

Board Policy Document

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Series 600

Policy Title: Religion

Code Number: AR681

Teaching about religion when related to course objectives is essential to a quality educational program.

Respect for various religious beliefs is a cornerstone of a pluralistic, democratic society. The policy on religion in the curriculum should be implemented through the District's educational programs and activities in such a way that:

1. The approach to religion shall be one of instruction rather than indoctrination.
2. Students may be exposed to religious views, but no particular view shall be imposed or discouraged or given greater credence or preference over non-religion.
3. Sensitivity shall be shown for the religious beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of all students. No student shall be required to read religious books contrary to the wishes of the child's parent or guardian.
4. Students shall not be singled out nor identified on the basis of religion.
5. No student will be required to enroll in health or physical education courses if a parent or guardian files a written statement with the school principal to the effect that the course conflicts with the pupil's religious beliefs.

First Adoption: February 14, 1995
Revision Adoption: December 17, 1996/February 27, 2001
Legal Reference: Iowa Code Section 256.11(6)
Iowa Code Section 280.6

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The following procedures shall be applied:

1. Curricula shall include appropriate objectives regarding the role religion has played in the development of various cultures, including such areas as the fine arts, customs, traditions, and values. Instruction must be objective and nonjudgmental.
2. The adequacy and appropriateness of instructional material in all areas of the curriculum relative to the role of religion shall be reviewed. Special care should be exercised in the areas of language arts, social studies, art, and music. When adequate course materials are not available, supplementary teaching materials shall be developed and made available to teaching personnel. Appropriate instructional materials should not be deleted because religious sensitivities might be offended. The decision to include or exclude must be based on secular, educational, rather than religious reasons.
3. Attention shall be given to the developmental differences between elementary and secondary students in the selection of course objectives and instructional materials.
4. Music selected for study must focus on course objectives and be chosen for musical rather than religious value. A school music program should not have the appearance of a religious celebration. Religious music may be a part of a music program, but the total effect must be non-religious.
5. The production or sponsorship of a religious program, celebration, or drama by the District, on or off school property, is not allowed. School-sponsored worship ceremonies of any kind are not permitted.
6. The display of religious symbols by the school, school officials, or school employees, for other than instructional purposes is prohibited. Religious symbols include but are not limited to any object for worship; crosses, crucifixes, cult symbols, Islamic Crescents, menorahs, nativity scenes, Stars of David, trees with religious symbols.

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7. The responsibility for the implementation of this policy and related staff training rests with the Educational Equity Office.

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