

**Regional School District No. 17**  
**6000 Series**

**6115(a)**

**Instruction**

**Religion in the Public Schools**

Religious belief and disbelief are matters of personal consideration. The Board of Education recognizes that in administering the school system there must be neutrality in matters relating to religion. Religion should neither be opposed nor promoted, nor should a preference be shown for one religion over another.

The fact that religion has had, and continues to have, a profound effect on history, culture, and the arts, cannot be ignored and therefore teaching about religion has a place in the curriculum. Such teaching should foster respect, mutual understanding, and sensitivity to the various belief(s) and disbelief(s) practiced in our pluralistic society and for diverse traditions and heritage.

Therefore, the district will approach religion from an objective, curriculum-related perspective, encouraging all students and staff members to be aware of the diversity of beliefs and respectful of each other's religious and/or non-religious views.

The district recognizes its responsibility to prepare students to accept and value diversity and develop positive attitudes about the richness and greatness of a pluralistic society and ensures that no religious belief or non-belief is promoted by the Regional School District No. 17 schools or its employees and none should be disparaged.

Students and staff members should be excused without penalty from participating in activities which are contrary to their religious beliefs as long as non-participation would not seriously impair important instructional objectives, and there is no less intrusive method for achieving those important instructional objectives.

**Religious Days**

The school district's calendar should be prepared to accommodate major religious days taking into account the potential disruption to the educational experience.

Student absences from school, or from extra-curricular activities, to observe a religious day shall be excused without penalty.

When school is in session on a major religious day, no examinations shall be given, no major new assignments shall be made, no new areas of study shall be introduced and no field trips will be planned.

Parents who wish to have their children excused from school or extra-curricular activities for religious purposes shall notify the school by following the established attendance procedures.

**Religion in the Curriculum**

The historical and contemporary values and the origin of the religious days may be addressed in elementary and secondary curricula, if presented in an unbiased and objective manner.

**6115(b)**

**Regional School District No. 17**  
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**Instruction (continued)**

**Religion in the Curriculum (continued)**

The inclusion of religious literature, music, drama, and art in the curriculum and in school activities is permitted. Such educational programs:

- A. Must be intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study;
- B. Must be presented objectively;
- C. Must be accurate in content;
- D. Must be developmentally and age-appropriate.
- E. Such studies will not promote or inhibit religious belief or non-belief

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 neither promote nor inhibit religious belief or non-belief.

Religious symbols, such as a cross, menorah, crescent, star of David, crèche, symbols of Native American religions, or other symbols are permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided that:

- A. The sole purpose of the display is educational.
- B. Such symbols are displayed on a temporary basis as an example of the cultural and religious heritage.

Student-initiated questions or completed assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about religious themes shall be accommodated, provided that classroom instruction maintains neutrality.

**Administration**

The principal shall be responsible for observing the Board of Education policy and these guidelines in planning and supervising instructional activities in the schools.

Policy adopted:  
1/00  
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1/04

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REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17  
Higganum, Connecticut