

## INSTRUCTION

### Ceremonies and Observances

#### A. Generally

The School Board encourages the observance throughout the school division of such special days and occurrences as are proclaimed by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the President of the United States. Such observances should be of educational value to the students and in acceptable taste.

#### B. Flags

In accordance with applicable law and guidance, the flags of the United States of America and the Commonwealth shall be displayed and handled at each school. Instruction in the history and principles of the flag of the United States and the flag of the Commonwealth shall be given in one or more grades. The instruction shall include the Pledge of Allegiance and the appropriate etiquette and conventions for respecting the dignity and appropriate display of such flags.

#### C. Minute of Silence

In accordance with applicable law and guidance, ~~T~~the Superintendent or designee shall ensure the daily observation of one minute of silence in each classroom of the ~~S~~school ~~D~~ivision. During such one minute periods of silence, the teacher responsible for each classroom shall take care that all students remain seated and silent and make no distracting display to the end that each pupil may, in the exercise of his or her individual choice, meditate, pray, or engage in any other silent activity which does not interfere with, distract, or impede other pupils in the like exercise of individual choice.

#### D. Commencements/Other Ceremonies

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution, as interpreted by caselaw, requires school officials to be neutral in their treatment of religion showing neither favoritism toward nor hostility against religion. Accordingly, the School Board and School Administration may not mandate, organize or sponsor religious activities or ceremonies. However, religious activity that is initiated by private individuals will be protected in keeping with current caselaw and directives of the United States Department of Education and the Virginia Board of Education.

#### E. Pledge of Allegiance

In accordance with the Code of Virginia, the Superintendent or designee shall ensure the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in each classroom of the ~~s~~School ~~D~~ivision and shall ensure that the flag of the United States is in place in each such classroom. The Code of Student Conduct shall apply to disruptive behavior during the recitation of the Pledge in the same manner as provided for other circumstances of such behavior; however, no student shall be compelled to recite the Pledge if ~~the~~ the student, the student'shis parent or legal guardian objects on religious,

philosophical, or other grounds to the student's participating in this exercise. Students who are thus exempt from reciting the Pledge shall remain quietly standing or sitting at their desks while others recite the Pledge and shall make no display that disrupts or distracts others who are reciting the Pledge. The principal shall provide appropriate accommodations for students who are unable to comply with the procedures described herein due to disability. The Office of the Attorney General shall intervene on behalf of the School Board and shall provide legal defense of this law.

#### **F. Posting of Bill of Rights and National Motto "In God We Trust"**

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that copies of the Bill of Rights of the ~~Constitution~~Constitution of the United States and the statement, "In God We Trust", the National Motto, enacted by Congress in 1956, are posted in a conspicuous place in each school for all students to read.

#### **G. Implementation of Constitution Day and Citizenship**

The seventeenth day of September shall annually be recognized as Constitution and Citizenship Day (to be referred to as "Constitution Day") and the third week of September will be observed as Civics Education Week. To ensure that all students reflect upon the importance of active citizenship, recognize the enduring strength of the United States Constitution, and reaffirm commitment to the rights and obligations of citizenship in the United States of America, the Superintendent shall ensure that appropriate observations and teachings are conducted in all schools.

#### **Legal Reference**

Code of Virginia § 2.2-3315, as amended. Citizenship Day and Constitution Week

Code of Virginia § 22.1-133, as amended. Flags.

Code of Virginia § 22.1-201, as amended. Study of documents of Virginia history and United States Constitution.

Code of Virginia § 22.1-202, as amended. Instruction in history and principles of flags of United States and Virginia; pledge of allegiance to American flag; guidelines developed by the ~~b~~Board.

Code of Virginia § 22.1-203, as amended. Daily observance of one minute of silence.

Code of Virginia § 22.1-203.1, as amended. Student-~~u~~initiated prayer.

Virginia Board of Education Guidelines Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance (2001)

Virginia Department of Education Superintendent's Memo-~~122#023-20~~ (202000) Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Schools and Written Certification Requirement.

House Joint Resolution No. 627 (2007) designating the third week in September as Civics Education Week in Virginia.

United States Department of Education Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (1/16/2022/7/03), as amended.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 §8524(as), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, 20 U.S.C. §7904 (a), as amended.

Acts of Assembly 2002 Chapter 902 (2003)

Adopted by School Board: November 16, 1976

Amended by School Board: February 1, 1977

Amended by School Board: August 21, 1990

Amended by School Board: July 16, 1991

Amended by School Board: July 13, 1993 (Effective August 14, 1993)

Amended by School Board: October 3, 2000

Amended by School Board: August 21, 2001

Amended by School Board: June 6, 2006

Amended by School Board: February 21, 2017

Amended by School Board: July 12, 2022

APPROVED AS TO  
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY

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