

RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS

Instructional programs may include references to religion and may use religious literature, art, music or symbols to illustrate the subject matter being taught. Such instruction should be designed to broaden the students' understanding of social and cultural history and their tolerance for the multiple ways of life practiced by the peoples of the world. Instruction about religious holidays shall be carefully tied to these educational objectives.

Factual and objective teaching about religion must be distinguished from religious indoctrination, which is clearly forbidden in public schools. The schools may teach about religion from a historical, cultural, sociological or other educational perspective, but must not favor the beliefs and customs of any particular religion or sect over any others in such teaching.

Staff shall be highly sensitive to its obligation not to interfere with the philosophical/religious development of each student, in whatever tradition the student embraces. School-sponsored programs should not be, nor have the effect of being, religiously oriented or a religious celebration.

Instruction which is contrary to a student's religious beliefs and teachings may be optional for that student, in accordance with the Education Code or at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee.

The Governing Board recognizes that holidays demonstrate the diversity and rich heritage of our community members. Classroom decorations and costumes may express seasonal themes that are not religious in nature.

(cf. 5113 - Absences and Excuses)

(cf. 6144 - Controversial Issues)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

51240 Excuse from health instruction and family life and sex education due to religious belief

51511 Religious matters properly included in courses of study

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20

6061 School prayer

Lemon v. Kurtzman, (1971) 403 U.S. 602

Walleye v. Gaffer, (1985) 472 U.S. 38