

HOLIDAY CELEBRATION POLICY

Our nation's history is rich with embracing religious holidays as part of our cultural heritage. In a nation as diverse as America, we have the unusual opportunity to integrate appropriate levels of study and celebration of holiday celebrations that are rooted in our tradition. We acknowledge the strict provision for separation of church and school in regards to the school's responsibility to refrain from support of any particular doctrine and celebratory events will never be used to inculcate religious beliefs.

Therefore, it is the policy of CRCS to support a balanced approach to all holiday celebrations, musical events, plays and other related school activities and classroom activities. The school principal, in concert with the school staff, will make appropriate decisions about holiday celebrations that best relate to the provisions of this policy. Parental concerns are to be addressed to the school principal and then to the Executive Director.

The Board adopts this policy with a shared commitment of respect for individual religious beliefs expressed in the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty, while ensuring its educational goal to advance students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion plays in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

The Board acknowledges that it is neither possible nor desirable for our schools to simply ignore religion and avoid all materials with a religious theme or implication.

CRCS may neither promote nor inhibit religious belief or non-belief, so long as expressions of religious belief or non-belief are consistent with school rules and respect the rights of others.

The Board directs its administrators, teachers, and students, with the cooperation of parents and community, to make practical and reasonable decisions regarding religious holidays when in school. This requires sensitivity to the needs of every student and a willingness to steer a course between the avoidance of all references to religion, on the one hand, and the promotion of religion on the other.

The intent of this policy and related regulations, which reflect and balance the academic and instructional mission of our schools, the law, and legal guidelines related to the separation of church and state, the richness and diversity of our population, and sensitivity to the rights and dignity of the individual, as they relate to the celebration of holidays.

The following guidelines will apply to the celebration of holidays:

- A. Holidays, which have a religious origin, may be acknowledged in the public schools.
- B. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of those holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.

- C. Music, art, literature, and drama, having religious themes or basis, will be permitted as part of the curricula for school-sponsored activities and programs, if presented in an objective manner.
 - 1. The duration of such programs and activities, which should be linked to the school's curriculum, should not exceed a period of time equivalent to the academic value of the program or activity.
 - 2. Activities, including any party-like celebration, should not exceed one hour at the end of the session on the identified day.
- D. Symbols that are a part of a religion are permitted provided such symbols are displayed as examples of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature.
- E. Symbols that are a part of religious holiday, but have acquired a secular meaning are permitted.
- F. Acknowledgement of a holiday will emphasize the historical, cultural, and social value of the holiday and the associated religion and will not be used to endorse any religion or holiday.

Legal References: Title 1 MRSA Section 111-A-118

Florey v. Sioux Falls School District 619 F.2d 1311, 1319, (8th Cir. 1980).

Clever v. Cherry Hill Township Board of Education, 838 F. Supp. 929
(D.N.J. 1993).

Adopted: 11/7/2012

Revised: 10/16/2023