

Instruction

School Ceremonies and Observances

Silent Meditation

The Board directs that the administration shall provide for students and teachers the opportunity to observe an appropriate period of time for silent meditation at the beginning of each school day.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Board further directs that an opportunity to say the Pledge of Allegiance shall be provided each school day. Participation in the recitation of the Pledge is voluntary.

Each school within the district shall provide time each school day for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Such recitation is voluntary. If, because of some personal philosophy or belief, a student has made the personal decision not to recite the "Pledge," he/she may choose to remain seated and silent. Students may wish to use this time to reflect on their belief or remember loved ones. In any event, all students must be courteous and respectful of the beliefs of others.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-16a Silent meditation.

10-29a Certain days to be proclaimed by governor. Distribution and number of proclamations

10-230 Flags for schoolrooms and schools

PA 02-119, An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools and Concerning the Pledge of Allegiance

No Child Left Behind Act

Policy adopted: January 17, 2012

PUTNAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Putnam, Connecticut

Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances

Separation of Church and State

Salute to the Flag and the Star Spangled Banner

Time shall be provided daily, preferably during the morning opening exercises, to provide the opportunity for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Permissive language rather than mandatory language, shall be used to introduce the recitation of the Pledge, such as, "You may now stand to recite the Pledge, or, You are invited to participate in the recitation of the Pledge."

If, because of some personal philosophy or belief, a student has made the personal, serious decision not to salute the Flag or stand for the "Star Spangled Banner," he/she may choose to remain seated and silent. Students may wish to use this time to reflect on their belief or remember loved ones. In any event, all students must be courteous and respectful of the beliefs of others.

Recognition of Religious Holidays

The recognition of holidays of different religions presents a natural and convenient opportunity for providing learning experiences to develop understanding, appreciation and respect for religious diversity.

1. The holidays to be recognized must be representative of the diverse religions of the world, not just Christianity and Judaism, and must be of historical and cultural significance to the religions they represent.
2. All religions must be treated with equal dignity, in a context based upon the premise that the time and resources devoted to the recognition of religious holidays be a very small part of that devoted to the total educational program.
3. All religions whose holidays are recognized must be afforded equal respect; none, as well as the right to disbelieve, shall be advanced or disparaged.
4. Recognition of religious holidays must be a secular education experience directed solely to enhancing tolerance of and respect for religious diversity and must be developmentally and age-appropriate, accurate in content, and objective in presentation.

Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances

Separation of Church and State

Salute to the Flag and the Star Spangled Banner (continued)

5. All programs and materials used for recognizing religious holidays must support curriculum objectives.
6. All programs and materials used must neither promote nor inhibit any ethnic, religious, or racial views.
7. All programs and materials used for recognizing religious holidays must be sensitive to the needs of the various backgrounds of the students.
8. Decorations that are a part of the custom and folklore of a religious holiday, that have no direct religious meaning or bearing (e.g., menorah, Christmas tree) may be displayed. Christmas trees must be secularly decorated and may be displayed.
9. Performance in the arts that recognize religious holidays must be for artistic reasons, not religious. The design and total effect of a performance must adhere to this purpose. How this will be accomplished should be explained prior to the performance taking place.
10. Musical concerts may include sacred music and traditional music of a religious holiday provided they are balanced with solutions that reflect the customs and folklore as well as festive and seasonal characteristics associated with the holiday. Religious music must not predominate although this may not be possible where major works are programmed at the high school.
11. Parents shall have the right to have their children excluded from any classroom or school program involving the recognition of religious holidays. This request must be made in writing to the Building Principal.

It is also necessary to be mindful of the Constitutional requirement of the separation of church and state. However, if a display conveys a secular recognition of different traditions for celebrating the winter holiday season, it may be appropriate (e.g., a crèche alone is unconstitutional, but a multi-tradition display combining a crèche, tree, menorah, etc., with information about the items displayed, without promoting them, may be constitutional). In short, the displays must involve an educational purpose.

Instruction

Ceremonies and Observances

Separation of Church and State

Federally Required Guidelines

Students have the following rights pursuant to federal law:

- To engage in private, non-disruptive activity such as prayer or bible reading while at school;
- Participation in before or after school events that have a religious content;
- To study about religion when appropriate to the curriculum;
- To produce written expressions of religious beliefs in homework, art work, and other assignments;
- To distribute in a non-disruptive manner, subject to reasonable restrictions as to time, place, and manner, religious literature;
- To be excused for religious reasons from participation in school programs or activities;
- To be granted release time to attend religious events;
- To wear clothing that includes a non disruptive religious theme or message;
- To be given access to school media to announce religious events in the same manner as other organizations;

To be granted access to school facilities for religious activities in the same manner as other organizations.

Instruction

Graduation Exercises - Student Speeches/Student Participation

Completion of the requirements for a high school diploma from the public schools of the district is an achievement that improves the community as well as the individual. Therefore, the Board shall recognize that achievement in a publicly celebrated graduation exercise.

Accordingly, appropriate graduation programs shall be planned by the administration. The date of the graduation ceremony shall be set at the regular Board of Education meeting each calendar year in April.

The District's valedictorian(s), salutatorian(s) or others at the discretion of the Building Principal or his/her designee may be permitted to speak as part of the school's planned graduation program. All such speeches shall be reviewed and approved in advance by the Building Principal or his/her designee.

All students in good standing who have successfully completed the requirements for graduation may participate in the graduation exercises.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-16a Silent meditation.

10-15c Discrimination in public schools prohibited.

Lee v. Weisman, 112 S. Ct. 2649 (1992).

Jones v. Clear Creek Independent School District, 977 F. 2d 963 (5th Cir.1992).

Harris v. Joint School District, 41 F.3d 447 (9th Cir. 1994).

American Civil Liberties Union of NJ v. Black Horse Pike Regional Board of Education, 84 F.3d 1471 (3rd Cir. 1996).

Santa Fe Independent School Dist. V. Doe, 430 U.S. 290 (2000)

Policy adopted: January 17, 2012

PUTNAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Putnam, Connecticut