

## **INSTRUCTION 6141.2**

### **Religious and Cultural Recognition**

#### **Recognition of Pluralism**

To endorse pluralism is to understand and appreciate the differences that exist among the nation's citizens. It is to see these differences as a positive force in the continuing development of a society which professes a wholesome respect for the intrinsic worth of every individual.

The Manchester School District recognizes its responsibility to prepare students to accept and value diversity and to develop positive attitudes about the richness and greatness of a pluralistic society.

Accordingly, the school district shall foster understanding and mutual respect regarding race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and religious beliefs.

#### **Religious Beliefs and Customs**

The school district shall encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be respectful of each other's views on religion. The curriculum, at every level, presents opportunities for providing learning experiences to develop understanding, appreciation, and respect for religious diversity.

Religious institutions and practices are central of human experience, past and present. An education excluding such a significant aspect of human culture would be incomplete. In presenting information concerning religion, the school district and its staff must recognize the responsibility under the state and federal constitution to remain neutral with regard to religion and not to inhibit or advance any particular viewpoint as to religion. Teaching about religion should be conducted in a factual, objective, and respectful manner.

Adopted: July 10, 1995

### **Religious and Cultural Recognition**

#### **Administrative Guidelines**

##### **1.0 Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs**

No religious belief or nonbelief shall be promoted by the school district or its employees and none should be disparaged.

##### **2.0 Religious Days**

2.1 The school district's calendar should be prepared to accommodate major religious days to the extent practicable, so as to minimize conflicts with personal observance of religious days.

2.2 Student absences from school or from extracurricular activities, to observe a religious day shall be excused without penalty.

2.3 Parents who wish to have their children excused from school or extracurricular activities for a religious holiday shall so advise the principal or designee in writing.

2.4 When the school is in session on a major religious holiday, no tests or examinations shall be given, no new units of study shall be introduced, and no field trips shall be planned. Homework may be assigned, but should not be required to be turned in by those students who are absent the day(s) immediately following the holiday(s). Teachers should make homework arrangements with students who will be absent. When a student is absent to observe a religious holiday, the day should be an excused absence. Students should not be penalized for their excused absence in any attendance recognition program.

### **3.0 Religion in the Curriculum**

3.1 The historical and contemporary value, and the origin of the religious days may be addressed in elementary and secondary curricula, if presented in an unbiased and objective manner without indoctrination.

3.2 The inclusion of religious literature, music, drama, and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities is permitted. Such educational programs:

- a. Must be intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study.
- b. Must be presented objectively.
- c. Must be accurate in content
- d. Must be age-appropriate

3.2 Such education programs should be the direct and sole responsibility of Board of Education employees whose employment requires a state certificate.

3.3 Religious themes in the arts, literature, and history should be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies should neither promote nor inhibit religious belief or nonbelief.

3.4 Religious symbols, such as a cross, menorah, crescent, star of David, crèche, symbols of Native American religions, or other symbols that are part of a religious day are permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided that:

- a. The sole purpose of the religious day display is educational.
- b. Such symbols are displayed on a temporary basis as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the religious day.

3.5 Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments (including compositions, art forms, music, speech, and debate) which reflect their beliefs or nonbeliefs about religious themes shall be accommodated, provided that such expressions do not interfere with classroom instruction and provided that classroom instruction shall maintain neutrality as to matters of religion. Teachers should not encourage or discourage such expressions.

3.6 The wearing of personal items of jewelry or clothing by students and/or staff, which may signify a personal religious belief, will be permitted; provided such items do not interfere with:

- a. an orderly and efficient educational process
- b. classroom instruction
- c. the responsibility to maintain neutrality as to matters of religion in the educational programs of the district.
- d. school(s) dress codes as published in handbooks

#### **4.0 School Musical Program**

4.1 Music of any faith or culture may be selected for a musical program as long as it is either inherently artistic, has educational value, or has traditional historical significance.

4.2 Religious music as part of a secular program or concert is permitted, provided it is presented in other than a religious context. Selection should reflect a blending of pluralistic beliefs and customs. Participation shall be on a voluntary basis.

#### **5.0 Administration**

The principal shall be responsible for observing the Board of Education policy and these guidelines in planning and supervising instructional activities in the schools.

Adopted: July 10, 1995