

SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES PROCEDURES

The historical and contemporary significance of religious holidays may be included in the education program provided that the instruction is presented in an unbiased and objective manner. The selection of holidays to be studied shall take into account major celebrations of several world religions, not just those of a single religion. Holiday-related activities shall be educationally sound and sensitive to religious differences and shall be selected carefully to avoid the excessive or unproductive use of school time. Teachers shall be especially careful in planning activities that are to take place immediately preceding or on a religious holiday.

The use of natural trees during the holiday season is prohibited by order of the City Fire Marshall. Nonmetal fireproof artificial trees may be used and underwriter approved lights may be placed on them.

HOLIDAY PERFORMANCES

Music, art, literature, drama, and displays having religious themes (including traditional carols, seasonal songs, and classical music) shall be permitted if presented in an objective manner without sectarian indoctrination. The emphasis on religious themes shall be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study or presentation. Religious content included in student performances shall be selected on the basis of its independent educational merit and shall seek to give exposure to a variety of religious customs, beliefs, and forms of expression. Holiday programs, parties, or performances shall not become religious celebrations or be used as a forum for religious worship, such as the devotional reading of sacred writings or the recitations of prayers.

SYMBOLS

The use of religious symbols, (e.g., a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, lotus blossom, nativity scene or other symbol that is part of a religious ceremony) shall be permitted as a teaching aid, but only when such symbols are used temporarily and objectively to give information about a heritage associated with a particular religion. The Christmas tree, Santa Claus, Easter eggs, Easter bunnies, and Halloween decorations are secular, seasonal symbols and as such can be displayed in a seasonal context.

PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS

Expressions of belief or non-belief initiated by individual students shall be permitted in composition, art forms, music, speech, and debate. However, teachers may not require projects or activities that are indoctrinational or force students to contradict their personal religious beliefs or non-beliefs.

Legal Ref.: U.S. Const. amend. I.
 Lee v. Weisman, 112 S.Ct. 2649 (1992).
 Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S. 602 (1971).
 Graham v. Central Community School District of Decatur County, 608 F.Supp.
 531 (S.D. Iowa 1985).
 Iowa Code § 279.8

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