

Policy 6141.2: Recognition Of Religious Beliefs And Customs

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 12/01/1988 | **Last Revised Date:** 03/01/2024 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 03/01/2024

The Governing Board recognizes that students' education would be incomplete without an understanding of the role of religion in society. As appropriate for a particular course, teachers may objectively discuss the influences of various religions, using religious works and symbols to illustrate their relationship with culture, literature, or the arts. The Board expects that such instruction will identify principles common to all religions and foster respect for the diversity of religions and customs in the world and be consistent with the adopted instructional materials and state standards, as applicable.

In order to respect each student's individual right to freedom of religious practice, religious indoctrination is forbidden in public schools. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that instruction about religion does not promote or denigrate the beliefs or customs of any particular religion or sect, nor that a preference be shown for one religious viewpoint over another. Staff members shall be highly sensitive to their obligation not to interfere with the religious development of any student in whatever tradition the student embraces, and treat all religions and religious conviction, including nonbelief, with fairness and respect.

Staff shall not endorse, encourage, or solicit religious or anti-religious expression or activities among students during class time.

Staff shall not coerce students in prayer or other religious activities as part of their official duties. However, Staff are not prohibited, when acting in their private capacity, from encouraging students' participation in personal prayer or other religious activity. Additionally, staff shall not prohibit or discourage any student from praying or otherwise expressing the student's religious belief so long as this does not disrupt the classroom or other school sponsored activity.

Students may express their beliefs about religion in their homework, artwork, and other class work if the expression is germane to the assignment. Such work shall be judged by ordinary academic standards, relevance, and other legitimate pedagogical objectives.

While teaching about religious holidays is a permissible part of the educational program, celebrating religious holidays is not allowed in the district. School-sponsored programs shall not be, nor have the effect of being, religiously oriented or a religious celebration. School and classroom decorations may express seasonal themes that are not religious in nature. The use of religious symbols that are part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided that such symbols are displayed as an example of cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and temporary in nature.

Classroom methods in instruction about religion shall not include religious role-playing activities or simulated religious devotional acts.

Music, art, literature or drama programs having religious themes are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in an objective manner and as

a traditional part of cultural and religious heritage.

District schools shall not prohibit religious activities if the same or similar non-religious activities are permitted.

Policy Reference Disclaimer:

These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

State

Ed. Code 38130-38139

Description

[Civic Center Act](#)

Ed. Code 46014

[Absences for religious purposes](#)

Ed. Code 51511

[Religious matters properly included in courses of study](#)

Ed. Code 51938

[Right of parent/guardian to excuse from sexual health instruction](#)

Federal

20 USC 4071-4074

Description

Equal Access Act

20 USC 6061

[School prayer](#)

20 USC 7904

[School prayer](#)

Management Resources

California Department of Education
Publication

Description

[Appendix F history social science framework for California public schools](#)

Court Decision

Florey v. Sioux Falls (1980) 619 F.2d 1311

Court Decision

Fellowship of Christian Athletes v. San Jose Unified School District Board of Education (2023) 82 F.4th 664

Court Decision

Kennedy v. Bremerton (2022) 142 S.Ct. 2407

Court Decision

Cole v. Oroville Union High School District (2000, 9th Cir.) 228 F.3d 1092

Court Decision

Lassonde v. Pleasanton Unified School District (2003, 9th Cir.) 320 F.3d 979

Court Decision

Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971) 403 U.S. 602

U.S. Department of Education
Publication

[Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, May 2023](#)

Website

[CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services](#)

Website	California Department of Education
Website	CSBA
Website	U.S. Department of Education

Cross References

Code	Description
0410	Nondiscrimination In District Programs And Activities
0450	Comprehensive Safety Plan
0450	Comprehensive Safety Plan
1325	Advertising And Promotion
1330	Use Of School Facilities
1330	Use Of School Facilities
5113	Absences And Excuses
5113	Absences And Excuses
5121	Grades/Evaluation Of Student Achievement
5121	Grades/Evaluation Of Student Achievement
5127	Graduation Ceremonies And Activities
5132	Dress And Grooming
5132	Dress And Grooming
5141.31	Immunizations
5141.31	Immunizations
5145.2	Freedom Of Speech/Expression
5145.2	Freedom Of Speech/Expression
6111	School Calendar
6115	Ceremonies And Observances
6115	Ceremonies And Observances
6142.8	Comprehensive Health Education
6142.8	Comprehensive Health Education
6142.93	Science Instruction
6142.94	History-Social Science Instruction

6143	<u>Courses Of Study</u>
6143	<u>Courses Of Study</u>
6144	<u>Controversial Issues</u>
6145.5	<u>Student Organizations And Equal Access</u>
6145.5	<u>Student Organizations And Equal Access</u>
6145.8	<u>Assemblies And Special Events</u>
6154	<u>Homework/Makeup Work</u>
6161.11	<u>Supplementary Instructional Materials</u>
6176	<u>Weekend/Saturday Classes</u>