609 RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL OBSERVANCES

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to identify the status of religion as it pertains to the programs of the school district.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. The school district shall neither promote nor disparage any religious belief or nonbelief. Instead, the school district encourages all students and employees to have appreciation for and tolerance of each other's views.

B. The school district also recognizes that religion has had and is having a significant role in the social, cultural, political, and historical development of civilization.

C. The school district recognizes that one of its educational objectives is to increase its students' knowledge and appreciation of music, art, drama, and literature which may have had a religious basis or origin as well as a secular importance.

D. The school district supports the inclusion of religious music, art, drama, and literature in the curriculum and in school activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience and is presented in an objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.

E. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of various religions, holidays, customs, and beliefs may be explained in an unbiased and nonsectarian manner.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

A. The superintendent shall be responsible for ensuring that the study of religious materials, customs, beliefs, and holidays in the school district is in keeping with the following guidelines:

1. The proposed activity must have a secular purpose.

2. The primary objective of the activity must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion.

3. The activity must not foster excessive governmental relationships with religion.

4. Notwithstanding the foregoing guidelines, reasonable efforts must be made to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from a curricular activity for a religious observance or American Indian cultural practice, observance, or ceremony. The school district must provide annual notice to parents of this policy, and our handbook lets parents know where all policies are located.

B. The superintendent is granted authority to develop and present for school board review and approval directives and guidelines for the purpose of providing further guidance relative to the teaching of materials related to religion. Approved directives and guidelines shall be attached as an addendum to this policy.

Legal References: U. S. Const., amend. I
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, Subd. 12 (Compulsory Instruction)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence from School for Religious and Cultural Observances)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.10 (Moment of Silence)
Good News Club v. Milford Central School, 533 U.S. 98 (2001)
Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe, 530 U.S. 290 (2000)
Tangipahoa Parish Bd. of Educ. v. Freiler, 530 U.S. 1251 (2000)
Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S.602, (1971)
Child Evangelism Fellowship v. Minneapolis Special Sch. Dist. No. 1, 690 F.3d 996 (8th Cir. 2012)
Wigg v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist., 382 F.3d 807 (8th Cir. 2004)
Doe v. School Dist. of City of Norfolk, 340 F.3d 605 (8th Cir. 2003)
Stark v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 640, 123 F.3d 1068 (8th Cir. 1997)
Florey v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist. 49-5, 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir. 1980)
Roark v. South Iron R-1 Sch. Dist., 573 F.3d 556 (8th Cir. 2009)
Child Evangelism Fellowship v. Elk River Area Sch. Dist. No. 728, 599 F.Supp.2d 1136 (D. Minn. 2009)
LeVake v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 656, 625 N.W.2d 502 (Minn. App. 2001)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-J (Feb. 14, 1968)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-K (Oct. 21, 1949)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 63 (1940)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 120 (1924)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 121 (1924)

Cross References: MSBA/MASA Model Policy 801 (Equal Access to School Facilities)