

**Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs**

Instruction provided by programs of the Humboldt County Office of Education may include references to religion or the use of religious literature, art, music or any other aspect of religion when such references are incidental to or are used to illustrate the subject matter being taught. Such instruction should be designed to broaden the students' understanding of and tolerance for the multiple ways of life practiced by the peoples of the world.

In order to respect each student's individual right to freedom of religious practice, religious indoctrination is clearly forbidden in the public schools. Instruction about religion shall not promote or denigrate the beliefs or customs of any particular religion or sect, nor should 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.

Staff shall not endorse, encourage or solicit religious or anti-religious expression or activities among students during class time. As part of their official duties, staff shall not lead students in prayer or other religious activities. However, staff shall not prohibit or discourage any student from praying or otherwise expressing his/her religious belief as long as this does not disrupt the classroom.

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.

While teaching about religious holidays is a permissible part of the educational program, celebrating religious holidays is not allowed in the public schools. 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.

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 the cultural and religious heritage. 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 are temporary in nature.

Any instruction in these schools which may be contrary to a student's religious beliefs and teachings may be viewed as optional for that student.

The following options will be available to students whose religious beliefs are in conflict with the subject matter being taught:

1. The student will be excused from attending the class while that topic is under study with no penalty of any kind.
2. The student will attend the class but no examination about the topic will be required of the student. No penalty for not taking the examination will be assessed.
3. The student will attend the class and may be tested about the topic as expected of every other student.

*Legal Reference:*

*EDUCATION CODE*

*38130-38138 Civic Center Act*

*46014 Absences for religious purposes*

*51511 Religious matters properly included in courses of study*

*51938 Right of parent/guardian to excuse from sexual health instruction*

*UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 20*

*4071-4074 Equal Access Act*

*6061 School prayer*

*7904 School prayer*

Policy

**HUMBOLDT COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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Eureka, California

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