



Religious Issues and The Arts Information

Frequently the Arts Education Office is asked to respond to parental concerns regarding religion in the arts.

Below you will find the official citations, but here is advice for Arts Education:

- Use common sense and make selections that address the curriculum
- Discuss your selections with your administration
- Offer a wide variety of experiences cross over as many cultures as possible while maintaining your focus on the curriculum. If you need assistance in finding music or theatre pieces with origins of other cultures, ask for help from the parents in your school community or the leaders in the local faith community. Consider International Focus as a resource - (festival in the fall numerous cultures not countries represented).

As a teacher of all children you should make appropriate choices that you can support as legitimate, instructional activities. A music selection might be classical perhaps in a foreign language music of that period was all written for the church because of funding . . . or you might teach a spiritual cultural context people passed on traditions/kept their spirits up through adversity . . . A theatre piece may reference holiday symbols but have a primary teaching objective of character traits or a historical event like the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Just make thoughtful choices that you can justify and you'll likely have few, if any, problems. Thanks for your continued commitment to quality arts education for our young people.

The Arts Education philosophy (adapted from the Anti-Defamation League Website) is consistent with the intent of the school board policy but specifically speaks to the arts.

Religious music or drama may be included in school events, which are part of a secular program of education. The content of these programs or events must be primarily secular, objective, educational and not focus on any one religion or religious observance. If the religious beliefs of students or their parents conflict with the content of the activity, students may be excused without any adverse consequences.

Symbols of religious holidays, which have acquired secular meaning, such as Christmas trees, may be permissible as decorations. Teachers and administrators should be sensitive to students who represent different religions and provide a broad range of experiences to build an appreciation for diversity.

*******WCPSS School Board Policy*******

2900 SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES 2900

The Wake County Public School System is committed to a position of neutrality in matters of religion. Although the schools and school employees shall promote understanding of religious diversity, encourage a spirit of brotherhood, and cultivate harmony among persons of various religious beliefs, the primary effect of any activity must neither advance nor inhibit religion.

2910 TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION 2910

The secular teaching about religions and about the history and practice of religions is permitted. The teaching of patriotic, historic, and literary documents having religious references embedded in them is permitted. Students shall be permitted to express religious themes through their natural artistic talents.

2920 TEACHING about HOLIDAYS 2920

The board encourages reasonable recognition of holidays in the schools in the spirit of sharing different rites and customs revealing the many different religious, philosophical, and cultural practices and beliefs held by Americans. In recognizing the various holidays, school employees may display secular symbols associated with holidays and may display religious holiday symbols as part of the secular teaching about religions and about the history and practice of religions. The display of religious holiday symbols that would have the purpose or effect of promoting religion is prohibited.