

RELIGION IN THE CURRICULUM

As a public entity, the District must comply with the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment requirement that the District neither establish religion in the schools nor prohibit students' free exercise of religion according to pertinent interpretation and application of those Constitutional provisions by the Courts. Accordingly, no Board of Education employee will promote religion in the classroom or in the District's curriculum, or compel or pressure any student to participate in devotional exercises. Displays of a religious character must conform with Policy 8800. Instructional activities shall not be permitted to advance or inhibit any particular religion or religion generally. Teachers shall forward requests for religious accommodation in instruction to the Principal.

~~The Board of Education believes that a~~ An understanding of religions and their effects on civilization is essential to the thorough education of young people and to their appreciation of a pluralistic society. To that end, curriculum may include, as appropriate to the various ages and attainments of the students, instruction about the religions of the world.

The Board acknowledges the degree to which a religious consciousness has permeated the arts, literature, music, and issues of morality. The instructional and resource materials approved for use in the District schools frequently contain religious references or concern moral issues that have traditionally been the focus of religious concern. That such materials may be religious in nature shall not, by itself, bar their use by the District. The Board directs that professional staff members employing such materials be neutral in their approach and avoid using them to advance or inhibit religion in any way.

The Board recognizes that religious traditions vary in their perceptions and doctrines regarding the natural world and its processes. The curriculum is chosen for its place in the education of the District's students, not for its conformity to religious principles. Students should receive unbiased instruction in the schools, so they may privately accept or reject the knowledge thus gained, in accordance with their own religious tenets ***if any.***

Accordingly, no student shall be exempted from ~~attendance in a required~~ ***completion of a required*** course of study on the grounds that the ***components of the*** instruction therein ~~interferes~~ ***interfere*** with the free exercise of his/her religion. ***However, if after careful personal review of the program's lessons and/or materials, a parent indicates to the school that either the content or activities conflict with his/her religious beliefs or value system, the school will honor a written request for his/her child to be excused from a particular***

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class period (s) for specified reasons. The student will be provided with alternate learning activities during the times of such parent requested absence.

No classroom teacher shall be prohibited from providing reasonable periods of time for activities of a moral, philosophical, or patriotic theme. No student shall be required to participate in such activities if they are contrary to the religious convictions of the student or his/her parents or guardians.

In accordance with the Silent Reflection and Student Prayer Act, each teacher in charge of a classroom shall observe a brief period of silence with the participation of all the students in the classroom at the beginning of each school day. Note that this period shall not be conducted as a religious exercise, but it shall be an opportunity for the silent prayer or reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.

~~The Superintendent shall prepare administrative guidelines which ensure that students are not influenced to accept a particular religious belief or point of view.~~

The District's instructional materials shall not be designed to influence students to accept or reject a particular religious belief or point of view and the Superintendent (or designee) shall prepare administrative guidelines to that effect.

Complaints by students or the public regarding any such course of study will be handled in accordance with Board Policy 9130.

20 U.S.C. Section 7904, U.S. Constitutional Amendment 1
105 ILC 20/0.01 et seq.

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To Policy Committee on 5/26/2015 O'Neil