

TOPEKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	REGULATION NUMBER: 6130-1
SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY IN THE SCHOOLS	DATE OF ISSUE: 08/21/85 <hr/> REVISIONS: <hr/> PREPARING OFFICE: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

I. PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines for activities involving religious content, ceremony, or celebration.

II. PERSONNEL AFFECTED:

- A. Board of Education Members
- B. All District Personnel

III. PROCEDURE:

A. The following questions established by the United States Supreme Court should be asked of each school-sponsored observance, program, instructional or other activity involving religious content, ceremony, or celebration:

- 1. What is the purpose of the activity? Is the purpose secular in nature?
- 2. What is the primary effect of the activity? Is it the celebration of religion? Does the activity either advance or inhibit religion?
- 3. Does the activity involve an excessive entanglement with a religion, religious group, or between the schools and a religious organization? Are funds of a religious origin being used for a school activity? Does either the school or religious activity require the consent or approval of the other?

If the purpose of the activity is secular, if the effect of the activity does not advance or inhibit religion, and if the activity does not involve an excessive entanglement, then the activity is permissible. All three criteria must be met.

B. School Ceremonies and Observances

The following regulation statements apply to such school activities:

- 1. Religious heritages and their histories, arts, symbols, and tenets may be included within a program of religiously neutral education. Such

studies must be objective in nature and directly related to the broader educational purposes in the various fields of study.

- 2. At no time shall any form of religious belief or system denying or objecting to belief be advanced or disparaged nor shall any form of religious indoctrination or exercise be conducted by the school district or its employees.**
- 3. The historical and contemporary significance and the symbols and origins of religious holidays may be studied within the guidelines of this regulation.**
- 4. Music, art, literature, and drama related to religious holidays may be studied and performed in programs if they are presented in an objective and neutral manner as a tradition of the cultural heritage of the particular holiday. Such programs should be part of a curricular unit and should be simply staged and costumed.**
- 5. In response to class questions and assignments, students shall be free to initiate expressions of religious belief or nonbelief through compositions, art forms, music, speech, and debate.**

C. Exemptions from Required Instruction

If the religious teachings of a student are contrary to any school activity, the student shall not be required to participate in the activity. To receive such an exemption, a written statement signed by one of the parents or a person acting as a parent of the student must be filed with the school principal requesting that the child not be required to participate in such activities and stating the reason for the request. (Students who receive such exemptions from instruction are still responsible for the total credit hours required for graduation.)

D. Student Absences and Excuses

When requested by the parent or guardian, students will be excused for observance of religious holidays.