

## Instruction

### Ceremonies and Observances

#### Separation of Church and State

In accordance with the United States Constitution, Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. It is the policy of The Woodstock Academy Board of Trustees that The Academy will, at all times and in all ways, have a neutral posture toward religion.

This expectation of neutrality need not preclude nor hinder The Academy in fulfilling its responsibility to educate students to be tolerant and respectful of religious diversity. The Board also recognizes that one of its educational responsibilities is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

Therefore, the Board will approach religion from an objective, curriculum-related perspective, encouraging all students and staff members to be aware of the diversity of beliefs and be respectful of each other's religious and/or non-religious views. In that spirit of respect, students and staff members should be excused from participating in activities that are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of compelling public interest that would prevent it.

#### Holiday Celebrations and Observances

The Head of School or his/her designee is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy. Pertinent information will be included in the student, parent, and staff handbooks.

#### Absence for Religious Observation

Student absences for religious observances shall be excused. Furthermore, such absences should not prohibit receipt of attendance-related awards nor impact student grades or participation in school events.

#### Recognition of Religious Holidays

The objective study of religious holidays provides a natural opportunity to promote an appreciation for and respect of diversity. Learning opportunities should reflect the diversity of global cultures.

1. Recognition of religious holidays will not dominate the educational program and must support curricular objectives;
2. All religions must be afforded equal dignity, with none advanced nor disparaged;
3. Decorations which are part of custom, that have no direct religious meaning (Christmas tree or Easter Bunny) may be displayed. Tree decorations should not promote religion nor require student participation;
4. Programs should focus on seasonal rather than religious themes inclusive of concerts, enrichment programs and fundraisers;
5. Performances which recognize holidays must be of an artistic nature, not religious. Program selections should not, by their nature, exclude students from participation;
6. The cafeteria staff will consider religious dietary restrictions when planning menus (non-meat meals, limiting pork to one menu choice); and
7. Parents may exclude their children from programs involving the recognition of religious holidays or if the celebration is in conflict with family beliefs. A written request for exclusion should be sent to the Head of School.

#### Silent Meditation

The Board directs that the administration shall provide students and teachers the opportunity to observe an appropriate period of time for silent meditation at the beginning of each school day.

#### Pledge of Allegiance

Students will be offered the opportunity to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag at least once during each school day. Participation in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance will be voluntary. Students may refuse to participate in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance for any reason, including religious, political, philosophical or personal reasons. If a student chooses not to participate, he/she may stand or sit in silence.

Policy Adopted: May 16, 2006  
Policy Updated: January 19, 2021

The Woodstock Academy  
Woodstock, Connecticut