

**BOARD POLICY**  
**Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District**

Instruction

6141.2 - BP

**RECOGNITION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS**

The Governing Board recognizes that students' education would be incomplete without an understanding of the role of religion in society. As appropriate for a particular course, teachers may objectively discuss the influences of various religions, using religious works and symbols to illustrate their relationship with culture, literature, or the arts. The Board expects that such instruction will identify principles common to all religions and foster respect for the diversity of religions and customs in the world and be consistent with the adopted instructional materials and state standards, as applicable.

In order to respect each student's individual right to freedom of religious practice, religious indoctrination is forbidden in public schools. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that instruction about religion does not promote or denigrate the beliefs or customs of any particular religion or sect, nor that a preference be shown for one religious viewpoint over another. Staff members shall be highly sensitive to their obligation not to interfere with the religious development of any student in whatever tradition the student embraces, and treat all religions and religious conviction, including nonbelief, with fairness and respect.

Staff shall not endorse, encourage, or solicit religious or anti-religious expression or activities among students during class time.

Staff shall not coerce students in prayer or other religious activities as part of their official duties, including at all times staff are providing services to the District and/or responsible for the supervision of District pupils (see Title 5 sections 5530 to 5596). When acting in their private capacity and not on duty and/or responsible for the supervision of District pupils, staff are not prohibited from communicating with students regarding prayer or other religious activity. Additionally, staff shall not prohibit or discourage any student from praying or otherwise expressing the student's religious belief so long as this does not disrupt the classroom or other district-sponsored activity.

Students may express their beliefs about religion in their homework, artwork, and other class work if the expression is germane to the assignment. Such work shall be judged by ordinary academic standards, relevance, and other legitimate pedagogical objectives.

While teaching about religious holidays is a permissible part of the educational program, celebrating religious holidays is not allowed in the district. School-sponsored programs shall not be, nor have the effect of being, religiously oriented or a religious celebration. School and classroom decorations may express seasonal themes that are not religious in nature. The use of religious symbols that are part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided that such symbols are displayed as an example of cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and temporary in nature.

Classroom methods in instruction about religion shall not include religious role-playing activities or simulated religious devotional acts.

Music, art, literature or drama programs having religious themes are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in an objective manner and as a traditional part of cultural and religious heritage.

District schools shall not prohibit religious activities if the same or similar non-religious activities are permitted.

When required by law, the district shall notify parents/guardians that they may, via written request, opt their student out of instruction on the basis of their religious beliefs as specified in the accompanying administrative regulation. Students whose parents/guardians opt them out of such instruction may be offered an alternative activity of similar educational value. Additionally, a student shall not be subject to disciplinary action, academic penalty, or other sanction on the grounds that the student was opted out of such instruction.

## Legal Reference

| State                                          | Description                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ed. Code 38130-38139                           | Civic Center Act                                                                                                            |
| Ed. Code 46014                                 | Absences for religious purposes                                                                                             |
| Ed. Code 51511                                 | Religious matters properly included in courses of study                                                                     |
| Ed. Code 51938                                 | Right of parent/guardian to excuse from sexual health instruction                                                           |
| Federal                                        | Description                                                                                                                 |
| 20 USC 4071-4074                               | Equal Access Act                                                                                                            |
| 20 USC 6061                                    | School prayer                                                                                                               |
| 20 USC 7904                                    | School prayer                                                                                                               |
| Management Resources                           | Description                                                                                                                 |
| California Department of Education Publication | Appendix F history social science framework for California public schools                                                   |
| Court Decision                                 | Mahmoud v. Taylor (2025) 606 U.S. ____ (2025 WL 1773627)                                                                    |
| Court Decision                                 | Florey v. Sioux Falls (1980) 619 F.2d 1311                                                                                  |
| Court Decision                                 | Fellowship of Christian Athletes v. San Jose Unified School District Board of Education (2023) 82 F.4th 664                 |
| Court Decision                                 | Kennedy v. Bremerton (2022) 142 S.Ct. 2407                                                                                  |
| Court Decision                                 | Cole v. Oroville Union High School District (2000, 9th Cir.) 228 F.3d 1092                                                  |
| Court Decision                                 | Lassonde v. Pleasanton Unified School District (2003, 9th Cir.) 320 F.3d 979                                                |
| Court Decision                                 | Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971) 403 U.S. 602                                                                                       |
| U.S. Department of Education Publication       | Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, May 2023 |
| Website                                        | CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services                                                                 |
| Website                                        | California Department of Education                                                                                          |
| Website                                        | CSBA                                                                                                                        |
| Website                                        | U.S. Department of Education                                                                                                |

## Cross References

| Code | Description                                           |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 0410 | Nondiscrimination In District Programs And Activities |
| 0450 | Comprehensive Safety Plan                             |
| 0450 | Comprehensive Safety Plan                             |
| 1325 | Advertising And Promotion                             |
| 1330 | Use Of School Facilities                              |
| 1330 | Use Of School Facilities                              |
| 5113 | Absences And Excuses                                  |
| 5113 | Absences And Excuses                                  |

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|---------|------------------------------------------|
| 5121    | Grades/Evaluation Of Student Achievement |
| 5121    | Grades/Evaluation Of Student Achievement |
| 5127    | Graduation Ceremonies And Activities     |
| 5132    | Dress And Grooming                       |
| 5132    | Dress And Grooming                       |
| 5141.31 | Immunizations                            |
| 5141.31 | Immunizations                            |
| 5145.2  | Freedom Of Speech/Expression             |
| 5145.2  | Freedom Of Speech/Expression             |
| 6111    | School Calendar                          |
| 6115    | Ceremonies And Observances               |
| 6115    | Ceremonies And Observances               |
| 6142.8  | Comprehensive Health Education           |
| 6142.8  | Comprehensive Health Education           |
| 6142.93 | Science Instruction                      |
| 6142.94 | History-Social Science Instruction       |
| 6143    | Courses Of Study                         |
| 6143    | Courses Of Study                         |
| 6144    | Controversial Issues                     |
| 6145.5  | Student Organizations And Equal Access   |
| 6145.5  | Student Organizations And Equal Access   |
| 6145.8  | Assemblies And Special Events            |
| 6154    | Homework/Makeup Work                     |
| 6161.11 | Supplementary Instructional Materials    |
| 6176    | Weekend/Saturday Classes                 |

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