


<p style="text-align: center;">Tucson Unified School District  <i>Celebrate the US!</i> Tucson, Arizona</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES</p>	TITLE: Holiday Activities
	DEPARTMENT: Legal Department

Religious Holidays

Public schools may not sponsor religious practices. Schools may, however, recognize religious holidays. The recognition of the holiday may not be overly religious, and must emphasize secular instruction about religious traditions rather than promote or inculcate a religious belief.

This does not mean that all recognition of religious holidays must be banned. The resolution lies in creating holiday programs that serve an educational purpose. Programs should not make a child feel excluded because of his/her religion, nor should he/she feel forcibly identified with a religion not his/her own. Holiday programs may include religious music and themes, but these should not dominate. Any skit should emphasize cultural, rather than religious aspects, of the holiday. The bottom line is to teach about the holiday without celebrating the holiday or engaging in religious observance.

Holiday Displays

Holiday displays should be temporary, require no active participation in any religious activity and should include diverse religious, cultural and ethnic symbols. For example, in any given year, a number of holidays may occur in December – Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Bill of Rights Day, and Badhi Day (Buddhist) – and may be appropriate for a lesson on the various celebrations held in the winter season. In this context, it is permissible for teachers to display religious symbols, so long as they are used solely as a teaching aid and only displayed temporarily as part of an educational lesson. Generally speaking the following holiday symbols are considered secular and therefore appropriate for use in public schools: Santa Claus, Christmas trees, reindeer, snowmen, elves, carolers, candy canes, greeting cards, wreaths, candles, menorahs, and holiday lights.

Music

Musical selections should be chosen on the basis of their particular musical, historical and educational value, and be presented in concert with a balanced representation of musical works, whether sacred or secular, with consideration of the grade levels involved. Musical pieces should be selected and performed as works of art, not as acts

of veneration. Program notes or oral narration may be provided. These notes should establish an objective context for the performance by giving such information as historical data, identification of the particular group for which the number has significance, and technical characteristics worthy of note.

Concerts and Performances

Concerts that present a variety of selections may include religious music, although concerts should avoid being dominated by religious music related to one religious group's holiday.

Accommodating Observance of Religious Holidays

Students from many religious traditions may ask to be excused from classroom discussions or activities related to particular holidays. Some holidays considered by many people to be secular (e.g., Valentine's Day, Halloween) are viewed by others as having religious connotations. Requests to be excused from participating in holiday programs should be routinely granted and provisions made for alternative activities.

In addition, some parents and students may request to be excused from discussions of certain holidays even when approached from an academic perspective. If focused on a limited, specific discussion, such requests may be granted in order to strike a balance between the student's religious interests and the school's interest in providing a well-rounded education.

Administrators and teachers should understand that a policy or practice of excusing objecting students from a specific activity or discussion does not mean the school may then sponsor religious celebrations or worship for the remaining students.

Authorized by the Superintendent: October 20, 2006

Revision:

Review:

LEGAL REF.