

**Burlington School District Policy
G 18: RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND SYMBOLS POLICY**

Former Policy INBA

It is the policy of the Burlington School District to foster understanding and mutual respect among students, staff, parents, and the community of religious beliefs and backgrounds. The primary mission of the District is education. The proper role of religion in the public school lies in its academic value and not in the appropriation or endorsement of any particular religion or belief system, or of religion over non-religion. This policy will encourage the advancement of our students' knowledge of, and appreciation for the role that religious heritage has played, and continues to play, in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

This policy recognizes the function of the school as a meeting place for children and families of different backgrounds and beliefs, as well as the increasing diversity of religious faith and expression present in our community, and prevents the effect of marginalization of minority members of the school community. Application of this policy will enhance our understanding of and respect for differences in religious beliefs and practices, and deepen our understanding of our common humanity.

In furtherance of this policy:

1. All engagement with religion, whether in the form of teaching about a religious holiday, the role of religion in history, school programs or the academic study of religion itself, must be done solely with education and understanding as its goal.
2. Curriculum planning should include the study of religions, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education, which can enhance student understanding and appreciation of diverse religious beliefs and practices. It is incumbent on teachers to teach about religion broadly, respectfully and inclusively.
3. Teaching about religious holidays, which is permissible, is different from celebrating religious holidays, which is not permissible. There shall be no school initiated or sanctioned formal or informal observance of religion, religious holidays or religious festivals.
4. Our schools shall be sensitive and responsive to the experiences of religious cultures or traditions, both in curriculum activities as well as scheduling of events and assessments, where options exist.
5. Staff shall be provided training, guidance, and specific advice regarding implementation of this policy

Procedures will be developed by the administration that both guide how religious holidays will be taught within the context of the curriculum as well as how student observances of religious holidays will be respected within the context of the learning environment. Procedures will be available at each school and at the Superintendent's office.

Legal References:

First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution
16 V.S.A. 563 (Powers of School Boards)
16 V.S.A. 563a (Harassment and hazing prevention)
Vt. Board of Education Regulations, School Quality Standards, 200, et Seq.

Cross References:

G 7, Curriculum Coordination
G 12, Selection of Instructional Materials
B 5, Powers of School Boards
G 17, Controversial Issues

Policy reviews & updates:

April 1, 2003	First reading
May 13, 2003	Second reading & adoption
February 13, 2007	First reading
March 13, 2007	Second reading & adoption