

Teaching about Religion

Religious instruction is a private concern. The schools shall not aid one religion, aid all religions, prefer one religion or no religion above another, or prefer nonbelievers to believers. Public schools cannot require or influence a person to go to, or remain away from, religious services; they cannot reward, punish, or discriminate against anyone for profession or religious beliefs, disbeliefs, or no beliefs. While the schools must remain neutral regarding religion, they should foster respect for each individual's conviction about religion and an understanding and respect for religions in general.

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, 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. Instruction in morality, ethics, and values is required; however, instruction shall not resort in partisan religious sanctions.
3. Bible reading for historical or literary instruction purposes is permitted; 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 other than for clearly identified school curriculum purposes, cannot legally be permitted. Recitations of prayers in classes also cannot be required or sponsored by school officials.
4. Neither instructional materials (including films) nor required assembly programs shall be used to promote or encourage non-religion, 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 non-school 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 a Star of David, cross, crucifix, Christmas nativity scene, or a Buddhist statue of sacred monkeys.
7. Religious baccalaureate services shall not be required school activity. Student representatives of graduating classes desiring to have a baccalaureate service outside school hours may arrange with a clergyman for his services and for suitable facilities. Attendance at any such service should be entirely optional with class members and school personnel acting as private individuals.

8. A pupil's religious beliefs shall be honored by excusing him without penalty at his parent's request from school attendance on his own official religious holidays. Also, upon a parent's request, school requirements or activities will be modified to accommodate an individual pupil's religious beliefs.
9. Students enrolled in private or parochial schools, where the school is on or near the bus route designated by the Board of Education, shall be provided the same transportation as provided for students attending public school.
10. 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 garbs maybe worn while teaching in a public school.
11. Teachers shall be permitted to expose students to information concerning religious and religious beliefs, but teachers shall not advocate, openly or covertly or by subtlety, a particular religion or religious belief.

END OF POLICY

Legal Reference(s):

[ORS 332.107](#)

[ORS 336.035](#)

U.S. CONST. amend. I.

OR. CONST., art. I.