RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
Teaching About Religion

Purpose: To establish the board’s vision for teaching about religion in district schools.

The contribution of religions to civilizations is one of the crucial keys to understanding human history and development. Therefore, the study of religious history and traditions should be part of the school curriculum as designated by state Social Studies Curriculum Standards. Study can play a vital role in enhancing an understanding among people of different religious backgrounds and beliefs. Any study of religious history and traditions should give neither preferential nor derogatory treatment to any single religion or to religion in general and should not be introduced or utilized for devotional purposes.

Neither the district nor its employees will promote or disparage any religious belief or non-belief. Instead, the district will encourage all students and staff members to appreciate and tolerate each other’s religious views.

The district supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama and the arts in the curriculum and in school activities, provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively.

A student may express his/her beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of his/her submission.

The district will accommodate student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments that reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme. For example, students are free to express a religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

Observance of Religious Holidays

The district will practice the following in the observance of religious holidays:

- The several holidays throughout the year which have a religious and a secular basis may be observed in the public schools.
- The historical and contemporary values and the origin of religious holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.
- The district will permit music, art, literature, and drama having religious themes or basis as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if they are presented in a
prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.

- The district will permit use of religious symbols such as a cross, menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, symbols of Native American religions, or other symbols that are a part of a religious holiday as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature displayed on a temporary basis.

- The district will prepare its calendar so as to minimize conflicts with religious holidays of all faiths as much as possible.

Option: Elective Courses on the Old and New Testament Era

The district will offer high school level elective courses on the history and literature of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Any courses offered will be based on State Board of Education academic standards and instructional materials and meet the following criteria:

- Courses offered will be taught in an objective manner with no attempt to influence the students as to either the truth or falsity of the materials presented.

- The school will award students the same number of Carnegie units as are awarded to other classes of similar duration.

- While the board may recommend a particular version of the Old or New Testament to be used in either course, the teacher and the enrolled students may use any version.

- The course will be taught by a certified teacher.

The board must ensure supervision and control of the courses in accordance with the criteria set out in this policy.

Adopted prior to 1972; Revised 5/81, 7/1/03, ^

Legal References:

A.  S. C. Code, 1976, as amended:
   2. Section 59-17-140 - Religion and public schools training for teachers and administrators.