

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.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Board further directs that an opportunity to say the Pledge of Allegiance shall be provided each school day. Participation in the recitation of the Pledge is voluntary.

Each school within the district shall provide time each school day for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Such recitation is voluntary. In any event, all students must be courteous and respectful of the beliefs of others. Non-participants are expected to maintain order and decorum appropriate to the school environment.

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: October 15, 2007

THOMASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Thomaston, Connecticut

Instruction

Religious Observances and Displays

It is the policy of the Board of Education that no religious belief or non-belief will be promoted by the District or its employees and none will be disparaged. The District will encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views. The District will use all opportunities to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parents, whether it involves race, culture, economic background or religious beliefs. Students and staff members shall be excused from participating in practices that are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it. There will be no benedictions or invocations or other form of group prayer at any school functions or exercises.

The District recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance the student's knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural and historical development of civilization.

Therefore, the practices of the District will be:

- The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and a secular basis may be observed in the schools.
- The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- Music, art, literature and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.
- The use of religious symbols such as a Cross, Menorah, Crescent, Star of David, creche, symbols of Native American religions or other symbols that are a part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature. Among these holidays are included Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah, St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving and Halloween.
- The District's calendar should be prepared to minimize conflicts with major religious holidays of all faiths.

It is also the policy of the Board that religious literature, music, drama, and the arts will be included in the curriculum and in school activities provided that it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.

Instruction

Religious Observances and Displays (continued)

The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature and history will only be as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.

Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme will be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

It is further the policy of the Board that dedication ceremonies shall recognize the religious pluralism of the community and be appropriate to those who use the facility.

The Board also believes that a baccalaureate service is traditionally religious in nature. Therefore such services must be sponsored by agencies separate from the district.

(cf. 6115 - Separation of Church and State)

(cf. 9030.1 - Religious Guidelines)

Legal Reference. Connecticut General Statutes

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Graduation Exercises - Prayer

The Board believes that completion of the requirements for a high school diploma from the public schools of the district is an achievement that improves the community as well as the individual. Therefore, the Board shall recognize that achievement in a publicly celebrated graduation exercise.

Accordingly, appropriate graduation programs shall be planned by the administration. The date of the graduation ceremony shall be as indicated in the Board approved school calendar.

The District's valedictorian(s), salutatorian(s) or others at the discretion of the Building Principal or his/her designee may be permitted to speak as part of the school's planned graduation program. All such speeches shall be reviewed and approved in advance by the Building Principal or his/her designee.

All students in good standing who have successfully completed the requirements for graduation may participate in the graduation exercises.

(cf. 6111 - School Calendar)

(cf. 6115 - School Ceremonies and Observances)

(cf. 6146 - Graduation Requirements)

(cf. 6141.2 - Separation of Church and State)

(cf. 6141.21 - Religion in the Public Schools)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-16a Silent meditation.

10-15c Discrimination in public schools prohibited.

Lee v. Weisman, 112 S. Ct. 2649 (1992).

Jones v. Clear Creek Independent School District, 977 F. 2d 963 (5th Cir.1992).

Harris v. Joint School District, 41 F.3d 447 (9th Cir. 1994).

American Civil Liberties Union of NJ v. Black Horse Pike Regional Board of Education, 84 F.3d 1471 (3rd Cir. 1996).

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