

POLICY

2017

8360

1 of 2

Instruction

SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

School Activities Related to Religious Holidays or Themes

School activities related to the teaching about religious holidays or themes must be consistent with, representative of, and congruent with the District's curriculum.

In planning school activities related to the teaching about religious holidays or themes, special effort must be made to see that the activity is not devotional and that students of all faiths can join without feeling they are betraying their own beliefs.

In planning school activities related to the teaching about religious holidays or themes, age appropriate activities are encouraged within the framework of the curriculum. Teaching about religious cultural holidays may include such special activities as parties and special foods, if they reinforce educational goals.

Symbols in the Schools

The purpose of using religious symbols should be to teach about religious concepts and traditions, and to convey historical or cultural content, not to promote or celebrate religious concepts, events or holidays.

Music in the Schools

The purpose of using religious music should be to teach musical concepts, to convey historical and cultural content, or to create aesthetic experiences in a setting which emphasizes artistic expression and educational value, not to promote or to celebrate a religious faith.

District Calendar

The days on which members of a religious group may be absent to observe a religious holiday (legal absence) will be noted on the school planning calendar and the District calendar distributed to parents/guardians. Out of respect for a student's observance of these holidays, teachers will be sensitive to the needs of the student by allowing them to make up all class work, homework, and tests without penalty. Parents/guardians are encouraged to notify the school prior to the absence in order to assist the staff in instructional planning and in meeting the needs of the student.

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2 of 2
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Curriculum Areas In Conflict With Religious Beliefs

Students shall be given the option to be excused from participating in those parts of an activity, program, or area of instruction involving a religious theme which conflicts with their own religious beliefs or that of their parents/guardians in accordance with applicable law and regulations. Alternatives may be provided that are of comparable instructional value.

Implementation

Administrative regulations will be developed to implement the terms of this policy. Further, the District shall vigorously publicize and disseminate this policy and accompanying regulations in order to promote community, faculty, student, and parental/guardian awareness.

United States Constitution, First Amendment
Equal Access Act,
20 United States Code (USC) Sections 4071-4074
Elementary and Secondary Education Act,
Section 9524, as amended by the No Child Left
Behind Act of 2001
Education Law Sections 1609(9) and (10), 1709(1)
and (3), 3204(5) and 3210
8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations
(NYCRR) Sections 16.2 and 109.2

NOTE: Refer also to Policies #7552 --Constitutionally Protected Prayer in the Public Schools
#8330 --Objection to Instructional Materials

Adopted: 8/25/03
Revised: 5/22/17