

SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES

Policy

It is the policy of this Board that the Trumbull Public Schools shall, at all times and in all ways, be neutral in matters of religion. This means that the Trumbull Public Schools:

- shall assume no role or responsibility for the religious training of any student; and
- shall not purposely become involved in the religious belief, disbelief or doubt of any student.

This requirement of neutrality need not preclude nor hinder the Trumbull Public Schools in fulfilling their responsibility to educate students to be tolerant and respectful of religious diversity. The district also recognizes that one of its educational responsibilities is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion has played in the social, cultural and historical development of civilization.

Therefore, the district will approach religion from an objective, curriculum-related perspective, encouraging all students and staff members to be aware of the diversity of beliefs and respectful of each other's religious and/or non-religious views. In that spirit of respect, students and staff members should be excused from participating in activities that are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of compelling public interest that would prevent it.

Adopted: 1/04/83
Revised: 7/18/89
Revised: 8/21/01

References

- First Amendment
- Connecticut General Statutes, Section 52-571b

Guidelines

Since religious institutions and diverse beliefs have been a force in shaping human experience, past and present, awareness of these significant forces is part of a complete education. It is essential that the teaching about - not of - religion be conducted in a factual, objective and respectful manner.

Therefore, the practice of the Trumbull Public Schools will be to:

1. emphasize that religious themes in the arts, literature and history, both in curriculum and school activities, be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. The curriculum should address a diversity of religions, using materials reflecting secular educational values. Studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious or non-religious beliefs;
2. provide a process for students to be excused from this instruction if their parents desire. A student who is excused should be given reasonable alternative accommodations and materials to work on that are of educational benefit. To the degree possible, alternative studies should deal with the subject of pluralism and diversity. The curriculum, however, should be such as to minimize the need for such requests;
3. provide programs that focus on a seasonal theme rather than religious themes inclusive of concerts, enrichment programs and fundraising sales.

Religious holidays provide a natural opportunity to promote an appreciation for and respect of diversity. Therefore, it will further be the practice of the Trumbull Public Schools to:

1. ensure that recognition of religious holidays will not dominate the educational program and must support curricular objectives.
2. ensure that performances, which recognize holidays, must be of an artistic not a religious nature. Religious music must not dominate any school program.
3. ensure that parents may exclude their children from programs involving the recognition of religious holidays or a celebration that is in conflict with family beliefs. A written request for exclusion should be sent to the building administrator.