

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION

Factual and objective teaching about religion, and the impact of religion, may be included in classroom instruction if such information is presented as part of the curriculum and is in keeping with the district's educational goals and student learning objectives. Staff members may not teach religion or advocate religious doctrine or practice. This prohibition against teaching extends to curricular decisions which promote religion or religious beliefs.

Requests to display religious objects in classrooms or schools shall be filed in accordance with the district's policy governing religious displays.

Religious musical selections, literature, documents of historical significance, artwork, and other learning aids may be included in the curriculum on the basis of their particular educational value and/or traditional secular usage and shall be presented with works that are nonreligious in nature, shall be selected and performed as works of art, not as acts of veneration, and shall be presented prudently and objectively, with background information explaining their purpose.

School programs, performances, and celebrations must serve an educational purpose. The inclusion of religious symbols, music, art, or writing is permitted, if the religious content has a historical or independent education purpose which contributes to the objectives of the approved curriculum. School programs, performances, and celebrations cannot promote, encourage, discourage, persuade, dissuade, or discriminate against a religion or religious activity and cannot be oriented to religion or a religious holiday.

A student or parent who believes that inclusion of religious material in the instructional program infringes on the student's free exercise of religion shall be given the option of opting-out by submitting a written request with the building principal. Upon review, investigation and approval the building principal shall direct the classroom teacher to provide the student with an alternative assignment.

Any staff member, citizen, or student who believes that a particular school program may have violated this policy may submit a complaint in accordance with the procedures established by board policy for complaints about instructional material.

Complementing NDSBA Templates (may contain items not adopted by the Board)

- ABBE, Displays of Religious Objects or Documents
- GAAA, Curriculum Design & Evaluation
- GAAC, Review & Complaints about Instructional & Resource Material • GAAC-BR, Procedure for Reviewing Complaints about Instructional/ Resource Material
- GBAA-E, Teaching about Religion Checklist

End of Manvel School District #125 Policy GBAA..... Adopted: 08/12/19

Updated: 10/11/21

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION CHECKLIST

NOTE: Any “NO” Answer Reflects Potential Difficulty, Either with Establishment Clause or Community Relations

1. Is the topic included in state or locally adopted curricular standards?
2. Do the curricular standards have a secular, non-religious purpose intended to teach about religion, such that, in context, curriculum reflects no appearance of endorsement of religious beliefs?
3. Does the teacher use sound instructional techniques consistent with state or locally adopted standards?
4. In context, do instructional techniques reflect no appearance of endorsement of religious beliefs?
 - a. Are techniques consistent with those used for other aspects of the curriculum?
 - b. Are techniques divorced from a “right/wrong” perspective and focused on teaching about religion rather than truth in religion?
 - c. Is there a “critical thinking” approach to controversial topics, separating a teacher from his/her perspective? Is this approach used for other controversial topics with a secular non-religious purpose?
 - d. Is the focus on specific curricular goals?
5. Does the teacher use materials approved by the state or consistent with local policy? Are local board policies regarding approval of materials up to date?
6. In context, do instructional materials reflect no appearance of endorsement of religious beliefs?
 - a. Are materials prepared by school publishers for instructional purposes consistent with adopted curricular standards?
 - b. Is the selection of materials intended to present a balanced and objective viewpoint?
 - c. Are multiple viewpoints presented?
7. Does the teacher provide notice to the administration of curricular and instructional decisions made before they are implemented?
 - a. Does district policy require notice and approval of instructional materials?

- b. Does district policy require notice of potentially controversial topics?

- 8. Has the board been involved with the issue?
 - a. In preparation with relevant policies?
 - b. Updated with potential for controversy and media exposure?
 - c. Aware of instructional and curricular decisions?

- 9. Does the district prepare the community and parents for the decisions being made? How?

- 10. Does the district have a policy on religion in schools?
 - a. Was the community involved in its preparation?

- 11. Are students given the opportunity to opt out of instruction not consistent with religious views?

- 12. Does the district have a policy for responding to media inquiry on controversial subjects?
 - a. Does the policy designate a single district spokesperson?
 - b. Does the staff know about this policy?

End of Manvel Public School 125 Exhibit.....Adopted: (10/11/21)