

***POLICY AND PRACTICE REGARDING RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND TRADITIONAL
COMMUNITY CUSTOMS***

RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS

It is accepted that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by Lyon County School District or its employees, and none should be disparaged. Instead, the school district should encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views. The school district should utilize its opportunity to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parents whether it involves race, disability, culture, economic background, or religious beliefs. In that spirit of tolerance, students and staff member should be excused from participating in practices which are contrary to their religious beliefs, unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it.

The Lyon County School District recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance student knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

RULES

Observance of Religious Holidays

The practice of the Lyon County School District shall be as follows:

1. The several holidays through the year which have a religious and secular basis may be observed in the public schools.
2. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
3. Music, art, literature and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and object manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.
4. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, symbols of native American religions or other symbols that are part of religious holiday are permitted as a teaching aide or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature.

Among these holidays are Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah, St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, and Halloween.

5. The school district's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all generally recognized faiths.

Religion in the Curriculum

Religious institutions and orientations are central to human experience, past and present. An education excluding such a significant aspect would be incomplete. It is essential that teaching about, and not of religion be conducted in a factual, objective and respectful manner.

Therefore, the practice of the Lyon County School District shall be as follows:

1. The district supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.
2. The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature and history should be only as extensive as is necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.
3. Student initiated expressions to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme shall be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

Dedications and Commencement

Traditions are a cherished part of the community life and the Lyon County School District expresses an interest in maintaining those traditions which have had a significance to the community. Such ceremonies should recognize the religious pluralism of the community.

Therefore, the practice of the Lyon County School District shall be as follows:

1. A dedication ceremony should recognize the religious pluralism of the community and be appropriate to those who use the facility. An open invitation should be extended to all citizens to participate in the ceremony.
2. Traditions, i.e., invocation and benediction, inherent in commencement ceremonies, should be honored in the spirit of accommodating and good taste.
3. The school holidays associated with Christmas shall be termed "Christmas vacation or Christmas Break." The school holidays associated with Easter shall be termed "Easter Vacation or Easter Break."