

SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Date: March 5, 2019

To: Area Superintendents and All School Principals; Division and Department Heads

Subject: RELIGION IN EDUCATION

Department and/or Persons Concerned: Area Superintendents, Principals

Reference: BP 6141.2, BP 6144, AR 6141.2, AR 6144, California Education Code section 51511, 20 U.S.C. section 6061 (School Prayer)

Brief Explanation:

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution establishes certain limits on the conduct of public school officials as it relates to religious activity, but does not prohibit the study of comparative religion, or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. The history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture) as literature (either as a separate course or within some other existing course), are all permissible public school subjects. However, the First Amendment requires that such material be presented in a neutral and balanced manner, which neither favors nor disfavors one religion over another.

San Diego Unified follows California state curriculum provided in the 2016 State of California History-Social Science Framework (“Framework”), which was adopted by the State Board of Education on July 14, 2016. Chapters 10 and 11 of the Framework cover World History and Geography in Grades 6 and 7, respectively. Included within the Framework is the study of world religions in the context of world history. Specifically, students are asked to evaluate the manner in which major religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism and cultural systems such as Confucianism, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment developed, and changed over time and spread to multiple cultures. Students may be asked to read excerpts from religious texts in connection with their studies.

Appendix F of the Framework provides guidance to educators about how to present material about religion in a manner that is constitutionally and academically appropriate. The Framework specifies all instructional materials must be in accordance with the guidance provided in Appendix F.

Additionally, the Board of Education has adopted Board Policies (“BP”) and Administrative Regulations (“AR”) 6141.2, regarding the recognition of religious beliefs and customs in instruction, and 6144, regarding the presentation of controversial issues, in order to ensure the District’s programs and activity comply with the state and federal constitution as well as Education Code section 51511.

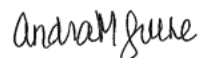
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In accordance with the above:

- Educational material on religious subjects must be neutral and may not be presented in a manner that promotes one religion over another.
- Educators should treat each religion with equal respect, with the time and attention spent discussing each religion being proportionate to its impact on history and human development and the material presented in its historical context.
- Belief systems must be presented in historical contexts and may not be presented as fact unless there is independent historical evidence justifying presentation in that manner.
- Religious texts, leaders and events must be examined using the same rigor and analytical methods and standards applied to other topics.
- Students who respond to class assignments with appropriately related religious content must be graded according to the same criteria applied to all other students and must not be penalized for expressions of belief or non-belief.
- Educators and other staff may not discuss or promote their personal religious views when acting in their official capacity. This includes displaying religious symbols, and encouraging or discouraging student participation in religious activities.
- Educators must allow students to freely express their religious beliefs, but may not indicate agreement or disagreement with those beliefs.
- Educators or other staff sponsoring guest speakers at District events must ask them not to use their position or influence on students to forward their own religious, political, economic or social views and shall take active steps to neutralize whatever bias has been presented. Guest speakers from religious organizations are not permitted to present to students on religious topics.



Andra M. Greene
General Counsel

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