

Commitment to Religious Neutrality

Religious activities of students

Individual students may engage in private, quiet religious activities so long as the conduct is not disruptive. This does not include the right to have a captive audience listen or compel other students to participate. Students may speak to their peers about religious topics just as they do with regard to political topics. Teachers and administrators should ensure that no student is in any way coerced to participate in religious activity. Student speech that constitutes harassment aimed at a student or group of students shall not be allowed.

Religious activities of staff

Staff members, including teachers and administrators, when present on school premises, when attending school sponsored events, or when otherwise acting in their capacity as school district employees, are representatives of the state and as such are prohibited from soliciting or encouraging religious activities, participating in religious activities with students, discouraging an activity because of religious content, or soliciting or encouraging anti-religious activities. The prohibitions set forth above do not apply to staff members when they are not acting as an employee of the district or when they are attending non-school sponsored events, regardless of where such events are held.

Teaching about religion

Public schools may not provide religious instruction. However, objective teaching about religion is permitted. The following may be taught about religion: the history of religion, comparative religion and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries. It is also permissible to teach religious influences in art, music, literature and social studies. Public schools may teach about religious holidays, including their religious aspects, and may celebrate the secular aspects of holidays. Schools may not observe holidays as religious events or promote such observance by students. In teaching about religion, teachers are prohibited from promoting, criticizing or ridiculing a religion.

Homework or coursework

Students may express their beliefs about religion in the form of homework, artwork and other written and oral expression. Such homework and classroom work should be judged by academic standards of substance and relevance and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school.

Approved by the Board: December, 2005

