

## Teaching about Religion

The public schools are charged with the obligation of maintaining neutrality in the matter of religion. The district strongly supports the constitutional principle of separation of church and public education.

The requirement of neutrality suggests an ongoing search by teachers for sensitivity, understanding, appreciation and factual information about cultural and religious diversity while refraining from advocacy of a particular religious position.

The district holds that the mere mention of a religious belief or practice in an objective manner does not constitute the teaching of religious doctrine nor does the mention of such topics constitute an attempt to subvert or supplant a student's belief in the religious convictions established by the home.

The following specific guidelines and directions are to be incorporated in addressing questions raised on the implementation of this policy:

1. Factual and objective teaching about religion is to be distinguished from the teaching of religion. For example, religion is often a factor to be considered in history, art, literature or music. Teachers may explain the meaning of religious holidays (e.g., Hanukkah, Christmas, Passover, Good Friday, etc.) as viewed by a religion's adherents, and others, but may not recognize such holidays with religious observances or symbols in the classroom or otherwise;
2. Religious reading for historical or literary instructional purposes is permitted. Such reading may not be used for devotional purposes or to influence religious beliefs;
3. Instruction in morality, ethics and values is required; however, instruction shall not resort to partisan religious sanctions. Upon a parent's request, school requirements or activities for the student will be modified to accommodate an individual student's religious beliefs;
4. The distribution of religious material to individual students or school groups or at school activities, other than for clearly identified school curriculum purposes, and solicitation for membership in religious groups are not permitted;
5. Neither instructional materials nor required assembly programs shall be used to promote or encourage nonreligion, partisan religion, partisan religious viewpoint, religious groups or partisan religious activities;
6. Religious music as part of a secular program or concert shall be permitted. On occasion, for purposes of performance and not part of any religious service or ceremony, school choruses, bands, orchestras, et cetera, may accept invitations to perform at nonschool religious functions only on condition that any member of the group may be excused at his/her request without penalty;

7. No public school funds shall be used for an intended devotional display or religious symbols such as a Star of David, cross, crucifix, Christmas nativity scene or a Buddhist statue of sacred monkeys;
8. Religious baccalaureate services shall not be a sanctioned school activity. Student representatives of graduating classes desiring to have a baccalaureate service outside school hours may arrange with a clergyperson for his/her services and for suitable facilities. Attendance at any such services should be entirely optional with class members and school personnel acting as private individuals;
9. At parent request, students will be excused from school to participate in official religious holiday observances.

The superintendent will develop administrative procedures for reconciling issues brought forth by a member of the community which center on a perceived violation of this policy.

END OF POLICY

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**Legal Reference(s):**

[ORS 332.107](#)

[ORS 336.035](#)

U.S. CONST. amend. I.

OR. CONST., art. I.