



Title: **Teaching About Religion Procedure**

Code: IGAC R

Section: Section I: Instruction

The purpose of this regulation is to provide guidelines for staff to utilize in the selection and use of materials for incorporation into the curriculum and conducting activities with religious content in the classroom or other locations.

Obtaining Permission for Instruction with Religious Content

The following steps shall be followed by a teacher or teachers to obtain permission to incorporate materials or conduct activities that contain religious content:

1. The teacher(s) responsible for the material or activity shall confer with the principal at the beginning of the grading period to discuss the general intent of the project and to establish mutually agreed upon time lines for complying with the following enumerated paragraphs.
2. In a time frame which allows for adequate review and response, the teacher(s) will submit to the principal a written instructional plan for the materials or activities including but not limited to:
 - a. a reasonably detailed description of the materials to be utilized or the activities to be conducted; and
 - b. the educational purposes for such materials or activities and the curricular objectives to be addressed.
3. In reviewing the instructional plan, the principal will apply the following three-part test to determine whether or not the proposed materials or activities are neutral and have an independent educational purpose which contributes to the stated goals of the approved instructional program.
 - a. Do the materials or activities have a primarily secular purpose?
 - b. Is the primary effect of the materials or activities one that neither advances nor inhibits religion?
 - c. Do the materials or activities involve an excessive entanglement between the school and a religious organization?
4. Within ten days after receipt of the instructional plan, the principal will respond to the teacher(s) in writing indicating one of the following:

- a. approval; or
- b. denial, with appropriate comments regarding areas of noncompliance with the policy accompanying this regulation.

5. Proposals being denied may be revised and resubmitted for consideration. If agreement cannot be reached on the proposed materials or activities, the teacher(s) may file a written appeal with the Superintendent. The Superintendent will consider the request and advise the affected parties regarding further disposition of the proposed activities at the earliest practicable time.

Planning Suggestions

1. Activities, symbols, or materials may have both cultural and religious significance. When planning activities or evaluating the use of materials or symbols, the religious attributes must be considered.
2. A program or lesson relating to a holiday season should focus on universal symbols and themes of the season, without undue emphasis on religious symbols.
3. Religious heritages and their histories, arts, symbols and tenets may be properly included within a program of religiously neutral education.
4. Staff must be able to respond affirmatively to each of the following questions when planning for the use of materials or activities with religious content:
 - a. When religious materials are used, are their uses intrinsic to the stated learning objectives?
 - b. Are the materials or activities presented objectively and in a balanced format?
 - c. Is the purpose and effect of the activities to expose students to religious beliefs rather than to promote affirmation or denial of a religious belief?
 - d. Are the materials or activities neutral?
 - e. Is excessive use of religious or sacred music, religious symbols, or scenery avoided?
 - f. Does planning for seasonal programs and other classroom activities consider the various beliefs represented by the pluralistic society we live in?
 - g. Are the materials or activities age-appropriate?

Seeking Excuse from Participation

Students or staff who request to be excused from participation in an activity or from the use of specific materials may be excused from such participation or use on the ground that the material or activity interferes with the exercise of a sincerely held religious belief. Students or the parent(s) of students seeking permission to be excused should direct such requests to the appropriate teacher. Staff should

direct requests to the building principal. Whenever possible, such requests should be made prior to the activity. The principal may not arbitrarily refuse a request not to participate based on religious objection. Such requests should be honored unless clearly unreasonable and/or disruptive to the educational program. (Mozert vs. Hawkins Co. Board of Education, 827 F. 2d1058 (6th Cir. 1987), Cert. denied 484US.1066(1988))

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