

Harvard Public Schools Policy Guidelines Regarding Educational Activities and Religious Holidays

In accordance with the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which affirms the basic American tradition of separation of church and state, the Harvard Public Schools shall ensure that no practices are allowed in the schools which convey endorsement or disapproval of any religion or religions, nor sponsor any activity which promotes or disparages any religion or religions. Students shall not be solicited in school by teachers or staff to participate in any form of religious devotion to take place before, during, or after school. Any school programs relating to religious holiday observances should serve an educational purpose for all students.

Music programs given at times close to religious holidays should not use religious aspects of these holidays as the underlying motive or theme. Although religious music is appropriate in the schools to the extent that it is sung or presented for musical rather than religious content, its use should not violate the secular nature of the school. Pageants, plays, recitals, and other literary or dramatic activities should not be used to convey religious messages. While religious holidays represent a valid source of ideas for meaningful school art experiences, teachers should avoid assigning or encouraging artwork that promotes religious aspects of such holidays. If, however, individual students choose to use a religious personage, event, or symbol as the vehicles for artistic expressions, they should be allowed to take this action.

Any parent or guardian of a student in the schools who has a serious concern about the implementation of this policy should follow the procedures for grievances and complaints described in policy KE, Public Complaints.

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