

COMMITMENT TO RELIGIOUS NEUTRALITY (Prayer in the Schools)

This policy supersedes any other Board Policy that might be inconsistent with it.

Notwithstanding anything which may inadvertently still appear in policy, the Board of Education understands that administration and staff must recognize the First Amendment religious rights of students. The Board further recognizes that the United States Constitution's First Amendment imposes two equally important obligations on public schools.

First, schools must not forbid students acting on their own from expressing their personal religious views or beliefs as long as their action(s) or statement(s) do not, in any significant measure, interfere with the educational process and/or instructional activities. Second, schools may not endorse religious activity or doctrine and students may not coerce participation in religious activity.

Schools must give students the same rights to engage in religious activity and discussion, as they engage in other comparable activity. Generally, this means that students may pray in a non-disruptive manner during the school day when they are not engaged in school activity and instruction, subject to the same rules as apply to other speech.

(cf. 1140 – Distribution of Materials to and by Students)

(cf. 6115 – Religious Ceremonies)

(cf. 6144 – Controversial Issues)

(cf. 6144.1 – Exemption from Instruction)

(cf. 6145 – Extra-Class Activities)

(cf. 6162.51 – Student Surveys)

(cf. 6145.3 – Distribution of Printed Matter, Freedom of School Press; Publications)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 10-16a Silent meditation.
 10-15c Discrimination in public schools prohibited.
 Lee vs. 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)
 20 U.S.C. 7904 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001)