

# Policy

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
HORTONVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## RELIGION IN THE CURRICULUM

It is accepted that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the School District or its employees, and none should be disparaged. Instead, the School district shall encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views.

The Hortonville Area School District must comply with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

### **Implementation:**

#### Religion in the Curriculum

Teaching about the world religions is educationally valuable when: it is part of an approved curriculum; it does not give preferential or derogator treatment to religion in general or to any single religion; and it does not constitute a religious practice. References can be made to the various world religions as follows:

- A. To make students aware of the various religions; not acceptance of any one religion.
- B. To inform students about various beliefs; not to conform to any one belief.
- C. To educate students; not to convert them.
- D. To instruct students; not to indoctrinate them.
- E. To expose students to the various religious views; not to impose any particular view.

The following activities are permitted as long as they do not take on the character of religious devotions:

- A. Writing or analyzing literature on religious subjects.
- B. Performing drama that deals with religious history or is religious in content.
- C. Producing or exhibiting art work dealing with religious themes.
- D. Playing, singing and presenting music that is religious in its content providing it is done in a non-devotional manner and presented to enhance its musical value only.
- E. Studies of the contributions made by religion to civilization.
- F. Singing of anthems or conducting studies of historical documents which contain reference to God.

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The Board acknowledges the degree to which religion often is incorporated into certain aspects of the arts, literature, music, and issues of morality. The instructional and resource materials approved for use in the District schools sometimes contain religious references or concern moral issues that have traditionally been the focus of religious concern. That such materials may contain such references, or may concern such issues, 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.

## Ceremonies and Observances

The School District recognizes that it is important to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural and historical development of civilization. The following guidelines provide school personnel with framework by which religious holidays can be incorporated into personnel with framework by which religious holidays can be incorporated into the school program within the limitation of the First Amendment.

- A. The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and secular basis may be observed in the School District providing they do not promote any one religion.
- B. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays must be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- C. Music, art, literature and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of cultural and religious heritage of that particular holiday.
- D. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent star of David, crèche, or other symbols that are part of a religious holiday are permitted as teaching resources provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature.
- E. The School District's calendar may be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.

## Nonparticipation Provision

The School District recognizes the need to foster understanding and mutual respect among students, parents and school personnel, whether it involves race, culture, economic background or religious beliefs. In that spirit of tolerance, students and staff members should be excused from participating in practices which are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it.

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Parent requests to excuse the student is required and written documentation from the pastor of the church can also be required. Students choosing not to participate in practices contrary to their religious beliefs may not be penalized in any manner. They should be given appropriate alternative educational activities.

This policy is subject to changes in law.

Complaints by students or the public regarding any such course of study will be handled in accordance with Board Policy #9130 – Public Requests, Suggestions, or Complaints.

See Reference: Policy #8800 Religious Beliefs, Customs, Ceremonies, and Observances

Legal References:

U.S. Constitutional Amendment 1