

FERNDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 502
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

No. 2340 P-1/3610 P-1

RELIGIOUS-RELATED ACTIVITIES OR PRACTICES

I. RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES

The intent of this procedure is to provide guidelines for the recognition of holiday events in our schools. These events should be recognized in a manner consistent with the rich and diverse make-up of the cultural heritage of our schools and local communities.

The focus of our schools is the education of students in preparation for their roles as citizens, both during their school and post-academic careers. These events must be connected to educational opportunities and include the learning and understanding of both a student's individual culture, as well as the culture of others, in a safe and respectful environment.

Ferndale School District has a comprehensive policy (No. 2340) regarding holiday celebrations. This policy is based on the guidance of both state and federal law, as well as recommendations from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of Washington. Understanding how to apply these policies can sometimes be difficult, so the following is an effort to provide guidance regarding celebration of holidays. Celebrations of holidays and cultural events will:

1. Provide an educational value to students within their schools or local communities.
2. Provide a safe and respectful environment in which all students can learn.
3. Allow students and staff individual expression except where the educational process may be substantially disrupted.
4. Promote parent and community involvement.
5. Consideration of educational opportunities should include culture, citizenship, historical traditions, and the arts.

II. INSTRUCTION RELATING TO RELIGION

Religious instruction or indoctrination in the schools of the district is prohibited by both the federal and state constitutions. Factual and objective teaching about religion may be included in classroom instruction where related to the district's educational goals and student learning objectives, provided that such teaching does not:

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1. Take the form of religious instruction, worship, exercise or persuasion;
2. Disparage or promote religion, or the absence of religion, or any particular belief system;
3. Question the religious belief, or absence of religious belief, of any student; or
4. Require a student to declare a religious preference.

III. BACCALAUREATE SERVICES

Neither the district nor any individual school shall sponsor or plan any baccalaureate program which is religious in nature or contains religious elements. Interested students and their families may plan and organize such baccalaureate exercises subject to the following conditions:

1. No school district funds may be used for any baccalaureate program;
2. Student and staff participation in baccalaureate shall be voluntary; and
3. Groups planning baccalaureate services may rent and utilize school facilities under terms and conditions prescribed in Board Policy No. 4330/9440.

IV. STUDENT ABSENCES DUE TO RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

1. The district shall not limit the right of parents to determine when their children should be absent from school because of religious observations.
2. Students shall not be penalized or deprived of make up opportunities for such absences, insofar as it is practicable to do so.
3. When scheduling important school activities and testing, the district and its schools shall attempt to avoid dates which conflict with religious holidays which may be observed by some students.

V. STUDENT EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

1. Students may wear religious attire or symbols provided that the educational process is not thereby substantially disrupted.
2. The district shall not conduct, sponsor, endorse, or encourage any student to recite or participate in prayers or other forms of devotional activity.

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VI. ASSEMBLIES

All assemblies conducted during the school day shall be under the control of the district. Such assemblies shall neither inhibit nor advance religion. Programs that convey a religious or devotional message are prohibited, including, but not limited to, presentations by persons who identify themselves as religious believers and extol the benefits of religious beliefs. This prohibition does not preclude the presentation of musical or dramatic programs which may include selections having a religious origin or significance as a part of a balanced program.

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