

Board Policy

Code No. 603.8

RELIGION AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The contribution of religions to civilization is one of the crucial keys to understanding human history and development. The study of religious history and traditions may be a part of the school curriculum, and can play a vital role in enhancing understanding among people of different religious backgrounds and beliefs. This study should give neither preferential nor derogatory treatment of any single religion or to religion in general, and should not be introduced or utilized for devotional purposes. Furthermore, no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the school district or its employees.

Materials and activities should be sensitive to America's pluralistic society and should educate rather than indoctrinate. All instructional and other school-sponsored activities must meet the three-part test established by the Supreme Court to determine constitutionality:

- 1) The activity must have a secular purpose;
- 2) The activity's principle or primary effect must be one that neither advances or inhibits religion; and
- 3) The activity must not foster an excessive governmental entanglement with religion.

Legal Reference: *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).
Iowa Code §§ 279.8; 280.6 (2009).

Cross Reference: 603 *Instructional Curriculum*
 604.5 *Religious-Based Exclusion from a School Program*

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