Houston County Board of Education

Monitoring: **Review: Annually, in December**	Descriptor Term: **Recognition of Religious Beliefs, Customs, & Holidays**	Descriptor Code: **4.803**	Issued Date: **12/09/24**
		Rescinds:	Issued: **07/08/13**

No religious belief or nonbelief shall be promoted or belittled by the school system or its employees. All students and staff members shall be tolerant of the views of others and not discriminate against anyone for a religious viewpoint or lack of a religious viewpoint. Students and staff members shall be excused from participating in practices which are contrary to their religious beliefs.[1]

STUDENTS' EXPRESSIONS OF RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINTS

A student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject shall be treated in the same manner as a student's voluntary expression of a secular viewpoint.

Students may express religious beliefs in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. These assignments shall be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and against other legitimate academic concerns. A student shall not be penalized or rewarded on account of the religious content of the student's work.[2]

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Recognition of religious holidays shall be as follows:[3]

1. The holidays throughout the year which have both a religious and a secular basis may be observed;[4]

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 objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday;

4. The use of religious symbols that are part of a religious holiday are permitted as a teaching aid or resource, provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature; and

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

Legal References

1. TCA 49-6-2901
2. TCA 49-6-1804
3. *Florey v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist.*, 619 F. 2d 1311 (8th Cir. 1980)
4. TCA 49-6-3016

Cross References

Student Equal Access 4.802
Attendance 6.200