

SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES/PATRIOTIC EXERCISES

The Board believes that special recognition should be given to national holidays. The building principal should encourage a discreet observance of these holidays which have become a part of the American heritage. These observances may, in some instances, be in the form of a school assembly or as part of classroom work.

The Board directs the administration to develop specific activities within each building to convey the meaning and significance of Veterans Day. The observance must be at least one hour long, except in buildings that schedule class periods of less than an hour. In those buildings, the observance must be at least one standard class period in length.

Religious Holidays and Observances

The following guidelines govern the observance of, and teaching about, religious holidays in the schools.

1. The public schools must be neutral in matters of religion. The schools must show no preference for one religion over another. They must refrain from the promotion of any religion or all religions; consequently, no religious celebrations may be conducted by the District's schools.

“Religious celebration” is defined as:

- A. a formal observance, including worship or religious services of any kind, whether or not conducted by a member of the clergy. Religious observances cannot be justified by the fact that the majority of students or individuals in a given community happen to approve of the practice or by the fact that individual students may absent themselves upon parental request;
- B. the display of religious objects or symbols, except those that are integral parts of a short-term study in the curriculum, such as art, history, etc., or
- C. the presentation of religious music, except to the extent that such music is presented for its musical rather than its religious content. Songs or music programs which have significance for a particular religion should not be sung or performed in the school during the period which coincides

with the community celebration of the events portrayed in the music. Festive songs that cannot be associated with a religious celebration are permitted.

2. A program or observance related to a religious holiday in theme or timing should be evaluated as to its purpose and effect. If either the purpose or the effect is judged to be religious rather than secular, the activity should not be undertaken.
3. The school should avoid any activity, display or exhibit that promotes or gives its approval to religious matters.

Patriotic Exercises

The Board believes one's appreciation of country is promoted by the ceremonies and observances held in the schools and that the United States Flag is a symbol of our democratic heritage, ideals and freedom.

The Board believes that saluting the Flag and reciting daily the Pledge of Allegiance help students to learn and to reinforce these principles. Therefore, the Board encourages all students, grades kindergarten through 12, to recite the Pledge of Allegiance during the school day at a time and manner specified by the building principal.

The Board recognizes that beliefs of some persons prohibit participation in the Pledge, the salute to the United States Flag or other opening exercises; therefore, such persons are excused from participation.

[Adoption date: September 6, 2001]

LEGAL REFERENCES

U.S. Const. Amend. I, Establishment Cl.
ORC 5.23; 3313.602; 3313.63; 3313.80

NOTE: THIS IS A REQUIRED POLICY