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Revised Policy - Vol. 38, No. 2

8800 - RELIGIOUS/PATRIOTIC CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES

RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES

The Board of Education acknowledges that the U.S. Constitution prohibits it from adopting any policy or rule promoting or establishing a religion or any policy that unlawfully restricts any person's free exercise of the individual right to free exercise of religion enjoyed by all persons. Within the confines of this legal framework, the Board adopts the following policy to address the scope of these rights and the District's authority within its own facilities or during events. Decisions of the United States Supreme Court have made it clear that it is not the province of a public school to advance or inhibit religious beliefs or practices. Under the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution, this remains the inviolate province of the individual and the church of his/her choice. The rights of any minority, no matter how small, must be protected. No matter how well intended, either official or unofficial sponsorship of religiously oriented activities by the school are offensive to some and tend to supplant activities which should be the exclusive province of individual religious groups, churches, private organizations, or the family.

As public employees, while on duty and acting within the scope of employment or pursuant to official duties, District staff members shall not use prayer, religious readings, or religious symbols as a devotional exercise or in an act of worship or celebration. Staff are expected to avoid circumstances where the staff member's expression of religious views could be reasonably construed as an endorsement or approval of the message by the school or District. Nothing in this policy or its application shall serve to prohibit or interfere with any staff member's free exercise of their religious views in circumstances not covered by this policy. The District shall not function as a disseminating agent for any person or outside agency for any religious or anti-religious document, book, or article. Distribution of such materials on District property by any party shall be in accordance with Policy 7510 - Use of School Facilities and AG 7510A - Use of District Facilities and Policy 9700 - Relations with Special Interest Groups.

Nothing in this policy prohibits teaching about various religions and religious practices in a manner consistent with any adopted District course curriculum. This instruction may include discussion of religious holidays and customs in a manner related to the curriculum that does not give the appearance of an endorsement of one religion over other religions or favoring either a system or religious beliefs or of other beliefs, such as atheism or agnosticism. Observance of religious holidays through devotional exercises or acts of worship is also prohibited.

Distribution of any outside organization's materials, including a request by any person wishing to facilitate dissemination of materials on District property, may make a request in accordance with Policy 7510 and AG 7510A - Use of District Facilities and Policy 9700 - Relations with Non-School Affiliated Groups and AG 9700A - Distribution of Materials to Students.

Students are not prohibited by this policy. The Board acknowledges that it is prohibited from adopting any policy or any guideline promulgated pursuant to this policy, from engaging in rule respecting or promoting an establishment of religion or prohibiting any person from the free, individual, and voluntary exercise or expression of the individual's/person's religious beliefs. However, such exercise or expression may be limited to lunch periods or other non-instructional time periods when individuals are free to associate, or on an individual basis in a manner that does not disrupt the educational process.

~~Observance of religious holidays through devotional exercises or acts of worship is also prohibited. Acknowledgement of, explanation of, and teaching about religious holidays of various religions is encouraged.~~ Celebration activities involving nonreligious decorations and use of secular works are permitted, but it is the responsibility of all faculty members to ensure that such activities are strictly voluntary, do not place an atmosphere of social compulsion or ostracism on ~~minority~~ groups or individuals, and do not interfere with the regular school program.

~~[]~~ The Board shall not conduct or sanction a baccalaureate service in conjunction with graduation ceremonies.

~~[]~~ The Board shall not include religious invocations, benedictions, or formal prayer at any school-sponsored event.

PATRIOTIC ACTIVITIES AND OBSERVANCES~~The United States Flag and Pledge of Allegiance~~

The flag of the United States shall be raised above each public school building operated by the District at all times during school hours, weather permitting. This flag shall measure at least ~~four (4)~~4 feet ~~two (2)~~2 inches by ~~eight (8)~~8 feet. A United States flag shall also be displayed in every classroom or other instructional site in which students recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

All students in attendance at school will be provided an opportunity to recite the Pledge each day that school is in session. However, no student shall be compelled to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. No student shall be penalized for failure to participate in the Pledge and the professional staff shall protect any such students from bullying as a result of their not participating in the Pledge.

The building principal or administrator shall be responsible for determining the appropriate time and manner for reciting the Pledge, with due regard to the need to protect the rights and the privacy of a nonparticipating student.

X] The District may offer students and staff a Moment of Silence to commemorate a significant event that has a significant impact on the community. The decision to offer a moment of silence shall be the building principal's and/or the Superintendent's decision. No moment of silence shall be described by school officials with reference to religious symbolism or activity. **[END OF OPTION]**

M.C.L. ~~2.91~~, 380.1347, 380.1347a, 380.1565

20 U.S.C. 4071 et seq.

~~29 C.F.R. 1910.1030~~

Gregoire vs. Centennial School District 907 F2d 1366, (3rd Circuit, 1990)

Lee vs. Weisman, 112 S. Ct 2649, 120 L. Ed. 2d 467 (1992)

**[Cross Reference
po8805]**

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Cross References po8805 - FLAGS AND DISPLAYS

Last Modified by Amy Manchester on April 26, 2024