

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION MOMENT OF SILENCE

No religious belief or non-belief will be promoted by Amber-Pocasset School District or by its employees while acting in their role of educators or school staff. In keeping with the First Amendment of the Constitution, the board shall neither endorse promote any efforts to advance or to inhibit religious beliefs of its students. It should be understood, however, that a study and investigation of various religious philosophies are essential to an understanding of our heritage and cultural positions.

Factual and objective teaching about religion, the impact of religion and the essence of our religious liberties and ideals may be included in classroom instruction. It is inherent to the teaching of history, literature, social studies, intercultural relations, human relations, art and music to include what religions and religious movements have contributed to these fields of study.

The school system shall respect all religious holidays and shall honor the request of any student to be absent from school on a religious holiday and to participate in religious activities of his/her preference. Such absences shall be considered excused and students shall be permitted to make up all work missed. If a student's religious beliefs are contrary to the content of any school subject or to any type of school activity, that student shall be excused from participation.

To be exempted from participation, the parent/guardian of the student shall present, in writing, a request for exemption stating the reason for the conflict. Such a request shall not prevent others from participating in an activity or course objected to as a religious conflict provided the activity does not involve an unconstitutional emphasis on religion. The board reserves the right to regulate the behavior of students even if such behavior is regarded as religious in nature if that behavior is disruptive to the school, is potentially injurious to the student or to other students, and expresses a belief or promotes an action in violation of the moral, criminal or civil law of the community.

It shall be the policy of this Amber-Pocasset Board of Education that no sectarian or religious doctrine shall be taught or inculcated into the curriculum or activities of the school. However, those students who wish to do so may participate in voluntary prayer so long as it is during noninstructional time and does not interfere with the rights of other students.

Each school site within the district shall observe one minute of silence each day for the purpose of allowing each student to meditate, pray, or engage in any other silent activity that does not interfere with, distract, or impede other students in the exercise of their choice. All school personnel are to afford these options to all students, who will individually make the selection as to which of these behaviors they will engage in during the moment of silence. These options will also be included in the student handbooks.

The minute of silence will be held at the start of the school day. The minute of silence will be announced over the intercom at the appointed time.

If the district or a school employee is sued for providing a moment of silence to students, the district must notify the Attorney General within five (5) days. The Attorney General will provide legal representation to the district or employee named as a defendant in an action related to this statutory requirement.

**REFERENCE: 70 O.S. §11-101.1
70 O.S. §11-101.2**