

LEARNING/INSTRUCTIONGuidelines on Observances of Religious Holidays

The Minneapolis Public Schools have an important responsibility to fulfill during religious holiday seasons. Providing essential and general background and promoting understanding must be seen as a part of this responsibility.

Programs designed to illustrate the history and universal significance of these religious holidays are viewed as an essential element in the educational process. The history of this nation is inextricably intertwined with religion and to overlook this fact would leave the student in a vacuum.

1. In keeping with the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, the right of the individual to practice the religion of choice shall be rigidly protected in the Minneapolis Public Schools. No ceremonies with a religious or sectarian theme will be included in the instructional program of the schools.
2. It is appropriate that each school provide well-planned and meaningful learning experiences which can create better understanding of the religious holidays occurring at that particular time of year.
3. It should be kept in mind that the observance of any religious holiday or the maintenance and furtherance of any religion is not the responsibility of the public school system. According to rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court, religious observances sponsored by public schools constitute a violation of the American principle of separation of church and state. Public school time, facilities, funds or personnel, according to these decisions, should not be utilized for religious observances during the defined school day.
4. Every attempt should be made for music, drama, and other school activities during school hours to be of a secular rather than a sacred nature. An individual's own religious convictions must be respected.
 - a. Christmas Day, for example, is a legal holiday under both state and federal law, but it is also a sacred day for Christians. It is not a sacred day for Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus, Shintoists, Jews, or other religious sects or non-religious groups.
 - b. The display of religious symbols in the public schools, except as an integral part of objective study, also contravenes the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state.
 - c. Religious music may be used as a part of a study of the world's diverse religions, but not as a form of observance of a religious holiday. It shall be the responsibility of the music

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instructor, when using religious music, to incorporate music in the curriculum from all religions of the world. Students in music classes, through their musical training and experience, should learn to understand and respect the music of people of diverse religions and races.

- d. In light of the above guidelines forbidding commemoration of religious holidays during school time, compulsory attendance or participation in after school commemorations of religious holidays (i.e., Christmas concerts given at night or outside the school) shall not be used as a requirement or grading criteria for any class in the Minneapolis Public Schools.
5. The recognition of religious holidays in the public schools must be carefully planned to reflect considered concern for the education of children in a religiously diverse school and society. Appropriate themes should be used to strengthen good will and mutual respect and understanding for all racial and religious groups attending the public schools. Programs should be extended to understanding other people living in other parts of the world of different colors and creeds throughout the year.

Related Reference: See Regulation 6250 B

Regulation
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By Deputy Superintendent
Minneapolis, Minnesota