



## Administrative Regulation 6144.1 Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

**Responsible Office(s):** Office of Academics

### **REGULATION**

1. It is accepted that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the school district or its employees and none should be disparaged. Instead, the school district should encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views. The school district should utilize its opportunity to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parent(s) or guardian(s), whether it involves race, culture, economic background or religious beliefs. In that spirit of tolerance, students and staff members should be excused from participating in practices which are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it. However, the allowance of nonparticipation does not justify or excuse practices that violate the relevant sections of a secular legislative purpose; its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and it must not foster an excessive government entanglement with religion. Further, no sectarian instruction shall be imparted or tolerated in any public school and no public funds may be used for sectarian purposes.
2. It is also accepted that many things in our culture and tradition worth transmitting to students, while religious in origin, have acquired a significance which is no longer confined to the religious sphere of life. Accordingly, the Washoe County School District recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance students' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural and historical development of civilization
3. Observance of Holidays – The practice of the Washoe County School District shall be as follows:
  - a. The several holidays throughout the year which have both a religious and a secular basis may be observed in the public schools. Among these holidays are St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Passover, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Christmas.
  - b. It is permissible to explain the historical and contemporary values and the origin of a holiday in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
  - c. Music, art, literature, drama and films having religious themes or bases 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

- d. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, creche, symbols of Native American religions or other symbols that are a part of a 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. "Temporary in nature" shall mean that time necessary to complete the particular instructional program.
- e. The use of religious symbols, music, art, literature and drama should, in all cases, be presented by the teacher in a manner that expressly avoids the impression that the teacher or school is sponsoring the beliefs or symbols of any one religion or sect and presented in a manner that recognizes the religious pluralism of the community

#### 4. Curriculum

- a. Religious institutions and orientations are central to human experience, past and present. An education excluding such a significant aspect would be incomplete. It is essential that the teaching about - and not of - religion be conducted in a factual, objective and respectful manner. Therefore, the practice of the Washoe County School District shall be as follows:
  - i. It is permissible to include religious literature, music, drama or art in the curriculum provided it is presented in a prudent and objective manner.
  - ii. The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature and history should be only 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.
  - iii. Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme shall be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

## **IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES & ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

1. This document shall align with the District's Strategic Plan.

## **REVISION HISTORY**

Date	Revision	Modification
11/27/1979	1.0	Adopted
09/22/1992	2.0	Revised