



Associated Regulation: IGAC-R

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION AND RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

The United States and Colorado Constitutions require that no activity of the Boulder Valley Public Schools shall be permitted which has the purpose or effect of advancing or inhibiting either religious belief or nonbelief; nor shall any such activity discriminate between systems of religious belief or forms of worship.

These principles are grounded in the understanding that governmental participation in religious matters and even the appearance of official preference for or antagonism toward any religious belief or nonbelief is disruptive within the community, infringes upon the individual's freedom of conscience, and ultimately is destructive of the integrity of government and religion. These principles are recognized to be of particular significance in the context of the public schools which have responsibility for children and youth.

The public schools shall neither sponsor nor interfere with religions. In this regard, the schools shall be guided by a policy of accommodation. The study of religions, religious art, and the activities and effects of religious institutions in a secular, academic context is entirely appropriate. To attempt to remove all such references from the curriculum would result in an incomplete and inaccurate educational program. The Boulder Valley School District endorses the study of religion in an objective, respectful, and cross-cultural manner and the study of the American tradition of religious liberty as an integral part of the educational program.

A. Neutrality

No religious belief or nonbelief should be promoted by the School District or its employees, and none should be disparaged. Instead, the School District should encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and respect each other's religious views. The School District should utilize its opportunity to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parents, whether it involves race, culture, economic background, or religious beliefs. In that spirit of understanding and respect, students and staff members may be excused from participating in activities which are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it.

In appropriate situations, alternative activities for such persons may be provided.

B. Teaching About Religion and School Programs

An education excluding such a significant aspect would be incomplete. It is essential that the teaching about and not of religion be conducted in an open, objective, and respectful manner and be timed to fit the educational objectives.

1. The District supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama, and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities, provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.
2. Religious themes in the arts, literature, and history may be included to enhance student understanding that religion and diversity of beliefs are basic components of our cultural heritage. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.
3. School programs, performances, and celebrations shall serve an education purpose. The inclusion of religious music, symbols, art, or writings may be permitted if the religious content has an independent educational purpose which contributes to the stated objectives of the approved curriculum. Intent, effect, and timing should be considered when planning school performances and activities.

C. Student Expression of Religious Belief

1. Students are free to express religious belief or nonbelief in discussion, compositions, art forms, music, speech, and debate.
2. No form of prayer, worship, or expression of religious belief or disbelief shall be prescribed or sanctioned in fact or in appearance by the schools. This shall not, however, be construed to restrict students from engaging in spontaneous discussion about religion, personal prayer, or personal meditation which is not disruptive of the educational process and does not infringe upon the privacy rights of others.
3. A great diversity exists in the Boulder Valley School District. Therefore, reasonable efforts shall be made to be sensitive to the religious observances of students so that the required school work, including tests, does not provide undue hardships, provided that the regular and normal expectancy of school programs may be met. Students are responsible for notifying school officials in advance and arranging for make-up work. Students should be excused only to the extent that their ability to complete the educational program is not jeopardized and that the absences do not cause undue hindrance to the conduct of the program.

4. Student-initiated religious groups or clubs shall be subject to Policies IGDA and KG.

D. School Assemblies, Sponsoring Religious Groups, and Use of Religious Facilities for Special Programs

1. A school assembly may include performances by groups which are affiliated with religious organizations. Any such assembly must be programmed and presented as an educational experience. The principal or designee shall provide written notice to the affiliate organization stating School District policy, responsibility, and guidelines concerning religious activities.
2. Religious groups may rent school facilities after school hours within School District policy but may not be sponsored by school organizations.
3. If any public school use of religious facilities commonly and regularly used for religious worship is contemplated, written justification, based on educational values and necessity to meet goals of the District and objectives of authorized educational programs, must be filed with and supported by the principal of the school according to the regulations for approving programs. If approved by the principal, the written statement must be filed with and supported by the appropriate cluster Executive Director or Deputy Superintendent at the earliest practical time and prior to any announcement of performances.

If a public school program occurs at a place commonly used for religious worship, provisions shall be made for optional educational activity for any student making such request on the basis of religious concerns. Further, the student's grade shall not be influenced by nonattendance or nonparticipation for that portion of the educational program conducted in a place of religious worship, provided that appropriate requests have been made and appropriate alternative assignments completed.

E. School Visitors

1. School visitors are required to report to the office of the school principal at the time of entering a school building. (KK — Visitors to the Schools.)
2. Uniform written rules regulating visitors to the schools are to be based upon the need for preserving the environment necessary to effectively conduct the educational process.
3. Proselyting of students on school property for the purpose of affiliating with a religion is prohibited.

4. Clergy or other representatives of religious groups may provide counseling to students during school hours in emergency situations on request of the student and with the prior consent of the principal or designee. Routine counseling should be scheduled outside of school hours and off school grounds.

F. Use of School Facilities by Nonstudent Religious Groups or Other Organizations (KG — Community Use of School Facilities)

School facilities may be used during nonschool hours on a temporary basis for religious activities under the following conditions. Nonschool hours includes days on which school is not in session and evenings after 6:00 p.m. on school days.

1. Use will be authorized on a temporary basis for up to one year.
2. Short-term extensions, not to exceed one year, may be granted under unforeseen circumstances such as the loss of regular facilities from fire, flood, or other acts not within the reasonable control of religious officials. Requests for an extension may also be granted where church building or remodeling programs actually under construction have not yet been completed.
3. Religious services and religious activities must be conducted at times when school is not in session.
4. Religious objects and symbols must be removed after each use.
5. Religious groups using facilities for worship services and religious activities will be charged as appropriate and will be required to pay custodial overtime when necessary.
6. The principal or designee or school person authorizing use related to building rentals shall provide applicable portions of the District policy on "Community Use of School Facilities" to any group using school facilities. Information related to the history and purpose of the organization should be provided to the District.

G. Baccalaureate Services, Invocations, and Benedictions

Neither the School District nor any school of the District authorizes, sponsors, or conducts religious services. The School District shall not conduct or sanction any baccalaureate service, nor shall it include religious invocations, benedictions, or formal prayer at school-sponsored events.

Parents and other groups may organize and conduct baccalaureate services; however, the School District shall not be identified, explicitly or implicitly, as sponsoring or endorsing such services. Reasonable caution should be exercised to ensure school or District neutrality relative to baccalaureate programs. Efforts should be made

periodically to clarify the school's neutrality with parent leaders and/or organizations sponsoring religious programs.

H. Staff Religious Groups

Faculty or staff groups are not to use school facilities for purposes of group prayer, testimony, worship, or religious study. School bulletin boards, school mail, school materials, and equipment are not to be used to advertise or promote such purposes. These religious activities should be conducted away from school and outside of school hours.

CROSS REFS.:

IGDA, Student Organizations (Secondary Schools)

KG, Community Use of School Facilities

KK, Visitors to the Schools

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