

POLICY ————— PEQUANNOCK TOWNSHIP

BOARD OF EDUCATION

OPERATIONS

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Ceremonies and Observances

8810 – CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES

The relationship of religious and religious practices to public school is recognized as a tenuous one as evidenced by numerous court decisions. The following policy statements shall cover practices regarding patriotic and religious customs and holidays.

Out of School Religious Observances

1. School personnel will take into account the possible effects of religious holidays on school attendance when planning school calendars. When possible, examinations and other major events will not be scheduled on such holidays.
2. Teachers will provide students who miss work because of religious reasons an opportunity to make up school work.
3. Any instruction in the school which may be contrary to a pupil's religious beliefs and teachings shall be viewed as optional for the pupil.
4. No pupil who is absent by reason of observance of a religious holiday shall be denied any right or opportunity given to students who were in attendance at that time.
5. The Board shall not prevent, or otherwise deny participation in, constitutionally protected prayer in any district school, consistent with guidance issued by the United States Department of Education and applicable judicial decisions interpreting the religion clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Programs

1. The schools must show no preference for one religion over another, and must refrain from the promotion of any religion or all religions. Consequently no religious celebration may be held in the public schools.
2. "Religious celebration" is defined as a formal observance, including worship or religious service of any kind whether or not conducted by a clergyman.
3. A program or observance related to religious holiday in theme or timing should be evaluated as to its purpose and effect. If both the purpose and the effect are judged to be secular rather than religious, the program would be acceptable.

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4. Non-profit faith based organizations are permitted to be supplemental service providers under the No Child Left Behind Act, provided the content that is secular, neutral and non-ideological. Such organizations need not modify their religious character identification to be eligible to become supplemental service providers.

U.S. Consti., First Amendment

N.J. Consti., Art. 1, 4

N.J.S.A. 18A:36-16

N.J.A.C. 6:20-1.3(j)

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