

Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances

Religious Ceremonies

The Supreme Court of the United States in two significant decisions declared it illegal to hold formal, prescribed religious exercises in the public schools. [Engel decision on state-adopted prayer (1962), and the Schempp decision on Bible reading (1963)]. However, while the court's prohibitions are narrow, its permissions are broad. Accordingly, the following types of school activities are permitted so long as they do not take on the character of religious devotions:

1. Writing or analyzing literature on religious subjects;
2. Playing, singing and presentation of music which is religious in its inspiration or origin;
3. Performance of drama which deals with religious history or which is religious in its content;
4. Production or exhibition of art work dealing with religious themes;
5. Recognition of significant religious holidays by declaring school vacations or by sponsoring activities which acknowledge the importance of these holidays in our cultural life;
6. Comparative studies of religion;
7. Analyses of the Bible, and other religious books, as part of the study of religions;
8. Studies of the contribution made by religion to civilization;
9. Study of the Bible for its historic significance;
10. Study of the Bible for its literary importance;
11. Recitations or study of historical documents which contain references to God;
12. Singing of official anthems which contain references to God.

Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances (continued)

United States Flag

The Flag of the United States of America shall be raised above each schoolhouse and at other appropriate places during all school sessions, weather permitting, and on the inside of the schoolhouse on other school days. The Flag shall be raised before the opening of school and taken down at its close every day.

The United States Flag shall be displayed in each schoolroom each day school is in session.

Holidays and Special Events

Holidays and special events may be recognized in our schools within the mores of our culture so long as such recognition respects the rights and feelings of minorities and is consistent with law.

Songs and customs which have come to us from the various ethnic and racial segments of our population may be used so as to broaden the awareness of our students to the contributions which each such segment has made to the composite American culture.

No public funds may be used in any way to benefit sectarianism in our public schools. No books, papers or utterances of a sectarian character shall be used except for instructional purposes.

Opening Exercises – Silent Meditation

The morning opening exercises will include the Pledge of Allegiance. Those students who have religious or conscientious objections may be excused from participating.

The Board of Education shall provide opportunity at the start of each day to allow those students and teachers who wish to do so, the opportunity to observe such time in silent meditation.

(cf. 6141.2 – Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 10-16a Silent meditation
 10-29a Certain days to be proclaimed by governor. Distribution and
 number of proclamations
 10-230 Flags for schoolrooms and schools

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EAST HAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
East Hampton, Connecticut