

---

# FAYETTEVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

---

## 6.14 – RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

### I. Statement of Philosophy

The policy of the Fayetteville Board of Education shall be that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the school district or its employees, and none shall be disparaged. Instead, the school district should encourage all students and staff members to appreciate individual religious freedoms 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 parents, whether it involves race, culture, economic background, or religious beliefs.

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

### II. Individual Religious Freedoms

The right of a student or staff member to engage in prayer and other religious activities that are personal and voluntary is recognized as long as the conduct is not disruptive nor interferes with the educational process or the rights of others. Staff members' activities shall not be such as would indicate to students an endorsement of or support for religion by the school.

### III. Religion in the Curriculum

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 Fayetteville School District shall be as follows:

- A. The district supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama, and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities provided the material has achieved a cultural significance. The inclusion of the material must be intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and be presented objectively with the secular purpose of advancing the students' knowledge of society's cultural and religious heritage.
- B. 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 belief.
- C. Student-initiated responses to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme shall be accommodated as long as germane to the assignment. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech, and debate.
- D. Religious speakers or groups using a religious text or promoting religion or disparaging religion will not be permitted to address assemblies or classes. Outside speakers and performance

# FAYETTEVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

---

groups are to be informed of these guidelines. In case groups or individuals violate the provision of the policy, they shall not be allowed to address the students again.

- E. Religious practices such as prayer or proselytizing shall not be included in the curriculum.

## **IV. Observance of Religious Holidays**

The practice of the Fayetteville School District shall be as follows:

- A. The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and a secular basis may be observed and taught in the public schools, but they may not be celebrated.
- B. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- C. Music, art, literature, and drama 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. Any holiday programs should be devised to serve educational purposes. Special care should be taken to insure that programs make no students feel excluded or identified with a religion not their own. Student participation will be voluntary.
- D. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, 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.
- E. The school district's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays. When possible, examinations and other major events will not be scheduled on such holidays. Teachers will provide students who miss school because of religious reasons an opportunity to make up school work.

## **V. School Activities**

In respect of the diverse religious beliefs in our community, school sponsored or endorsed invocations, benedictions, and other religious activities are specifically prohibited at school sponsored or endorsed activities such as athletic contests, dedications, and commencement ceremonies where students are present as observers or participants.

Date Adopted: 11-16-81

Revised: 1-25-94

Revised: 2-22-94