

Religious Beliefs, Customs, Observances and Instruction

Section 1. General. East Allen County Schools does not consider the public school to be a proper forum for the observance of organized religious worship, for the direct advocacy of religious beliefs, or for belittlement of religious belief or nonbelief. In this spirit of understanding of both the legal and ethical requirements of respecting this very significant part of the American culture, the Superintendent is directed to develop guidelines to assure such in all segments of the school's operation.

Section 2. Guidelines. In support of the EACS policy, the following guidelines have been established to assure proper respect, sensitivity and protection to all religious cultures/faiths in the pluralistic society in which the public schools do function:

1. There will be no ban on cultural material having a religious origin so long as the material to be used or studied is of instructional value to the classes concerned and is free of a sectarian and/or theological purpose.
2. Where religion is properly a part of course content, it must remain in its normal perspective. Inclusion of sacred writings, music and art in the educational program of the schools is to be based on their independent educational merits. Course content should generally be determined by the administration/faculty. While explanation of a religious belief may be called for, classes will not be used for religious instruction.
3. An all school program will serve an educational or cultural purpose. It is to be staged and costumed in a manner free of sectarian and/or theological beliefs. Time spent in preparation for such will be in proportion to its educational value.
4. Official school assemblies and graduation exercises involving the direct participation of non-students must be justified on the basis of independent educational merit. Non-students in such events must not be invited as participants for the expressed purpose of presenting religious commitments.
5. Religious music is accepted when studied and performed for the musical content.
6. Individual student expressions portraying religious symbols or scenes are acceptable so long as the teacher does not require projects which embody a sectarian belief.

7. Prayer will be omitted from the formal school program. For student groups in which membership is elective, prayer is a matter of personal preference. Students will not be required to participate in prayers.
8. In accordance with policy 1330, religious groups may use space and/or other resources for meetings, dispersal of information and/or presentations based on equitable use of schedule, space, equipment and other resources. There will be no interference with other school functions. There will be no activity which interferes with the rights of others.
9. Students, teachers and all school district personnel are to show respect for those persons subscribing to religious beliefs differing from their own.
10. Students requested to participate in church/religious oriented activities must be on a voluntary basis. This would be applicable on days of workshop and/or holidays also.