

## **Instruction**

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

Since religious institutions and diverse beliefs have been a force in shaping human experience, past and present, awareness of these significant forces is part of a complete education. It is essential that the teaching about -- not of -- religion be conducted in a factual, objective and respectful manner.

Therefore, the practice of the schools will be to:

1. Emphasize that religious themes in the arts, literature, and history, both in curriculum and school activities, be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. The curriculum should address a diversity of religions, using materials reflecting secular educational values. Studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious or non-religious beliefs;
2. Recognize the age and developmental difference of students and accommodate these variances in instructional approach;
3. Ensure that the expenditure of school time, money, and materials for this area of the curriculum be kept to a minimum;
4. Provide training for teachers in both the substantive content to be taught and in methods of teaching to ensure the transmission of accurate information, a sensitive approach, and consistency throughout the district;
5. Ensure that teachers preview any material presented in their classroom for compliance with these guidelines;
6. Provide a process for students to be excused from this instruction if their parents so desire. Students of appropriate maturity should be able to excuse themselves. A student who is excused should be given reasonable alternative accommodations and materials to work on that are of educational benefit. To the degree possible, alternative studies should deal with the subject of pluralism and diversity. The curriculum, however, should be such as to minimize the need for such requests.
7. Provide training for administration and teachers in dealing with excuses and absences for religious reasons.

## **Instruction**

### **Separation of Church and State** (continued)

8. Provide an instructional atmosphere which would not require students to reveal their personal beliefs but which would allow them to express those beliefs of their own volition.

Since holiday recognition is an opportunity to expand learning opportunities about the diversity and variety of religious traditions, it will further be the practice of public schools to:

1. Ensure that recognition of religious holidays be a valid objective educational experience and comply with curriculum guidelines.
2. Ensure that classroom discussions and other activities concerning religious holidays are accurate in content, objectively presented to foster understanding and respect, and carefully limited so as to avoid the excessive or unproductive use of school time.
3. Ensure that religious holiday themes and symbols not be utilized as the instructional content in unrelated curriculum areas.
4. Prepare the district's calendar so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths. Examinations or important school events will not be scheduled on days when students may be absent for religious observances.