

USING RELIGIOUS MATERIALS AND PLANNING AND PRESENTING HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

The study of religions of the world, religious books, or religious music may be a part of courses of study and curriculum but shall not be used as a means of indoctrination or religious instruction. Although the foundation of the United States is based on a Christian-Judeo creed (In God We Trust), the schools need to maintain a separation of church and state in both curricular and extracurricular programs so as not to be offensive to those who profess a particular religious belief or those who profess atheism or agnosticism. The respect of man for his fellow man is increased by recognition and understanding of the beliefs, values, and mores of others. School programs designed to improve comprehension and acceptance of differences among men have educational significance.

Guidelines

In selecting instructional materials and in planning holiday programs, the following guidelines are to be followed:

1. In planning and developing a holiday program, staff members should ensure that it will reflect respect for the sensibilities of staff members and students of all faiths in each school and that it is consistent with the policies of the Board of Trustees and the laws of the state of California and the nation.
2. The quality of content and length of time spent in the preparation and presentation of any program must be educationally justifiable.
3. Holiday programs require careful planning so that no student or staff member will be precluded from participation because of personal conviction. At all times pupils and staff members must be accorded the privilege of excuse from participation in any holiday program without penalty.
4. Our calendar of special days, weeks, and events suggests to staff members many opportunities for a variety of school programs. Some of these include recognition of persons who have made significant contributions to our American way of life, events that have influenced our development as a nation, and activities that observe our cultural heritage.
5. Since any school-sponsored program is a part of the curriculum, it is necessary that each be planned carefully to include:
 - a. Instructional objectives
 - b. Instructional resources of the school, community, or District
 - c. Content which is educationally defensible

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- d. Specific relationships with the ongoing instructional effort of the school
 - e. Supervision by staff members
 - f. Provision for evaluation
6. Sectarian scenes, displays, tableaux, and music, when used to create a religious tone or sacred atmosphere, are not to be included for purposes of religious indoctrination.
7. Frequently school programs are seasonal in nature and are planned to coincide with community celebrations such as Christmas. Care needs to be exercised in developing content for these programs that avoids sectarian doctrine and the use of religious materials in the instructional program.
- a. Stress should be placed on cultural learnings
 - b. Schools may benefit from materials and programs which increase a student's understanding of the variety of beliefs in a pluralistic society by teaching mutual understanding and brotherhood and respect for group differences
 - c. Careful programming can result in the awareness that holidays are observed differently by differing groups and nationalities.
 - d. Religious exhibits, displays, or symbols such as crosses, crèches, and menorahs may be used when they are a necessary and integral part of the study of subjects in the curriculum; e.g., art, history, etc. However, such exhibits, displays, and symbols shall not be used as decorations with the intent to indoctrinate
 - e. Music should be limited to festive songs and orchestrations that are traditional and are not presented because of religious content