

HOLIDAYS AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

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Respect for religious and cultural differences is fundamental to American democracy and contributes to harmonious living in a free society. These holiday guidelines are intended to reflect the District's commitment to provide an inclusive environment where religious and cultural diversity are acknowledged and appreciated. It is not the responsibility or intention of the schools to celebrate religious observances.

1. School activities associated with religious observances will be in the context of teaching about traditions, will have educational purposes and will neither inhibit nor promote religion.
2. Teachers may allow appropriate student-initiated sharing of family customs and traditions with the guidance normally present in any classroom-sharing situation. Teachers will provide opportunities for students to share information about religious customs and traditions, when appropriate, provided that it fits the context of the classroom experience, does not involve proselytizing, is respectful of all students, and respects students' and their families' religious choices, whether they adopt particular religious beliefs or choose not to adopt religious beliefs and participate in religion.
3. School activities and instruction associated with religious observances will involve a balanced perspective of multiple cultural traditions. Musical programs that include selections from religious traditions must withstand the test of the following questions:
 - What is the purpose of the activity/instruction? Is the purpose secular in nature, e.g., studying music of a particular composer's style or historical period?
 - What is the primary effect of the activity/instruction? Is it the celebration of religion? Does the activity either promote or inhibit religion? Does the activity/instruction have curricular or academic value, by providing instruction in academic subjects or disciplines that are related to the course in question?
 - Does the activity/instruction involve excessive entanglement with a religion or religious group, or between the schools and religious organizations?

Since music that is based on a sacred text or has a religious origin (particularly choral music) often is or serves as a foundation for a substantial body of important music, music literature, and the history of music, competent music education necessarily may include music that is related to one or more of the world's religions.

4. Classroom activities, concerts, presentations or programs will show sensitivity to the beliefs of all students, will aim for inclusivity, and will treat all students' beliefs with respect and dignity. Activities will be appropriate to the age and developmental level of the students.
5. School classroom celebrations must be in the context of the curriculum, should involve limited instructional time and, cannot be associated with a religious observance. It is the responsibility of all faculty members to ensure that such activities are strictly voluntary, do not compel students to participate or give any impression that participation is required, do not exclude or ostracize minority groups or individuals, and do not interfere with the regular school program.

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6. Displays or decorations will reflect a balanced perspective of multiple cultural traditions and will have an educational purpose.

7. Schools may have multicultural presentations or programs following the guidelines established by this Policy.

8. The Waunakee Community School District recognizes that exam schedules or due dates for major projects can conflict with a student's ability to participate in and/or observe religious holidays, observe the prevailing practices of one's religion, or comply with the mandates of a student's religion. The District also recognizes that any number or religious holidays or dates of religious observance do not require that students' academic schedule, coursework, test dates or project deadlines be changed. Any missed work, projects, or exams will be rescheduled or made up by the student, at a time determined by the teacher, when it does not interfere with the religious observance or religious holiday.

Therefore, the District will excuse a student from exams and/or will grant a student relief from deadlines for submitting major projects, provided that at least one week's notice is given to the attendance office and to teacher(s) that have scheduled exams or established deadlines for projects on the date identified.

Students that ask to be excused from an exam or major project deadline may be asked to demonstrate that taking exams or submitting major projects on the religious observance date in question does, in fact, interfere with the prevailing practices or mandates of a student's religion. For purposes of this Policy, a "major project" shall be defined as a project that counts for at least 10% of a student's overall grade.

LEGAL REF.: Sections 118.01(2)(b)7 Wisconsin Statutes

118.13

118.15(1)(a)

118.155

120.13

Wisconsin Constitution, Article X-Section 3

PI 41, Wisconsin Administrative Code

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2016

U.S. Department of Education Guidance Document Regarding Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

CROSS REF.:

381.1, Teaching About Religion

411, Equal Educational Opportunities

430 Rule 2 Approved Legal Excuses for Student Absence

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