

Fostering the development of knowledge and respect for the rights of all cultural and religious groups is a continuing goal of the North Thurston Public Schools. Therefore the District recognizes that opportunities to learn about cultural and religious traditions should be provided within the framework of the district curriculum. The values and the origins of religious holidays or non-religious events should be explained in an unbiased and objective manner. This recognition will not have the effect of promoting religion or celebrating any religious holiday or non-religious observances.

During the school year, some special observances are required by law and other observances are established by precedence. When such observances are planned ahead of time as an extension of classroom work, they are more meaningful for students. These educational opportunities should be handled with great care, sensitivity, and respect for the feelings and beliefs of all individuals.

All children shall be permitted, but not required, to participate in special observances in school-sponsored programs or activities that are a regular part or extension of the curriculum. Parents shall have the authority to determine when their children may participate or be excused from special observances. Students shall not be penalized or deprived of make-up opportunities when excused. The school shall provide an alternative activity for these students during the observance or activity.

Professional judgment is critical in determining the appropriateness of the special observance to the curriculum and the maturity of the students. Individual students may use an instructional project, such as writing or an art assignment or drama selection, to express voluntarily their religious beliefs or a religious tradition. Music, art, literature, and drama having a religious basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs. Classroom practice will include experiences and materials representing the everyday lives of children. The preceding restrictions will not preclude the factual and objective teaching about religious holidays, and religious differences. Such instruction can enhance the mutual understanding needed by all citizens in a pluralistic society.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish procedures regarding student celebrations and observances.

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