

## **Instruction**

### **School Ceremonies and Observances**

#### **Silent Meditation**

The Board directs that the administration shall provide for students and teachers the opportunity to observe an appropriate period of time for silent meditation at the beginning of each school day.

As required by the No Child Left Behind Act, the Superintendent will, by October 1 of each year, certify in writing to the state that students of the District are not prevented by policy or rule from participating in constitutionally protected prayer. The Superintendent will ensure that the staff, parents/guardians and students are made aware of the parameters of acceptable religious speech and actions. The Superintendent will also distribute guidelines to each school concerning religion in the schools, after such guidelines/regulations have been approved by the Board attorney and reviewed by the Board.

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Each school within the district shall provide time each school day for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Such recitation is voluntary. If, because of some personal philosophy or belief, a student has made the personal decision not to recite the "Pledge," he/she may choose to remain seated and silent. Students may wish to use this time to reflect on their belief or remember loved ones. In any event, all students must be courteous and respectful of the beliefs of others. Non-participants are expected to maintain order and decision appropriate to the school environment.

#### **United States Flag**

The Flag of the United States of America shall be raised above each schoolhouse and at other appropriate places during all school sessions, weather permitting, and on the inside of the schoolhouse on other school days. The Flag shall be raised before the opening of school and taken down at its close every day.

The United States Flag shall be displayed in each schoolroom each day school is in session.

Legal Reference:        Connecticut General Statutes  
                                  10-16a Silent meditation.  
                                  10-29a Certain days to be proclaimed by governor. Distribution and number  
                                  of proclamations  
                                  10-230 Flags for schoolrooms and schools  
                                  PA 02-119, An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools and  
                                  Concerning the Pledge of Allegiance  
                                  No Child Left Behind Act

Policy adopted:        May 11, 2004

HAMDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
 Hamden, Connecticut

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### **Ceremonies and Observances**

#### **Separation of Church and State**

#### **Salute to the Flag and the Star Spangled Banner**

Time shall be provided daily, preferably during the morning opening exercises, to provide the opportunity for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Permissive language rather than mandatory language, shall be used to introduce the recitation of the Pledge, such as, "You may now stand to recite the Pledge, or, You are invited to participate in the recitation of the Pledge."

If, because of some personal philosophy or belief, a student has made the personal, serious decision not to salute the Flag or stand for the "Star Spangled Banner," he/she may choose to remain seated and silent. Students may wish to use this time to reflect on their belief or remember loved ones. In any event, all students must be courteous and respectful of the beliefs of others.

#### **Jewish Holy Days**

The Principal is responsible for making sure that teachers refrain from administering tests and quizzes when Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur fall on school days. If possible, major school functions should not be scheduled on Friday evenings prior to Jewish holy days. Students of the Jewish faith will be excused without penalty on Jewish holy days.

#### **Recognition of Religious Holidays**

The recognition of holidays of different religions presents a natural and convenient opportunity for providing learning experiences to develop understanding, appreciation and respect for religious diversity.

1. The holidays to be recognized must be representative of the diverse religions of the world, not just Christianity and Judaism, and must be of historical and cultural significance to the religions they represent.
2. All religions must be treated with equal dignity, in a context based upon the premise that the time and resources devoted to the recognition of religious holidays be a very small part of that devoted to the total educational program.
3. All religions whose holidays are recognized must be afforded equal respect; none, as well as the right to disbelieve, shall be advanced or disparaged.
4. Recognition of religious holidays must be a secular education experience directed solely to enhancing tolerance of and respect for religious diversity and must be developmentally and age-appropriate, accurate in content, and objective in presentation.

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#### **Separation of Church and State**

#### **Salute to the Flag and the Star Spangled Banner** (continued)

5. All programs and materials used for recognizing religious holidays must support curriculum objectives.
6. All programs and materials used must neither promote nor inhibit any ethnic, religious, or racial views.
7. All programs and materials used for recognizing religious holidays must be sensitive to the needs of the various backgrounds of the students.
8. Decorations that are a part of the custom and folklore of a religious holiday, that have no direct religious meaning or bearing (e.g., menorah, Christmas tree) may be displayed. Christmas trees must be secularly decorated and may be displayed.
9. Performance in the arts that recognize religious holidays must be for artistic reasons, not religious. The design and total effect of a performance must adhere to this purpose. How this will be accomplished should be explained prior to the performance taking place.
10. Musical concerts may include sacred music and traditional music of a religious holiday provided they are balanced with solutions that reflect the customs and folklore as well as festive and seasonal characteristics associated with the holiday. Religious music must not predominate although this may not be possible where major works are programmed at the high school.
11. Parents shall have the right to have their children excluded from any classroom or school program involving the recognition of religious holidays. This request must be made in writing to the Building Principal.

It is also necessary to be mindful of the Constitutional requirement of the separation of church and state. However, if a display conveys a secular recognition of different traditions for celebrating the winter holiday season, it may be appropriate (e.g., a creche alone is unconstitutional, but a multi-tradition display combining a creche, tree, menorah, etc., with information about the items displayed, without promoting them, may be constitutional). In short, the displays must involve an educational purpose.

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### **Federally Required Guidelines**

Students have the following rights pursuant to federal law:

- To engage in private, non-disruptive activity such as prayer or bible reading while at school;
- Participation in before or after school events that have a religious content;
- To study about religion when appropriate to the curriculum;
- To produce written expressions of religious beliefs in homework, art work, and other assignments;
- To distribute in a non-disruptive manner, subject to reasonable restrictions as to time, place, and manner, religious literature;
- To be excused for religious reasons from participation in school programs or activities;
- To be granted release time to attend religious events;
- To wear clothing that includes a non disruptive religious theme or message;
- To be given access to school media to announce religious events in the same manner as other organizations;

To be granted access to school facilities for religious activities in the same manner as other organizations.