

Recognition of Religious Holidays

In accordance with the mandate of the Constitution of the United States prohibiting the establishment of religion, it is the policy of this Committee that the Barrington Public Schools shall, at all times and in all ways, be neutral in matters of religion. This means that the Barrington Public Schools

- shall assume no role or responsibility for the religious training of any student; and
- shall in no way become involved in the religious belief, disbelief or doubt of any student.

This requirement of neutrality **should neither** preclude nor hinder the Barrington Public Schools in fulfilling its responsibility to **teach tolerance** and respect **for** religious diversity.

Holidays of different religions presents a natural and convenient opportunity for providing learning experiences to develop understanding, appreciation and respect for religious diversity. The Committee approves of this opportunity with the following caveats:

1. For the purposes of this policy, recognition shall mean the acknowledgement 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 recognition of religious holidays should involve only a minor portion of total school time and the school budget.
5. Guidelines shall be developed to assist teachers and school administrators in applying this policy and to assure that it is applied in a consistent manner among the schools.
6. The experience of recognizing religious holidays should enrich and not harm students. While every effort should be made to avoid students having to exclude themselves from such experiences, provision should be made to enable them to do so, and to do so without embarrassment or penalty.

Policy - "RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS"

1.0 General

1.1 Schools may recognize holidays associated with world religions. While the means and time devoted for doing so can vary, all of the religions must be treated with equal dignity.

1.2 The time and resources devoted to the recognition of religious holidays shall be a very small part of that devoted to the total educational program.

2.0 Governing

2.1 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 contributions of religion to world civilization and culture.

2.2 All programs for recognizing religious holidays must be educational, not religious, and all such programs should be developmentally appropriate for the students involved.

3.0 Rights and Privileges of Students and Parents

3.1 Parents shall have the right to have their children excluded from any school program involving the recognition of religious holidays.

3.2 If parents have a concern about a program to recognize 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 challenged materials.

3.3 When a student is absent from school to observe a religious holiday, such absence shall be excused.

4.0 Special Considerations

4.1 Symbols and Decorations

4.11 Religious symbols may be used as teaching aids in developing understanding of the religion they represent, and only for that purpose.

4.12 Holiday displays may contain religious symbols, mixed with non-religious symbols when:

a. The religious symbols are neither prominent nor dominant segments of the display; and

b. The school principal views and approves the display before viewing by the students to assure its compliance with this guideline.

4.2 Performances in the Arts

4.21 Performances in the arts that recognize religious holidays must be for artistic, not religious, reasons. The design and total effect of a performance must adhere to this purpose.