

Religion in the Schools

I. Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

It is accepted that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by Dallas School District or its employees, and none should be disparaged. Instead, the School District should utilize its opportunity to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parents/legal guardians, 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 which are contrary to their religious beliefs without penalty.

The School District recognizes that one of its educational goals should be to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritages have played in the social, cultural and historical development of civilization.

II. Rules

A. Observances of Religious Holidays

The practice of the School District shall be as follows:

1. The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and secular basis should be observed in the public schools.
2. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays should be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
3. Music, art, literature and drama having religious themes or bases are permitted and encouraged 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.
4. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, Menorah, crescent, Star of David, creche, symbols of Native American religions or other symbols that are a part of a religious holiday are 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. Among these holidays are included Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah and Thanksgiving.
5. The School District's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.

B. Religion in the Curriculum

Religious institutions and orientations are central to human experience, past and present. They are the basis for much of the accepted moral and ethical behavior of today. The School District recognizes the importance of the religious heritage of America and respects the religious belief of those in the district. 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.

Therefore, the practice of the School District shall be as follows:

1. The District supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.
2. 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.
3. As curriculum and instruction includes theories, views and precepts, they will be represented as such, not as fact.
4. Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme shall be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

C. Traditional Observances

Traditions are a cherished part of the community life and the School District expresses an interest in maintaining those traditions which have had a significance to the community. Such ceremonies should recognize the religious pluralism of the community.

Therefore, the practice of the School District shall be as follows:

1. Because the baccalaureate service is traditionally religious in nature, it should be sponsored by the graduating senior class and the clergy of the community, separate from the Dallas School District. Said service may be held on or in school property, conforming to the current "open public use" policy.
2. A memorial service or like observance should recognize the religious pluralism of the community.

D. Moral and Spiritual Training

The Dallas School District is vitally concerned that teaching of moral and ethical values be part of the fabric of public education. Therefore, the following statutes are included for easy reference:

ORS 339.420 Attendance at religious instruction.

Upon application of the parent/legal guardian of the child, or, if the child has attained the age of majority, upon application of the child, a child attending the public school may be excused from school for periods not exceeding two (2) hours in any week for elementary students and five (5) hours in any week for secondary students to attend weekday schools giving instruction in religion.

ORS 336.067 Instruction in ethics and morality.

1. In public schools special emphasis shall be given to instruction in:
 - a. Honesty, morality, courtesy, obedience to law, respect for the national flag, the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Oregon, respect for parents/legal guardians and the home, the dignity and necessity of

honest labor and other lessons which tend to, promote and develop an upright and desirable citizenry.

- b. Respect for all humans, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, age, gender or disability. Acknowledgment, of the dignity and worth of individuals and groups and their participative roles in society.
 - c. Humane treatment of animals.
 - d. The effects of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and controlled substances upon the human system.
2. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall prepare an outline with suggestions which will best accomplish the purpose of this section, and shall incorporate the outline in the courses of study for all public schools.

END OF POLICY

Legal Reference(s):

[ORS 336.067](#)

[ORS 339.420](#)