

RELIGION

POLICY:

The Board recognizes that views and opinions regarding the relationship of the school and religion are diverse. While community opinions are important in shaping policy, the Board must give primary credence to the United States and Washington State Constitutions and decisions made by the respective courts when establishing guidelines for making decisions regarding religious-related activities and practices.

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

In meeting this educational objective, the Board assures that the District will comply with the provisions of the United States and Washington State Constitutions and decisions of the courts in regard to religious-related activities and practices.

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PROCEDURES:

The procedures outlined below will best describe the practices of the Lake Stevens School District when religion or religious activities are part of school instruction, programs, or activities. Whether an activity or use of symbol is permissible or not depends as much on circumstances of its use as on the activity or symbol itself. For this reason, no answer to questions about what is or is not permissible can be provided in advance without considering the following questions.

1. Does this event or activity relate to the educational program and to particular student learning objectives?
2. Is it being used with sensitivity to the feeling of students?
3. Is it clear that it is not being used for the purpose of religious worship, exercise or instruction, or to support any religious establishment?
4. Is it clear that its use does not establish or permit sectarian control or influence of the school program?
5. Is it affected by the Accommodation Theory?

Instruction Relating to Religion. Religious instruction or indoctrination in the schools of the district is prohibited. Factual and objective teaching about religion may be included in classroom instruction where related to the District's educational goals and student learning objectives, provided that such teaching does not:

1. Take the form of religious instruction, workshop, exercise, or persuasion.
2. Disparage or promote religion, or the absence of religion, or any particular belief system.
3. Question the religious belief or absence of religious belief of any student.
4. Require a student to declare a religious preference.

Religious Holiday Observances. The recognition of holidays having religious significance is permissible if such recognition is free of devotional elements and does not have the effect of promoting any religion or celebrating any religiously-based holiday. Displays and decorations pertaining to religion or a religious symbol or holiday should be related to instruction that is based upon the District's educational goals and student learning objectives. Not only should these displays and decorations derive from classroom instruction, they should also avoid any implication that the school supports or favors any particular religious or sectarian doctrine.

Programs and Assemblies. Any musical or dramatic selections performed by students which have a religious origin or significance shall be selected on the basis of their artistic and educational value and/or traditional secular usage and shall be presented together with other works which are nonreligious in nature. Programs and assemblies shall neither inhibit nor advance religion. Programs designed with the purpose to convey a religious or devotional message are prohibited, including presenters whose purpose is to deliver a religious message and/or extol the benefits of religious beliefs.

Student Absences Due to Religious Observances.

1. The District shall not limit the right of parents to determine when their children should be absent from school because of religious observances.
2. Students shall not be penalized or deprived of make-up opportunities for such absences.
3. When scheduling important school activities and testing, the District and its schools shall attempt to avoid dates which conflict with religious holidays which may be observed by some students.

Student Expression of Religious Belief.

1. Students may wear religious attire or symbols provided that the educational process is not thereby substantially disrupted.
2. Students shall not be prohibited from expressing their religious beliefs through arts, crafts, expressive writing, speech, and discussions with other students.
3. The District shall not conduct, sponsor, endorse, or encourage any student to recite or participate in prayers or any other form of devotional activity.
4. The right of parents to determine when their children may decline to participate in school activities, which are a regular part of the curriculum but which are offensive to their religious beliefs, shall not be limited by school authorities. Students who as a consequence choose not to participate shall not be penalized or subjected to pressure to choose between participation in such activities and their religious beliefs.

Facilities

1. Religious services shall not be held in school facilities during school hours or in connection with any school-sponsored or school-related activity.
2. A school facility may be rented by and for religious groups/activities under the terms and conditions outlined in Policy No. 1410.
3. The Lake Stevens School District itself shall neither advance nor inhibit any religious practice by use of its funds, property, or facilities. However, this does not prohibit the District from displaying or using individual student's work which may express his/her religious belief.