

2271 WINTER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

The Randolph Schools shall observe the doctrine of separation of church and state in accordance with the constitution, statutes and decisional law. In a pluralistic society, public schools are places for persons of varying beliefs. Schools may neither promote nor denigrate any religion.

On the elementary level, natural opportunities arise for discussion of religious holidays while studying different cultures and communities. In the secondary curriculum, students of world history or literature have opportunities to consider the holy days of religious traditions.

Some holidays considered by many people to be secular are viewed by others as having religious overtones. Students from certain religious traditions may ask to be excused from classroom discussions or activities related to particular holidays.

Some parents and students may make requests for excusals from discussions of certain holidays even when treated 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 freedom and the school's interest in providing a well-rounded education.

Holiday programs should be devised in a manner that would serve an educational purpose for all students. Programs should compel no student to identify with a religion or belief not his/her own.

Holiday concerts in December may appropriately include music related to Christmas and Hanukkah, but religious music should not dominate. Any dramatic productions should emphasize the cultural aspects of the holidays. Nativity pageants or plays portraying the Hanukkah miracle are not appropriate in the public school setting.

While recognizing the holiday season, none of the school activities in December should have the purpose, or effect, of promoting or inhibiting religion.

Musical Activities

Sacred music may be sung or played as part of the academic study of music. School concerts that present a variety of selections may include religious music. Concerts should avoid programs dominated by religious music, especially when these coincide with a particular religious holiday.



All holiday music programs shall be approved by a committee including the Superintendent of Schools **and Superintendent designee, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and the music supervisor.** Upon request, interested parents may examine copies of the musical selections of all programs at the office of instruction.

Cultural Activities

The use of art, drama or literature with religious themes also is permissible if it serves a sound educational goal in the curriculum but not if used as a vehicle for promoting religious belief.

Instructional Use of Religious Items

The use of religious symbols, provided they are used only as examples of cultural and religious heritage, is permissible as a teaching aid or resource. Religious symbols may be displayed only on a temporary basis as part of the academic program. Students may choose to create artwork with religious symbols, but teachers should not encourage or discourage such creations.

Holiday Decorations

The balanced use of objects and symbols representing the cultural and secular aspects of the winter holiday season is permitted. Seasonal displays should not be designed so as to give the appearance of the district endorsing any particular religion.

Common areas of the school, i.e. hallways, lobbies, cafeterias may be decorated with student produced artwork which is seasonal in nature and is displayed in a manner which is consistent with the school's impartial view of religion.

Adopted: 17 July 2012
Revised:

