

Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances

Holiday Celebrations

1. The greatness of the American Democracy lies in the diversity that composes its unit. The public school is the one institution in our culture that immediately and realistically provides us with the instrument to make our children aware of the differences of race, color, and religion that each of us enjoys. It is only through association and understanding that children will learn to respect these differences. We should be objective and factual in the acknowledgement of these differences. We must instruct children to respect one's right to be different and to be ready to defend that right.
2. The Judeo-Christian heritage, which is a pillar of American Democracy, celebrates during the winter season. Therefore, this is a highly appropriate time to teach cultural diversity through song and celebration (literature, art, food and symbols).
3. Teachers should exercise care that symbols are not used in a devotional sense.
4. No child should be placed in a position of embarrassment as a result of the school's activities in the observance of religious and national holidays. Holidays should be discussed in such a manner that all will have an appreciation as to the meaning of the occasion, yet with no incursion on the right of any child to keep faith with his/her own beliefs and those of his/her parents. When the occasion arises, opportunities should be afforded children to discuss and to observe various national cultures and various religious beliefs, practices and traditions.

Religious Devotions in the Schools

In accordance with the decision of the United States Supreme Court [Eagle decision on state-adopted prayer (1962); Schempp decision of Bible reading (1963)], the Orange Board of Education does not permit the public recitation of devotional prayer and the devotional reading of the Bible, Koran, or any other similar document and/or book that serves as a foundation of a religion, during the school day. The attitude the board adopts, as recommended by the Court, is one of "neutrality." Neutrality means that the board, as an agent of the government, will take no step either to foster or to discourage the practice of religious devotion.

6115P (b)

Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances

Pledge of Allegiance

The Board further directs that an opportunity to say the Pledge of Allegiance shall be provided each school day. Participation in the recitation of the Pledge is voluntary.

Each school within the district shall provide time each school day for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Such recitation is voluntary. If, because of some personal philosophy or belief, a student has made the personal decision not to recite the "Pledge," he/she may choose to remain seated and silent. Students may wish to use this time to reflect on their belief or remember loved ones. In any event, all students must be courteous and respectful of the beliefs of others.

Silent Meditation

The Board directs that the administration provide for students and school staff the opportunity to observe an appropriately brief period of time for silent meditation at the beginning of each school day.

United States Flag

The Flag of the United States of America shall be raised above each schoolhouse and at other appropriate places during all school sessions, weather permitting. The Flag shall be raised before the opening of school and taken down at its close every day.

The United States Flag shall be displayed in each schoolroom each day school is in session.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-16a Silent meditation

10-230 Flags for classrooms and schools

PA 02-119 An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools and Concerning the Pledge of Allegiance

No Child Left Behind Act

Policy adopted: 9/9/85
Revised: 02/11/2008

ORANGE SCHOOL SYSTEM
Orange, Connecticut

Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances – Regulations

1. Recognition of religious holidays must be a secular education experience directed solely to enhancing tolerance of and respect for religious diversity and must be developmentally and age-appropriate, accurate in content, and objective in presentation.
2. Students should be exposed to a variety of cultures, religious, and ethnic backgrounds in order to understand the diversity of the American society. In keeping with this, it is acceptable for a student to quote scripture, for example, if it is done in the content of a topic in the curriculum being studied.
3. The sharing of holiday celebrations within the classroom for the purpose of allowing children to understand our differences and our similarities is acceptable as long as this practice is educational and not devotional.
4. The decoration of schools and classrooms in preparation for a holiday should not take place until a week prior to that holiday. The exception to this guideline would be in the primary grades (K – 2) where projects generally require more time. Decorations that are a part of the custom and folklore of a religious holiday, that have no direct religious meaning or bearing (e.g. menorah, Christmas trees) may be displayed.
5. The basic concepts of civility, respect, tolerance, and understanding should be interwoven into the entire fabric of all school activities.
6. Musical concerts may include sacred music and traditional music of a religious holiday provided they are balanced with selections that reflect the customs and folklore as well as festive and seasonal characteristics associated with the holiday. Parents shall have the right to have their child(ren) excluded from any classroom or school program involving the recognition of religious holidays. This request must be made in writing to the Principal.