

**CRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CRANFORD, NEW JERSEY**

POLICY: RECOGNITION AND EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The Board directs that no religious belief or non-belief shall be promoted in the regular curriculum or in direct sponsored courses, programs or activities, and none shall be disparaged. The Board also recognizes that a broad, genuine secular program of education is furthered by advancement of people's knowledge of our society's cultural and religious heritage. Accordingly, the Board endorses the following guidelines related to the recognition and expression of religious beliefs within the schools.

Student prayer and religious discussion: Students may pray in a nondisruptive manner when not engaged in school activities or instruction. Specifically, students in informal settings, such as cafeterias and hallways, may pray and discuss their religious views with each other, subject to the same rules of order as apply to other student activities and speech.

Students may also participate in before or after school events with religious content on the same terms as they may participate in other noncurriculum activities on school premises. The school administration will neither discourage nor encourage participation in such an event.

Teachers and school administrators will ensure that no student is in any way coerced to participate in religious activity.

Graduate prayer and baccalaureates: The school administration will not mandate or organize prayer at graduation, nor organize religious baccalaureate ceremonies.

Official neutrality regarding religious activity: Teachers and school administrators are prohibited from soliciting or encouraging religious activity, and from participating in such activity with students.

Teaching about religion: The schools will not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion, including the Bible or other scripture: the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture) as literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries all are permissible public school subjects. Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature, and social studies.

Student assignments: Students may express their beliefs about religion in the form of homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free of discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions.

Religious excusals: The schools will exercise discretion in excusing pupils from instruction for religious reasons. The schools will also exercise discretion in excusing pupils for off-premises religious instruction.

Legal References:

Religious Expression in the Public Schools: A Statement of Principles, U.S. Department of Education, June 1998

Adopted: November 28, 2005