

Barrington Public Schools Policy On Religious Observance Practices and Accommodations

Purpose: This policy follows the recognition of religious holidays in accordance with the mandate of the Constitution of the United States. Barrington Public Schools (BPS) shall, at all times and in all ways, be neutral in matters of religion. This policy sets forth the protocol required of educators at BPS when requests are made by students to accommodate their religious practice. In addition, this policy sets forth the protocol required of the employee when requests are made by any staff member to accommodate their religious practice. Finally, this policy outlines the educational implications for developing religious tolerance and inclusivity. The policy applies to all students and to all persons employed by BPS.

Policy: Student Accommodations: When any student is unable, because of religious practice, to attend class or participate in an examination or any other required assignment or activity in any course in which enrolled, the course instructor shall provide reasonable opportunity to make up the examination, assignment or activity. When a student is absent from school to observe a religious holiday, such absence shall be excused from academics, athletics, and extracurricular activities.

Rights and Privileges of Students and Parents:

1. Parents shall have the right to have their children excluded from any school program involving the discussion of religious holidays.
2. If parents have a concern that a program recognizes a religious holiday, they should discuss it with the principal. If their concern is not resolved through such discussion, they may follow the district procedures for appeal.

Staff Accommodations: Any staff member may request the use of one of their personal days or vacation days when unable to be present for a workday due to religious observance.

Additional Information: [The Harvard Pluralism Project](#) provides a comprehensive list of religious holidays celebrated throughout the world, along with the dates of observance. This document may serve as a reference point.

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Second Read/Approved: May 9, 2019

Protocol

Holidays of different religions present an opportunity for providing learning experiences to develop understanding, appreciation, and respect for religious diversity.

1. For the purposes of this policy, recognition shall mean the acknowledgment of the existence of holidays associated with various religions. It shall not include celebration or glorification of any religion.
2. The holidays recognized should be representative of the diverse religions of the world, not just Christianity and Judaism, and should be of historical and cultural significance to the religions they represent.
3. All religions whose holidays are recognized should be afforded equal respect; none, as well as the right to disbelieve, shall be advanced or disparaged.
4. The basic reasons for recognizing religious holidays shall be to educate students
 - a. to be tolerant of and to respect religious diversity;
 - b. to understand the meaning and the significance of religious liberty, including the right to disbelieve; and
 - c. to appreciate the role of religion in history and the impact of religion on world civilization and culture.
5. All programs for discussing religious holidays must be educational, not religious, and all such programs should be developmentally appropriate for the students involved.
6. Religious symbols may be used as teaching aids in developing an understanding of the religion they represent, and only for that purpose.