

POLICY

PEQUANNOCK TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF EDUCATION

ADMINISTRATION
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2270.1 – CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES

The relationship of religious and religious practices to public school is recognized as a tenuous one as evidenced by numerous court decisions. The following policy statements shall cover practices regarding patriotic and religious customs and holidays.

Out of School Religious Observances

1. School personnel will take into account the possible effects of religious holidays on school attendance when planning school calendars. When possible, examinations and other major events will not be scheduled on such holidays.
2. Teachers will provide students who miss work because of religious reasons an opportunity to make up school work.
3. Any instruction in the school which may be contrary to a student's religious beliefs and teachings shall be viewed as optional for the student.
4. No student who is absent by reason of observance of a religious holiday shall be denied any right or opportunity given to students who were in attendance at that time.
5. The Board shall not prevent, or otherwise deny participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in any district school, consistent with the United States Department of Education's Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (USDOE Guidance).

Programs

1. The schools must show neither favoritism toward nor hostility against religious expression.
2. "Religious celebration" is defined as a formal observance, including worship or religious service of any kind whether or not conducted by a clergyman.
3. A program or observance related to religious holiday in theme or timing should be evaluated as to its purpose and effect. If both the purpose and the effect are judged to be secular rather than religious, the program would be acceptable.

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4. Non-profit faith based organizations are permitted to be supplemental service providers under the Every Student Succeeds Act, provided the content is secular, neutral and non-ideological. Such organizations need not modify their religious character identification to be eligible to become supplemental service providers.

U.S. Consti., First Amendment
N.J. Consti., Art. 1, 4
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-16
N.J.A.C. 6:20-1.3(j)

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