609 RELIGION

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to identify the status of religion as it pertains to the programs of the school district.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. The school district shall neither promote nor disparage any religious belief or nonbelief. Instead, the school district encourages all students and employees to have appreciation for and tolerance of each other's views.

B. The school district also recognizes that religion plays a significant role in the social, cultural, political, and historical development of civilization.

C. The school district recognizes that one of its educational objectives is to increase its students' knowledge and appreciation of music, art, drama, and literature which may have a religious basis or origin as well as a secular importance.

D. The school district supports the inclusion of religious music, art, drama, and literature in the curriculum and in school activities provided it is intrinsic to the learning experience and is presented in an objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.

E. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of various religions, holidays, customs and beliefs shall, if used, be explained in an unbiased and nonsectarian manner.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

A. It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent to ensure that the study of religious materials, customs, beliefs and holidays in the school district is in keeping with the following guidelines:

1. The proposed study or activity must have a secular purpose.
2. The primary objective of the study or activity must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion.
3. The study or activity must not foster excessive governmental relationships with religion.
4. Notwithstanding the foregoing guidelines, reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from attendance at school for the purpose of religious instruction or observance of religious holidays.

B. Outside Speakers.
Outside speakers are permitted in accordance with Policy 644 – Community Resource Persons. Speakers may present informational and historical information about religion, but will not proselytize. The staff member in charge should advise each speaker of Policy 609 – Religion.

C. The superintendent is granted authority to develop and present for school board review and approval directives and guidelines for the purpose of providing further

guidance relative to the teaching of materials related to religion. Approved directives and guidelines shall be attached as an addendum to this policy.

Policy 609 - Religion
Adopted: 12/10/07

School Board
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 659
Northfield, Minnesota

Legal References: U. S. Const., amend. I
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, Subd. 12(3) (Compulsory Instruction)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence From School for Religious Observance)
Lemon v. Kurtzman, 403 U.S.602, 91 S.Ct. 2105, 29 L.Ed.2d 745 (1971)
Florey v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist. 49-5, 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir. 1980)
Stark v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 640, 123 F.3d 1068 (8th Cir. 1997)
Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe, 530 U.S. 290, 120 S.Ct. 2266 (2000)
Tangipahoa Parish Bd. of Educ. v. Freiler, 530 U.S. 1251, 120 S.Ct. 2706 (2000)
LeVake v. Independent Sch. Dist. No. 656, 625 N.W.2d 502 (Minn. App. 2001)
Good News Club v. Milford Central School, 533 U.S. 98, 121 S.Ct. 2093, 150 L.Ed.2d 151 (2001)
Doe v. School Dist. of City of Norfolk, 340 F.3d 605 (8th Cir. 2003)
Wigg v. Sioux Falls Sch. Dist., 382 F.3d 807 (8th Cir. 2004)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-J (Feb. 14, 1968)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169-K (Oct. 21, 1949)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 63 (1940)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 120 (1924)
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 121 (1924)

Cross References: MSBA/MASA Model Policy 801 (Equal Access to School Facilities)