

## **Religious Observances**

The historical and contemporary significance of religious observances may be included in the program of education provided that such instruction is presented in an unbiased and objective manner. The selection of religious observances to be recognized or studied will take into account celebrations of multiple world religions, not just those of a single religion. Activities will be educationally sound and sensitive to religious differences and will be selected carefully to avoid the excessive or unproductive use of school time. Teachers will be prudent in planning activities that are to take place immediately preceding or on religious observances.

The use of religious symbols will be permitted as a teaching aid, but only when such symbols are used temporarily and objectively to give information about a heritage associated with a religion.

Productions of music, art, literature, and/or drama having religious themes may be a part of the educational program and are permitted if presented in an objective manner without sectarian indoctrination. Religious content included in student performances will be selected on the basis of its independent educational merit and will seek to give exposure to a variety of religious customs, beliefs, and forms of expression. Programs, parties, or performances will not become religious celebrations, or be used as a forum for religious worship, such as the devotional reading of sacred writings, or the recitations of prayers. Student participation in a program or performance which includes religious themes will be voluntary.

Expressions of belief or non-belief initiated by individual students will be permitted in composition, art forms, music, speech, and debate. However, teachers may not require projects or activities which indoctrinate or force students to contradict their personal religious beliefs or non-beliefs. In instances where many students might naturally choose to make a religious expression, alternate activities will be offered.

Legal Reference: Iowa Code §§ 279.8; 280.6  
 U.S. Const. amend. I.  
*Lee v. Weisman*. 112 S.Ct. 2649 (1992)  
*Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971)  
*Graham v. Central Community School District of Decatur County*, 608 F.Supp. 531 (S.D. Iowa 1985)

Approved: 07-13-81  
 Reviewed: 11-13-89  
 01-25-93  
 06-24-96  
 08-09-99  
 04-12-04  
 Revised: 09-22-14  
 05-14-18  
 Reviewed: 02-14-2022