

RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS

In accordance with MCPS [Policy 2460](#):

The District's curriculum may include the study of religions as ancillary to studies of human history and development and of various national, cultural, and ethnic groups. The study of religions shall give neither preferential nor derogatory treatment to any single religious belief or to religion in general. The study of religions shall be treated as an academic subject with no emphasis on the advancement or practice of religion.

Student Prayer and Discussion:

Students may pray individually or in groups and discuss their religious views with other students, as long as they are not disruptive or coercive. The right to engage in voluntary prayer does not include the right to have a captive audience listen, to harass other students, or to force them to participate. Students may pray quietly in the classroom, except when they are expected to be involved in classroom instruction or activities.

Assemblies, Extracurricular and Athletic Events:

District officials may not invite or permit members of the clergy, staff members, or outsiders to give prayers at school-sponsored assemblies and extracurricular or athletic events. District officials may not organize or agree to student requests for pray at assemblies and other school-sponsored events. Furthermore, prayer may not be broadcast over the school public address system, even if the pray is nonsectarian, non-proselytizing, and initiated by students.

Student Religious Expression and Assignments:

Students may express their individual religious beliefs in reports, tests, homework, and projects. Staff members should judge their work ordinary academic standards, including substance, relevance, appearance, composition, and grammar. Student religious expression should neither be favored nor penalized. Staff members may teach objectively about religious holidays and about the religious symbols, music, art, literature, and drama that accompany the holidays. They may celebrate the historical aspect of the holidays, but may not observe them as religious events.

School Programs and Performances:

School programs, performances, and celebrations must serve an educational purpose. The inclusion of religious music, symbols, art, or writings is permitted if the religious content has an historical and/or independent educational purpose which contributes to the objectives of the approved curriculum. School programs, performances, and celebrations cannot promote, encourage, discourage, persuade, dissuade, or incriminate against a religion or religious activity and cannot be religious or religious-holiday oriented.

Student Religious Clubs:

Students may organize clubs to discuss or promote religion, subject to the same constitutionally acceptable restrictions that the District imposes on other student-organized clubs.