



IMDC - RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND DISPLAYS/TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION

It is the concern of the District that students, staff, families, and others in the community achieve a mutual understanding and respect for the various religious and cultural groups. The diversity of religions and cultures constitutes one of the great strengths in our schools and community. The District is committed to upholding an inclusive culture where students and staff can represent their authentic selves. As expressed in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, everyone in the United States has the right to practice their own religion, or no religion at all. The District also recognizes its responsibility to make reasonable accommodations for students' religious observances, while neither promoting one religion over another nor preferring religion over non-religion.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The District will remain religiously neutral. The District will avoid the promotion of any specific religion and will guard against deliberate or inadvertent preference for any religion or religion over non-religion. As such, schools, departments, and staff must adhere to the following:

1. No religious or worship services may be organized or conducted by the District, schools, departments, or District staff.
2. Religious exhibits or displays may be shown only as an integral part of some curricular area such as art, music, history, or literature for informational purposes and with no intent to indoctrinate.
3. Religious music may be presented for its historical, cultural, or academic value as it relates to a unit of study, but not as part of a devotional exercise, service, or celebration.
4. A specific religion, or religious over non-religious belief, must not be advanced or disparaged in school ceremonies, celebrations, or observances. No form of religious indoctrination or exercise, including prayers, may be conducted by the District or its staff. Staff should consider whether the presentation would prevent a sense of inclusion or belonging to non-adherents.
5. Staff groups are not to use school facilities for purposes of group prayer, testimony or worship, except in their capacity as private citizens during non-school hours pursuant to District Policy KG (Use of District Facilities).

SCHEDULING

Major religious observances as identified on the District's multicultural calendar must be taken into consideration when scheduling school activities, extracurricular events, tests and assignments, field trips, and other events.

School and Grade-Wide Events

Schools will avoid scheduling important events that by their nature cannot be made up, such as picture day, open house, prom, or graduation, on days that conflict with major religious observances that may impact student attendance or participation. Such events may be scheduled on major religious observances only if such scheduling is reasonably necessary to carry out the proper functioning of a school program or course of study, or to avoid an unreasonable burden on other students, or if such scheduling is outside the control of school staff.

Tests and Assignments

To the greatest extent possible, schools will avoid scheduling tests or deadlines for major assignments on days that conflict with major religious observances. If scheduling a test or deadline on a major religious observance is unavoidable, staff will inform students and parents of such plans as far in advance as possible so accommodations may be provided as needed.

Field Trips, Co-Curricular, and Extra-Curricular Activities

When scheduling other special events such as field trips, tryouts, plays, concerts and major co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, schools will consider the potential for students to experience conflicts due to a religious observance. Staff will inform students and parents of plans as far in advance as possible, so that conflicts with religious observances can be avoided, if possible to do so without making unfair demands on programs or other students, and otherwise accommodated if not.

District administrator approval is required to schedule a field trip or a major co-curricular or extra-curricular activity on a major religious observance when scheduling is within the control of the school or District.

ACCOMMODATION

When conflicts arise between student's religious observances and the school's schedule of classes or activities, the religious observance takes precedence. Any student unable to attend classes on a particular day for a religious observance will be excused from attendance requirements for the day. No such absence will be counted against a student in determining exclusion, failure, or reduction of grades.

Teachers shall provide students a meaningful opportunity and reasonable time to make up missed classwork, tests, quizzes, and final exam reviews, and to complete homework due on that day or the following school day. Make-up opportunities will not be required of a student on the school day immediately after a student is absent from school due to a religious observance.

INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

Instruction should include the understanding of religions and cultures and their similarities, diversities, histories, and contributions. Such teaching should be factual, and any doctrinal impact should be avoided.

Instruction should acknowledge the multicultural society. Focus should be on the similarities and differences of religions and cultures without treating differences as novelties or engaging in cultural appropriation. Students may be invited to share their individual experiences but should not be asked or expected to represent a group or protected class unless they are comfortable doing so.

The District should work to bring about better religious and cultural understanding while maintaining neutrality. The director of teaching and learning, the director of curriculum, and the director of language, culture and equity will provide assistance with religious and cultural education. Above all, a meaningful effort toward achieving a sensitive understanding of people regardless of religion, culture, or race demands a dedication of each individual to that end.

COMMUNICATION

The superintendent will prepare and maintain an administrative guideline to implement this policy, including a list of major religious observances, which will be communicated to all District staff. School staff will be informed at least annually of dates of major religious observance, the observance of which may impact student attendance or participation.

Families will be informed annually about this policy and their student's right to request a religious accommodation. Information including a list of major religious observances will be made available on the District website. Parents are encouraged to communicate their student's need for religious accommodation to the school.

The superintendent shall reconsider the scope of this policy if the total number of school days identified as major religious observances is likely to impose an unreasonable burden on the District or schools' ability to schedule important school events.

Current practice codified: 1994

Adopted: May 22, 1995

Revised: June 10, 1996

Revised by Superintendent: May 26, 2022

CROSS REFS:

JH/JHB, Student Attendance/Truancy

IMDC-R, Teaching About Religion/Religion In Schools

KF, Use of District Facilities