

## **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND DISPLAYS**

It is the policy of the Ringwood Board of Education that no religious belief or non-belief will be promoted by the school district or its employees and none will be disparaged. The district will encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views. The district will use all opportunities to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parents, whether it involves race, culture, economic background, or religious beliefs. Students and staff members will be excused from participating in practices that are contrary to their religious beliefs.

The district recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

Therefore, the practice of the district will be:

The several holidays throughout the year that have a religious and a secular basis may be observed in the schools.

The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.

Music, art, literature, and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner, and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.

The use of religious symbols such as a cross, Menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, symbols of Native American religions or other symbols that are a part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature. Among these holidays are included Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah, St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, and Halloween.

The school district's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.

It is also the policy of this board of education that religious literature, music, drama, and the arts will be included in the curriculum and in school activities provided that it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.

The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature, and history will be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.

Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments that reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme will be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech, and debate.

Because the baccalaureate service is traditionally religious in nature, it will be sponsored by agencies separate from the district.

**REFERENCE: 70 O.S. §11-101, §11-101.1**