

INSTRUCTION

Religious Observances

Guidelines are hereby established for religious observances in the Lynchburg City Schools:

1. No religious observances may be held as part of the school curriculum. Religious observances include worship or religious services of any kind, whether or not conducted by clergymen, as well as the reading of religious literature for devotional purposes or the recitation of prayers.
2. It is appropriate for the school to offer a course in comparative religion and/or the history of religion and its relationship to general history. Such course, if offered, should be: (a) held at the school, (b) taught by teachers with special expertise in this area (c) balanced, (d) factual and not devotional and avoid any doctrinal impact and any implication that any of the religious doctrines discussed have the support of the school division or the state.
3. School ceremonies and activities, including assemblies, PTA meetings, honor society investiture, graduation, dedication and sporting events are secular occasions. Programs and speeches whose intention is religious promotion and indoctrination are inappropriate.
4. The school should avoid any activities, displays and exhibits, which promote and give its approval to religious matters. The display of religious objects and symbols is appropriate only as an integral part of a regular study in the curriculum, e.g., art, history etc. The presentation of religious music is appropriate only to the extent that such music is presented for its musical rather than its religious content. Use of school facilities by outside religious groups should be available on the same basis as it is to other community groups.
5. In planning the school calendar, care should be taken to avoid, wherever, possible conflict with the calendars of the religious communities so that students are not pressured to choose between school attendance and religious observance. To this end, for example, sporting, academic and social events, PTA meetings, plays and concerts, etc., should not be scheduled on religious holidays, or at times when services of worship are held in local congregations. It is the responsibility of the clergy in the community to communicate this information to the school administration in advance of each year's planning. In planning the calendar, it is desirable that vacation periods be given neutral names, e.g., winter recess and spring recess, so as to avoid the implication that the school is granting the vacation in observance of a religious holiday.
6. The right of parents to determine when their children should be absent from school because of religious observances should not be limited by school authorities, nor should students be penalized or deprived of make-up opportunities for such

INSTRUCTION

Ceremonies and Observances (continued)

absences, or pressured to choose between school attendance and religious observance.

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