

Religion in the Classroom

The Minneapolis Public Schools endorses the position of the U.S. Supreme Court which, in its 1963 Abington School District No. V. Schempp decision, emphasized the importance of the study of religion: "It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities."

However, the Minneapolis Public Schools also recognizes that caution must be taken in the manner in which religious subject matter is presented. The Minneapolis Public Schools agrees with that same Supreme Court decision which stated that "a public school may not require the reading of a portion of the Bible or the recitation of the Lord's Prayer as part of a classroom religious exercise."

Recognizing the need for discretion in the teaching of religious subject matter, the Minneapolis Public Schools has established the following guidelines:

1. Courses dealing with religion are not to teach a particular doctrine; they are to teach about religion without taking a moral stance regarding validity or error of different religious view.
2. Courses dealing with religion are not to include any kind of mock ceremony which might reflect negatively on someone's religious belief.
3. Teachers offering courses which deal with religion through departments such as English or Social Studies should not lose sight of the relationship of that course to the basic concerns of the department-- improving literacy, increasing cultural and historical awareness, and developing understanding of current events.
4. Controversial topics or subject matter are best handled objectively by a professional educator.

Related Reference: Regulation 6138 A

Regulation
adopted: 2/23/76

revised: 8/13/85

By Deputy Superintendent
Minneapolis, Minnesota