

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

No. 210(a)

Board of Trustees Douglas County School District

PROGRAM

RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS

The District and its employees shall remain neutral regarding religion and nonreligion. District employees shall not promote, endorse, inhibit, or disparage any religious belief, religious practice, or nonbelief in the performance of their official duties. The District shall foster a school environment in which students and staff are expected to treat the sincerely held religious and nonreligious views of others with respect. The District shall promote understanding and mutual respect among students, families, and staff across differences including race, creed, culture, religion, and background. Students shall be reasonably accommodated when a classroom activity, school practice, or school-sponsored event conflicts with a sincerely held religious belief or observance, unless the requested accommodation would fundamentally alter the instructional activity, create a safety concern, violate law, or cause undue disruption. Employee requests for religious accommodation shall be addressed under applicable law and District procedure.

The District recognizes that religion and nonreligion have influenced history, culture, literature, art, music, and civic life. **One educational goal of the District is to promote student understanding of the role of religion and religious liberty** in social, cultural, and historical development of civilization, provided that such instruction is academic, objective, and nondevotional.

Observance of Religious Holidays

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

1. Public schools may teach about religious and secular holidays and may acknowledge such holidays as part of an instructional program or school activity when the purpose is academic, cultural, or historical rather than devotional. No holiday activity shall be conducted in a manner that endorses, favors, or inhibits religion or nonreligion.
2. Instruction concerning the origins, history, traditions, and contemporary significance of a holiday shall be presented in an objective, age-appropriate, and pedagogically relevant manner, without proselytizing or sectarian instruction.
3. Music, art, literature, drama, and other instructional materials with religious themes may be used in the curriculum or in school-sponsored programs when they serve a legitimate educational purpose and are presented objectively, in context, and as part of a balanced study of culture, history, or the arts.

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4. Religious symbols or displays may be used as instructional resources when they are relevant to the approved curriculum, are presented objectively as examples of cultural, historical, or religious heritage, and are displayed only for the time reasonably necessary to complete the instructional purpose. Such displays shall not be used in a manner that would cause a reasonable observer to view the District as endorsing religion.
5. All employees shall ensure that religious symbols, music, art, literature, drama, and holiday-related activities are presented in a manner that avoids the appearance of District sponsorship, endorsement, or disapproval of any religion or nonreligion and reflects awareness of the religious diversity and rights of the school community.

Curriculum

Religion, religious liberty, and nonreligious thought are significant aspects of human experience, past and present. Instruction concerning religion shall be academic, factual, objective, and respectful. District employees shall teach about religion when educationally appropriate, but shall not provide devotional instruction, lead religious exercises, or direct students to participate in religious activity

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

1. Religious literature, music, drama, art, and primary-source materials may be included in the curriculum when they are relevant to the instructional objectives and are presented objectively and in context.
2. Instruction involving religious themes in literature, history, music, art, or other subjects shall be limited to what is reasonably necessary for a balanced and academically sound study of the subject matter and shall not promote, denigrate, or inhibit any religious belief or nonbelief.
3. Student-initiated expressions that reflects a student's sincerely held religious belief or nonbelief shall be permitted on the same basis as comparable secular expression, provided the student otherwise meets the academic and program requirements of the assignment or activity. Students may express religious or nonreligious viewpoints in schoolwork, art, music, speech, and debate to the same extent they may express other personal viewpoints.

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4. Students may engage in private, voluntary, and non-disruptive prayer or other religious expression to the same extent they may engage in comparable nonreligious expression, subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions and ordinary school rules. Student religious groups at secondary schools shall be afforded the same access to school facilities during noninstructional time as other noncurricular student groups, as required by law. District employees present at such meetings shall act only in a nonparticipatory supervisory capacity unless otherwise permitted by law.

[See Policy 210 Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs](#)

Adopted: 8/14/12
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