

RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS

Instructional programs may include references to religion and may use religious literature, art, music or symbols to illustrate the subject matter being taught. Such instruction should be designed to broaden student understanding of social and cultural history and extend tolerance for the multiple ways of life practiced by the peoples of the world. Instruction about religious holidays shall be carefully tied to these educational objectives.

Factual and objective teaching about religion must be distinguished from religious indoctrination, which is clearly forbidden in public schools. The schools may teach about religion from a historical, cultural, sociological, or other educational perspective, but must not favor the beliefs and customs of any particular religion or sect over any others in such teaching.

Staff shall be sensitive to its obligation not to interfere with the philosophical/religious development of each student in whatever tradition the student embraces. School-sponsored programs should not be, nor have the effect of being, religiously oriented or a religious celebration.

Instruction which is contrary to a student's religious beliefs and teachings may be optional for that student who shall be excused upon written request of the parent or guardian, in accordance with the Education Code or at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee.

The Governing Board recognizes that holidays demonstrate the diversity and rich heritage of our community members. Classroom decorations and costumes may express seasonal themes that are not religious in nature.

Students may be released for religious instruction under the following conditions:

1. Students shall be permitted to be absent from school to participate in religious exercises or to receive moral and religious instruction.
2. Each pupil so participating shall attend school for a period equaling at least the minimum school day for their particular grade.
3. Each pupil shall not be excused for religious exercises or instruction for more than one hour per day and for no more than four days per school month.
4. The religious institution shall assume full responsibility for students while under their charge.
5. The religious institution shall call for the students at the school of attendance and shall return them to the school at the conclusion of the exercise of instruction.

RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS (continued)

6. Religious instruction and exercises shall not take place on school property.
7. Prior consent of parents shall be received.

(cf. 5113 - Absences and Excuses)
(cf. 6144 - Controversial Issues)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

51240 Excuse from health instruction and family life and sex education due to religious belief
51511 Religious matters properly included in courses of study