

POLICY

1999

8411

Instruction

SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

The public school system serves all the children, without regard to racial background or religious belief. Therefore, there must be no teaching of any specific religious doctrine in the public schools. However, religion is an important aspect of our national background because:

- a) It is a great moral force working toward the improvement of mankind, and
- b) It stresses the dignity and value of the individual and thereby builds a solid foundation for the American principles and democratic ideals.

We encourage the observance by the schools of nationally celebrated occasions or events which are of a religious nature, have a religious background or may have been religious in origin, as long as they are directed to education with respect to the cultural, moral, spiritual, historical, social and artistic aspects thereof. Participation by students in any program presented in connection with these observances will be on a voluntary basis. Those students not participating in such programs will be provided with an alternate educational program.

In accordance with our Constitution, which guarantees religious freedom, emphasis will be given to the development of respect and consideration for those of differing religious beliefs. Every effort will be made to insure that no student is hurt, embarrassed or emotionally disturbed because of religious belief.

Students may be excused from attending school on days of religious observance while school is in session, in accordance with the approved list of days of religious observance issued by the Commissioner of Education.

Teachers must be certain that no new or sequential materials for an understanding of the basic curriculum are introduced on those days when students are absent for religious observance or involved in a released-time program for special religious instruction. Included in this category are group tests which are considered an integral part of the basic curriculum. Teachers must be certain not to schedule tests on days when students are absent for religious purposes. However, while school is in session during those days of religious observance, teachers will be allowed to present materials which are designed for enrichment and/or review materials which are related to the particular course of study.

Adopted: 6/16/99