

SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES

HOLIDAY POLICY:

M.S.A.D. No. 75 schools reflect an increasingly diverse society with many religious, ethnic and cultural traditions and beliefs that are meaningful to the students and adults in our communities.

Holidays and traditions provide the opportunity for confirmation and hope to individuals and families, and provide rich opportunities for learning. It is the responsibility of the schools to create awareness of and increased sensitivity to our diverse society, in order to establish and maintain a comfortable climate for learning throughout the entire school year for all students and adults.

The M.S.A.D. No. 75 Board of Directors encourages all those involved in educating our children to be aware and knowledgeable of religious diversity and cultural differences.

Religious holidays may be seen as opportunities to teach about religion, history and culture. The celebration of religious holidays in the classroom or school-wide is not appropriate. The exploration of religious holiday practice must take into account the existence of religious diversity in our society at large and should not be limited to one time of the year.

The study of religious holidays should serve academic goals, as outlined in the District Learning Results, of educating students about family traditions and their relationship to culture, cultural differences and similarities, as well as about the beliefs and practices of various religions. Holiday symbols may be used within this educational context. They should not be used as decorations. This does not apply to personal choices about dress. Careful consideration should be given of holiday symbols that may be regarded by some as secular and by others as religious.

GUIDELINES:

- This policy does not apply to student or District employee dress. Established dress codes remain in effect at all times.
- This policy does not limit any private conversation regarding religious matters. Educational programs and activities are in no way affected by this policy.
- This does not apply to the selling of holiday materials as fund-raisers as long as it is not excessive. Fund-raisers need to be sensitive to the religious affiliations of those who might sell the items and those who might purchase them.

FILE: IND
Revised 6-23-2011

- This policy applies to all District-owned and leased buildings with the exception of spaces leased by third parties not affiliated with or funded by the District.
- The M.S.A.D. No. 75 policy on Sacred Music supports student performances of sacred music as long as its purpose is secular, educational, neither enhances nor inhibits religion, and involves no “entanglement” with religious organizations. This policy should not be interpreted as inhibiting the performance of sacred music at school performances. Rather, it should be viewed as describing the context in which it is performed.
- Further clarification of this policy can be found in its accompanying “Frequently Asked Questions.”

PROCEDURES:

1. All new teachers and staff will be informed of the policy at the outset of employment.
2. The policy will be placed in its entirety (including the Frequently Asked Questions) in the M.S.A.D. No. 75 Employee Handbook. Employees are required to sign the handbook to confirm that it has been read.
3. At the outset of the year, the calendar of major religious holiday date will be distributed to all employees, as well as the policy in its entirety.
4. Employees will be reminded of the policy in November, prior to the holiday season.
5. School leaders will ensure that faculty and staff know how to respond appropriately to student or parent questions regarding the policy, emphasizing that the policy does not restrict First Amendment rights regarding speech or dress and that it places religious holidays inside an educational context.

FIRST READING:	April 13, 2000
SECOND READING:	May 11, 2000
ADOPTION:	May 11, 2000
FIRST READING OF REVISIONS:	May 9, 2002
SECOND READING OF REVISIONS:	May 23, 2002
ADOPTION OF REVISIONS:	May 23, 2002
FIRST READING OF REVISIONS:	June 2, 2011
SECOND READING OF REVISIONS:	June 23, 2011
ADOPTION OF REVISIONS:	June 23, 2011