purpose

This policy identifies the status of religion as it pertains to the programs of the school district.

II. General Statement of Policy

- A. The school district will neither promote nor disparage any religious belief or nonbelief. Instead, the district encourages all students and employees to have appreciation for and tolerance of each other's views.
- B. The district also recognizes that religion has had and is having a significant role in the social, cultural, political, and historical development of civilization.
- C. The district recognizes that one of its educational objectives is to increase its students' knowledge and appreciation of music, art, drama, and literature which may have had a religious basis or origin as well as a secular importance.
- D. The district supports the inclusion of religious music, art, drama, and literature in the curriculum and in school activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience and is presented in an objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- E. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of various religions, holidays, customs and beliefs may be explained in an unbiased and nonsectarian manner.

III. Responsibility

- A. It will be the responsibility of the director of teaching and learning to ensure that the study of religious materials, customs, beliefs and holidays in the school district is in keeping with the following guidelines:
 - 1. The proposed activity must have a secular purpose.
 - 2. The primary objective of the activity must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion.
 - 3. The activity must not foster governmental relationships with religion.
 - 4. Notwithstanding the foregoing guidelines, reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from attendance at

school for the purpose of religious instruction or observance of religious holidays.

- B. The director of teaching and learning is granted authority to develop and present for school board review and approval directives and guidelines for the purpose of providing further guidance relative to the teaching of materials related to religion. Approved directives and guidelines will be attached as an addendum to this policy.

Legal References:

U. S. Const., amend. I

Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, Subd. 12(3) (Compulsory Instruction)

Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence From School for Religious Observance)

Minn. Stat. § 121A.10 (Moment of Silence)

Good News Club v. Milford Central School, 533 U.S. 98, 121 S.Ct. 2093, 150 L.Ed.2d 151 (2001)

Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe, 530 U.S. 290, 120 S.Ct. 2266 (2000)

Tangipahoa Parish Bd. of Educ. v. Freiler, 530 U.S. 1251, 120 S.Ct. 2706 (2000)

Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S.602, 91 S.Ct. 2105, 29 L.Ed.2d 745 (1971)

Child Evangelism Fellowship v. Minneapolis Special Sch. Dist. No 1, 690 F.3d 996 (8th Cir. 2012)

Roark v. South Iron R-1 Sch. Dist., 573 F.3d 556 (8th Cir. 2009)

Wigg v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist., 382 F.3d 807 (8th Cir. 2004)

Doe v. School Dist. of City of Norfolk, 340 F.3d 605 (8th Cir. 2003)

Stark v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 640, 123 F.3d 1068 (8th Cir. 1997)

Flore v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist. 49-5, 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir. 1980)

Child Evangelism Fellowship v. Elk River Area Sch. Dist. No. 728, 599 F. Supp.2d 1136 (D. Minn.2009)

LeVake v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 656, 625 N.W.2d 502 (Minn. App. 2001)

Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-J (Feb. 14, 1968)

Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-K (Oct. 21, 1949)

Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 63 (1940)

Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 120 (1924)

Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 121 (1924)

Cross Reference:

Policy 801 (Equal Access to School Facilities)

Policy

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Revised: 3/16/15

Reviewed: 1/13/20

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 273

Edina, Minnesota

Directives & Guidelines to the Teaching of Religion-Related Materials

1. Students may be taught about the role of religion in the historical, cultural, economic and social development of the United States and other nations. However, students may not be taught a specific religion for devotional or doctrinal purposes.
2. Religious texts may be studied as literature but not as religious doctrine. They must be studied only when they naturally occur in the context of school-designated curriculum.
3. If religion is discussed, care must be taken to discuss minority as well as majority religions. In all cases, religion must be discussed in a neutral, objective, fair, balanced and factual manner.
4. Teachers may educate students about the historical, contemporary and cultural aspects of religious holidays. However, celebrating religious holidays in the schools, through worship or other activities, is unconstitutional.
5. Religious symbols are permissible in the classroom only to the extent that they are temporary, used as teaching aids, and cited as examples of the cultural and religious heritage of a people. They may not be used as decoration.
6. Classroom parties may be educational or of social purpose. Classroom parties that occur during the school day may not promote or be based upon religious holidays or include activities that have a religious association.
7. School activities should not be scheduled on significant religious holidays. Care should be taken to avoid tests, special projects, introduction of new concepts, and other activities which would be difficult to make up. Conversely, the students who remain in school should continue to have meaningful learning experiences.
8. Any work of art to be studied should be selected for its inherent merits. The artwork should represent the best examples to illustrate the academic standards and the curriculum's educational goal.
 - Artwork may be related to a specific religious/cultural tradition. The study of such artwork can enhance the understanding and appreciation of a cultural product, which a particular tradition has fostered. Whenever possible, a multiplicity of cultural traditions should be included.
9. Music will be studied for its inherent beauty of structure and form. Its purpose in study should be learning for the sake of developing artistic understanding and responsiveness. Music will not be selected for the purpose of advancing or perpetuating a particular religious belief system or a particular holiday.
 - Music will be selected first, on its own merits as an art form, and second, as a multicultural object of study which enhances the understanding of the development of a particular movement in human civilization. Professional judgment will be taken

in the public performance of music associated with any religious and/or cultural tradition that it not be designed as a religious service or religious celebration. Whenever possible, a multiplicity of cultural traditions will be included. Typical educational objectives should include a range and a balance offering music from various religious and/or cultural traditions. Music from a sacred tradition will be studied and performed as an educational experience which relates to achieving curricular goals and objectives, and will not be designed to foster a specific religious belief.

- Schools may excuse a student from engaging in a music activity, which offends that student's religious belief or conscience. Each situation will be reviewed on an individual basis.
10. A student may express religious beliefs or themes in his or her schoolwork and school personnel should neither promote nor inhibit such religious expression. However, school personnel may rule inappropriate the expression of religious beliefs in schoolwork if such expression is irrelevant to the subject matter being taught.
 11. A student may wear religious attire and/or jewelry in school or during a school-sponsored activity unless the wearing of such attire or jewelry would compromise the student's physical safety in a given situation, i.e. the wearing of jewelry during gym class or while engaging in a school-sponsored sport may be prohibited for safety reasons.
 12. Students may pray individually or in groups and may speak to their peers about religious topics when it does not interfere with school instruction or school-sponsored activities. However, school personnel will intercede to stop such religious speech if it is not welcomed by the peer(s) being addressed or otherwise constitutes coercion, intimidation or harassment.
 13. A student may not be penalized for staying out of school or a school-sponsored activity on a religious holiday of his or her faith. Absence policy for making up assignments will apply.
 14. A student may be excused from participation in a class or school program if he or she objects to the subject matter being taught on religious grounds. When students are excused an alternative assignment may be required.