

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to identify the status of religion as it pertains to the programs of NWSISD.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. NWSISD shall neither promote nor disparage any religious belief or nonbelief. Instead, NWSISD encourages all students and staff to have appreciation for and tolerance of each other's views.
- B. NWSISD also recognizes that religion has had and is having a significant role in the social, cultural, political, and historical development of civilization.
- C. NWSISD recognizes that one of its educational objectives is to increase its students' knowledge and understanding of different cultures' music, art, drama, literature, practices and traditions which may have had a religious basis or origin as well as a secular importance.
- D. NWSISD supports the inclusion of religious music, art, drama, and literature in the curriculum and in its programs and activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience and is presented in an objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- E. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of various religions, holidays, customs and beliefs may be explained in an unbiased and nonsectarian manner.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the Executive Director to ensure that the study of religious materials, customs, beliefs and holidays as part of NWSISD programs or activities is in keeping with the following guidelines:
 - 1. The proposed activity must have a secular purpose.
 - 2. The primary objective of the activity must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion.
 - 3. The activity must not foster excessive governmental relationships with religion.

4. Notwithstanding the foregoing guidelines, reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from attendance at a NWSISD program or activity for the purpose of religious instruction or observance of religious holidays.
- B. The Executive Director is granted authority to develop and present for school board review and approval directives and guidelines for the purpose of providing further guidance relative to the teaching of materials related to religion. Approved directives and guidelines shall be attached as an addendum to this policy.

Legal References: U.S. Constitution, First Amendment
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, Subd. 12(3) (Compulsory Instruction)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence From School for Religious Observance)
Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S.602, 91 S.Ct. 2105, 29 L.Ed.2d 745 (1971)
Florey v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist. 49-5, 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir.) *cert. denied*, 449 U.S. 987, 101 S.Ct. 409, 66 L.Ed.2d 251 (1980)
Stark v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 640, 123F.3d 1068 (8th Cir.) *cert. denied*, 118 S.Ct. 1560, 140 L.Ed. 2d 792 (1997)
Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe, U.S. , 120 S.Ct. 2266 (2000)
Tangipahoa Parish Board of Education v. Freiler, U.S., 120 S.Ct. 2266 (2000)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-J (Feb. 14, 1968)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-K (Oct. 21, 1949)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 63 (1940)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 120 (1924)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 121 (1924)

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