

Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

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 (Hanukkah, Christmas, Passover, St. Patrick's Day, 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 classrooms or otherwise.
2. Instruction in morality, ethics and values is encouraged; however, instruction shall not resort to partisan religious sanctions.
3. Bible reading for historical or literary instructional purposes is encouraged; however, where attendance is mandatory, Bible reading may not be used for devotional purposes or to influence religious beliefs. The distribution to individual students on school property of New or Old Testaments, Bibles or any other religious literature (other than for clearly identified school curriculum purposes) cannot legally be permitted according to opinion of the Attorney General. Recitations of prayers in classes also cannot be legally required or sponsored by school officials.
4. Neither instructional materials (including films) nor required assembly programs shall be used to promote or encourage nonreligion, partisan religion, partisan religious viewpoints, religious groups or partisan religious activities.
5. Religious music as part of a secular program or concert shall be permitted. 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 request without penalty.
6. No public school funds shall be used for an intended devotional display or religious symbols such as Star of David, cross, crucifix, Christmas nativity scene or a Buddhist statue of sacred monkeys.
7. Religious baccalaureate services shall not be a required school activity. Student representatives of graduating classes desiring to have a baccalaureate service outside school hours may arrange for the services of clergy and for suitable facilities. Attendance at any such services should be entirely optional with class members and school personnel acting as private individuals.
8. Pupil's religious beliefs shall be honored by excusing them without penalty at their parent's request from school attendance on their own official religious holidays. Also, upon a parent's request, school requirements will be modified to accommodate an individual pupil's religious beliefs.
9. Teachers shall be judged solely on their professional competence and not on the basis of their religious beliefs, nonbeliefs or associations. No person shall be barred from employment as a teacher merely because of membership in a religious group. However, no distinctively religious garb may be worn while teaching in a public school.