

Concord School District Policy #643 *

Religious Observances and Displays

I. Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

It is accepted that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the school district or its employees and none should be disparaged. Instead, the district should encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views. The district should use all opportunities to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parents, whether it involves race, culture, economic background, or religious beliefs. In that spirit of tolerance, students and staff members should be excused from participating in practices that are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it.

The district recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

II. Observance of Religious Holidays

The practice of the district will be:

- The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and a secular basis may be recognized in schools.
- The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- Music, art, literature, and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner, and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.
- The use of religious symbols that are a part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource, provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature.
- The school district's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.

III. Religion in the Curriculum

Religious institutions and orientations are central to human experience, past and present. An education excluding such a significant aspect would be incomplete. It is essential that the teaching about --- and not of -- religion be conducted in a factual, objective, and respectful manner.

The practice of the Concord School District will be:

- The district supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama, and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities provided that it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively

- The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature, and history should be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs. Student-initiated responses to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme will be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech, and debate.

Adopted July 5, 1994

* Also Policy #816