

Policy Subject RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS	Location Code 506.1	Adoption Date 2/10/86
	Rescinds/Amends	Adopted

The Norfolk Public School District recognizes that one of its educational goals is to advance the students knowledge and appreciation of the role that our religious heritage has played in the social, cultural and historical development of civilization.

It is accepted that no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the school district or its employees, and none should be disparaged. Instead, the school district should encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and be tolerant of each other's religious views. The school district should utilize its opportunity to foster understanding and mutual respect among students and parents, whether it involves race, culture, economic background or religious beliefs. In that spirit of tolerance, students and staff members should be excused from participating in practices which are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of overriding concern that would prevent it.

Religious holidays and religious symbols associated with the holidays are a significant part of customs and traditions of Norfolk students and community patrons. Such holidays may be recognized and observed by the District. Observance shall be as follows:

1. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
2. Music, art, literature and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday
3. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, creche, symbols of Native American religions or other symbols that are a part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature.
4. The school district's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.

Religious institutions and orientations are central to human experience, past and present. An education excluding such a significant aspect would be incomplete. It is essential that the teaching about - and not

of- religion be conducted in a factual objective and respectful manner. Inclusion of religion in the curriculum shall be practiced as follows:

1. The District supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.
2. The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature and history should be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies should never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs.
3. Students-initiated expressions to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme shall be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious beliefs or non-beliefs in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

Traditions are a cherished part of the community life and the Norfolk Public School District expresses an interest in maintaining those traditions which have had a significance to the community. Such ceremonies should recognize the religious pluralism of the community. Dedications and ceremonies shall be practiced as follows:

1. A dedication ceremony should recognize the religious pluralism of the community and be appropriate to those who use the facility. An open invitation should be extended to all citizens to participate in the ceremony.
2. Traditions, i.e., invocation and benediction, inherent in commencement ceremonies, should be honored in the spirit of accommodation and good taste.
3. Baccalaureate service is provided as a non-mandatory attendance portion of Commencement exercises. The program is supplied by the Norfolk Ministerial Association.

Teachers while engaged in teaching may not wear religious garb indicating membership in or adherent of any religious order, sect, or denomination.