Sacramento City USD

Board Policy

Recognition Of Religious Beliefs And Customs

BP 6141.2
Instruction

The Governing Board recognizes that students' education would be incomplete without an understanding of the role of religion in history. It is both proper and important for teachers to objectively discuss the influences of various religions, using religious works and symbols to illustrate their relationship with society, literature or the arts. The Board expects that such instruction will identify principles common to all religions and foster respect for the multiple creeds practiced by the peoples of the world.

In order to respect each student's individual right to freedom of religious practice, religious indoctrination is clearly forbidden in the public schools. Instruction about religion must not favor, promote or demean the beliefs or customs of any particular religion or sect. Staff shall be highly sensitive to its obligation not to interfere with the religious development of any student in whatever tradition the student embraces.

Staff shall not endorse, encourage or solicit religious or anti-religious expression or activities among students. They shall not lead students in prayer or participate in student-initiated prayer. However, staff shall not prohibit or discourage any student from praying or otherwise expressing his/her religious belief as long as this does not disrupt the classroom.

Students may express their beliefs about religion in their homework, artwork and other written and oral reports if the expression is germane to the assignment. Such work shall be judged by ordinary academic standards, free of discrimination based on religious content.

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression: Publications Code)
(cf. 6144 - Controversial Issues)
(cf. 6145.5 - Student Organizations and Equal Access)

Religious Holidays

Whereas teaching about religious holidays is a permissible part of the educational program, celebrating religious holidays is not allowed in the public schools. School-sponsored programs shall not be, nor have the effect of being, religiously oriented or a religious celebration.

(cf. 5113 - Absences and Excuses)

School and classroom decorations may express seasonal themes that are not religious in nature.

Legal Reference:
EDUCATION CODE
51240 Excuse from health instruction and family life and sex education due to religious belief
51511 Religious matters properly included in courses of study
UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20
6061 School prayer
Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971) 403 U.S. 602
Walleye v. Gaffer (1985) 472 U.S. 38

Management Resources:
"Religion in the Public Schools: A Joint Statement of Current Law," April 1995
"Religious Expression in Public Schools," United States Department of Education, August 1995

Policy SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
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