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**RICHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS**

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to identify the status of religion as it pertains to school programs and activities.

**II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

- A. The District shall 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. REQUIREMENTS**

**A. School Sponsored Programs and Activities**

School-sponsored programs and activities, including the study of religious materials, customs, beliefs, and holidays must meet the following three criteria.

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 excessive governmental relationships with religion.

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**B. Religious Expression and Accommodations**

1. Schools may not forbid students, acting on their own, from expressing their personal religious views or beliefs solely because they are of a religious nature. At the same time, schools may not endorse religious activity or doctrine, nor coerce participation in religious activity.
2. Religious harassment aimed at one or more students is not permitted. Students do not have the right to make repeated invitations to other students to participate in religious activity in the face of a request to stop.
3. 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.

**IV. ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES**

The superintendent is authorized to develop administrative guidelines to assist in the implementation of this policy.

**Legal References:**

U.S. Constitution, First Amendment  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, Subd. 12(3) (Compulsory Instruction)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence From School for Religious Observance)  
*Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S.602, 91 S.Ct. 2105, 29 L.Ed.2d 745 (1971)  
*Florey v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist. 49-5*, 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir.) cert. denied, 449 U.S. 987, 101 S.Ct. 409, 66 L.Ed.2d 251 (1980)  
*Stark v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 640*, 123 F.3d 1068 (8th Cir.) cert. denied, 118 S.Ct. 1560, 140 L.Ed.2d 792 (1997)  
*Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290, 120 S.Ct. 2266 (2000)  
*Tangipahoa Parish Board of Education v. Freiler*, 530 U.S. 1251, 120 S.Ct. 2266 (2000)  
*LeVake v. Independent School District No. 656*, 625 N.W.2d 502 (Minn. App. 2001), cert. denied, 534 U.S. 1081, 122 S.Ct. 814, 151 L.Ed.2d 698 (2002)  
*Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, 533 U.S. 98, 121 S.Ct. 2093, 150 L.Ed.2d 151 (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)

1     ***Cross References:***

2     Policy 103: Harassment Prohibition

3     Policy 801: Student Use of Secondary School Facilities

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6     RATIFIED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION: November 2, 1998

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8     REVISED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION: December 20, 2004; August 12,  
9     2013; July 12, 2021