

Public School Practices and Procedures

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, St. Patrick's Day, Good Friday, etc.) as viewed by religion's adherents and others, but they may not recognize such holidays with religious observances of symbols in the classroom or otherwise.
2. 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 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.
3. 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.
4. Religious music as part of a secular program or concert shall be permitted. School choruses, bands, orchestras, etc., 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.
5. 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.
6. 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 with a clergyman for his/her services and for suitable facilities. Attendance at any such service should be entirely optional with class members and school personnel acting as private individuals.