

## Section 7000 – Instructional Program

7800-R School Ceremonies and Observations (Cf. 7770)

7800-R

Through special ceremonies or through the instructional program, building administrators may arrange for proper commemoration of the following special days in the schools:

Constitution Day (September 17); Columbus Day (Second Monday in October); Veteran's Day (November 11); Martin Luther King's Birthday (3rd Monday in January); Lincoln's Birthday (February 12); and Washington's Birthday (3rd Monday in February).

### Observance of Constitution Day

The District shall offer a Constitution Day program(s) each September 17 to commemorate the signing of the United States Constitution.<sup>1</sup> The following are examples of acceptable Constitution Day programs:

- An assembly for all grades in the school featuring a speaker from local, state, or federal government to discuss the importance of the signing of the U.S. Constitution,
- An art or essay contest centering on the signing of the U.S. Constitution,
- A special program focusing on the signing of the U.S. Constitution broadcasted over an educational T.V. channel District-wide,
- Hallway bulletin board displays stressing the observance of the signing of the U.S. Constitution, or
- Classroom skits or mini-plays featuring students who represent the original signers of the Constitution and who give a brief biography of the person whom they represent.

The Superintendent authorizes the formulation of a Constitution Day Planning Committee to assist the Superintendent in choosing an appropriate Constitution Day program for the District.

The Superintendent shall appoint a member of the administrative staff to organize the Constitution Day Planning Committee. The Committee may include students, teachers, and administrators. The primary duties of the Committee will be to formulate

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution Day shall be held on September 17<sup>th</sup> of each year. However, if September 17<sup>th</sup> falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, then Constitution Day shall be held during the preceding or following week.

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suggestions for a District Constitution Day program and/or suggestions for individual school or classroom observances, which shall be presented to the Superintendent.

### Observance of Religious Holidays

The practice of the District shall be as follows:

The several holidays throughout the year that have a religious and secular basis may be observed in the public schools.

The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.

Music, art, literature and drama having a religious theme or basis 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.

The use of religious symbols such as a cross, Menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, symbol of Native America 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. Among these holidays are Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah, and St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, and Halloween.

The District's calendar, through the collective bargaining process, may be prepared to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.

### Religion in the Curriculum

It is essential that teaching about, and not of, religion be conducted in a factual, objective, and respectful manner. Therefore, the practice of the District shall be as follows:

The Board supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities if it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.

The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature, and history should be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced thorough study of these areas. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.

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Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments, which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme, shall be accommodated. Students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in composition, art forms, music, and speech.

### Dissemination of Religious Materials

Materials that have a religious content may be made available to students during non-instructional time. The District shall impose content neutral, time, place, and manner restrictions on the dissemination of religious materials to ensure that students are aware that the materials are not being endorsed or sponsored by the District.

### Dedications and Commencement

Traditions are a cherished part of the community life and the District expresses an interest in maintaining those traditions, which have had significance to the community. While recognizing the significance of traditions, the Board recognizes that its dedication ceremonies and commencement exercises must be secular in nature. Inspirational addresses, which do not promote religion, may be permitted at such ceremonies.

Because the baccalaureate service is traditionally religious in nature, it, if held, shall be sponsored by agencies separate from the District. School initiated invocations and benediction, inherent in commencement (graduation) ceremonies, are not allowed under current law.

### Federally Required Guidelines

Students have the following rights pursuant to federal law:

- To engage in private, non-disruptive activity such as prayer or Bible reading while at school,
- To participate in before or after school events that have a religious content,
- To study about religion when appropriate to the curriculum,
- To produce written expressions of religious beliefs in home work, art work, and other assignments,
- To distribute in a non disruptive manner, subject to reasonable restrictions as to time, place, and manner, religious literature,
- To be excused for religious reasons from participation in school programs or activities,
- To be granted release time to attend religious events,

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- To wear clothing that includes a non disruptive religious theme or message,
- To be given access to school media to announce religious events in the same manner as other organizations, and/or
- To be granted access to school facilities for religious activities in the same manner as other organizations.

Rules Accepted: June 29, 2009