

## Missoula County Public Schools

### Instruction 2460

#### Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

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 also may not organize or agree to student requests for prayer at assemblies and other school-sponsored events. Furthermore, prayer may not be broadcast over the school public address system, even if the prayer 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 by 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 aspects 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 discriminate 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.

Policy History: Proposed at PNP November 18-2009

Adopted on: April 13, 2010