

KANAWHA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY

Series: C45 - Religion in the Schools

45.1 General Policy. The Board recognizes that religious institutions and diverse beliefs have historically played a significant role in shaping the human experience and that awareness of religion in this context should be addressed through appropriate curriculum. However, instruction in this area must not foster any particular religious tenets nor demean any religious or non-religious beliefs.

45.2 Religious Holidays. Principals and teachers are charged with being especially discriminatory in planning activities that are to take place immediately before or on a religious holiday. Holiday programs may not become religious celebrations. However, music, art, literature and drama having religious themes (including traditional carols, seasonal songs and classical music) will be permitted, if presented in an objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.

45.3 Religious Symbols. The use of religious symbols such as the cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, or lotus blossom may be used as teaching aids, but only when used temporarily and objectively to give information about a heritage associated with a particular religion. The Christmas tree, Santa Claus, traditional Halloween images, traditional Valentine's Day images, Easter eggs and Easter bunnies are secular, seasonal symbols and, as such, may be displayed in a seasonal context.

45.4 Student Participation. Students will be excused from participation in instruction or programs upon the request of the parents on the basis that such instruction or program contradicts personal religious beliefs. Students of appropriate maturity may excuse themselves. A student who is excused shall be provided alternative activities that are of educational benefit. The curriculum, however, should be such as to minimize the need for such requests.

45.5 Schedule of Events. The District's calendar shall be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays. Examinations or important school events should not be scheduled when students may be absent for religious observances.

45.6 Staff Development. The Office of Staff Development will provide programs on a periodic basis which are calculated to ensure staff awareness of this policy and which will facilitate sensitivity to religious differences.

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