

POLICY

STAFFORD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Religion in the Schools

2270 RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

The Board of Education recognizes that religious belief and disbelief are matters of personal conviction rather than governmental authority and the pupils of this district are protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and by Article I, Paragraph 4 of the New Jersey State Constitution from the establishment of religion in the schools. School officials will be neutral in their treatment of religion in the school district, showing neither favoritism toward nor hostility against religious expression. The school district will not permit an activity if the activity advances or inhibits any particular religious expression that is protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. However, nothing herein shall be interpreted to prohibit the religious expression of individuals (e.g., individual prayer; accommodation of prayer during instructional time; and individual religious expression in class assignments) in accordance with constitutionally protected individual rights as interpreted by the United States Supreme Court.

The Board believes that an understanding of religions and the contributions that religion has made to the advancement of civilization is essential to the thorough education of young people and to their appreciation of a pluralistic society. To that end, the curriculum may be developed to include, as appropriate to the various ages and attainments of the pupils, instruction about the religions of the world.

The Board also acknowledges the degree to which a religious consciousness has enriched the arts, literature, music, and issues of morality. The instructional and resource materials approved for use in the schools of this district frequently contain religious references or concern moral issues that have traditionally been the focus of religious concern. That such materials may, therefore, be religious in nature shall not, by itself, bar their use by the district. The Board directs that teaching staff members employing such materials be neutral in their approach and avoid using them to advance or inhibit religion in any way.



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The Board recognizes that religious traditions vary in their perceptions and doctrines regarding the natural world and its processes. The curriculum is chosen for its place in the thorough and efficient education of the children of this district, not for its conformity to religious principles. Pupils should receive unbiased instruction in the schools so that they may privately accept or reject the knowledge so gained in accordance with their own religious tenets.

U.S. Consti. Amend. 1
U.S. Department of Education - Guidance on
Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary
Schools - February 7, 2003
N.J. Consti. (1947) Art. 1, para. 4
N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.6 et seq.; 18A:36-16

Adopted: 22 July 2004
Revised: 21 October 2010

