

Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

1. Observances of Religious Holidays

The practice of the Gervais School District shall be as follows:

- a. The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and secular basis should be observed in the public schools;
- b. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays should be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination;
- c. Music, art, literature and drama having religious themes or bases are permitted and encouraged 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;
- d. The use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, symbols of Native American religions or other symbols that are a part of a religious holiday are 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. These holidays include Christmas, Easter, Passover, Hanukkah, and Thanksgiving;
- e. The school district's calendar should be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths.

2. Religion in the Curriculum

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. As curriculum and instruction includes theories, views and precepts, they will be represented as such, not as fact.
- d. Student-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 belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

3. Traditional Observances

Traditions are a cherished part of the community life and the 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.

Therefore, the practice of the district shall be as follows:

- a. Because the baccalaureate service is traditionally religious in nature, it should be sponsored by the graduating class and the clergy of the community, separate from the district. Said service may be held on or in school property, conforming to the current “open public use” policy;
- b. A memorial service of like observance should recognize the religious pluralism of the community.

4. Moral and Spiritual Training

The district is vitally concerned that teaching of moral and ethical values be part of the fabric of public education.

Religious institutions and orientations are central to human experience, past and present. They are the basis for much of the accepted moral and ethical behavior of today. The district recognizes the importance of the religious heritage of America and respects the religious belief of those in the district. 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.