

Religion in the Public Schools

1. Purpose

The teaching of religion is a private concern. It has no place in our educational programs or school-sponsored activities of our public schools. Staff members of the district, while on duty, may neither require nor attempt to persuade anyone to go to or remain away from religious services; they may neither force nor urge anyone to engage in or refrain from religious acts or the profession of religious beliefs or nonbeliefs; they may not give preferential treatment to believers or nonbelievers; they may not reward, punish or discriminate against anyone for profession of religious beliefs or the lack thereof.

2. Religious Objections to Materials

If a student or parent objects on religious grounds to reading, studying, or discussing any instructional material, the teacher will supply an alternative without prejudice to the student.

3. Religious Holidays

The teaching of religion is to be distinguished from teaching factually and objectively about religion. For example, religion is often a factor to be considered in history, art, literature, politics, and music.

Teachers should take particular care to see that the meaning of religious holidays is explained either by invited representatives from the various religious traditions or in accordance with the adherents of those traditions.

Teachers may not celebrate such holidays with religious observances or symbols in the classrooms or as part of any school-related activity. Extreme care must be given to prevent ridicule of any person's religious practices and beliefs.

4. Use of Instructional Materials and Assembly Programs

Neither instructional materials (including films) nor assembly programs will be used to promote or encourage nonreligion, religion, religious viewpoints, religious groups or religious activities.

5. Use of Communication Media

No school communication media will be used to advertise or promote religious devotional activity with the exception of paid advertising in the authorized student newspaper. Student-sponsored religious, philosophical, and political groups may post notices of date, time, place, and purpose of meeting on the board designated for use by school-sponsored clubs.

6. **Class Activities Utilizing Religious Content**

Classroom activities, parties, plays, musical programs, etc. should be evaluated for their general educational and cultural value to all students. The time and effort spent by teachers and students in preparation of these activities should be proportional to the educational value of the activity.

7. **Devotional Display of Religious Symbols**

No public school funds, property, or other facilities will be used, as part of the regular school program, for the devotional display of religious symbols.

8. **Baccalaureate Program**

Students may have a baccalaureate program that is not religious.

9. **Wearing of Religious Garb by School Employees**

Teachers will be judged solely on their professional competence and never on the basis of their religious beliefs, nonbeliefs, or association. No person will be barred from employment as a teacher merely because of membership in a religious group. Wearing of distinctively religious garb by a school employee on school premises during school time is prohibited.

10. **Use of Religious Terminology**

Terminology which does not relate to a particular religion or religious belief should be used in school calendars and school activities, and in the titling and promotion of school activities.

11. **School Activities on Religious Holidays**

Persons who schedule extracurricular activities should be aware of religious holidays in order to seek to avoid conflicts and allow maximum participation by students in all school activities.

12. **Implementation of Policy**

Each building principal will annually devote a portion of a staff meeting to a discussion and clarification of policy regarding religious holidays. This discussion will be held prior to November 1 each year.

A copy of this policy and guidelines relating to religion in the schools will be distributed to all new staff members of the district.

END OF POLICY

Legal Reference(s):

[ORS 332.107](#)

[ORS 336.035](#)

U.S. CONST. amend. I.

OR. CONST., art. I.