



**DRAFT**

## **Celebration of Holidays**

The Regional School Unit No. 24 (RSU) Board (RSUB) creates this policy with a shared commitment of respect for individual religious beliefs expressed in the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty while ensuring its educational goal to advance students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion plays in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

The RSUB acknowledges that it is neither possible nor desirable for our schools to simply ignore religion and avoid all materials with a religious theme or implication.

RSU may neither promote nor inhibit religious belief or non-belief, so long as expressions of religious belief or non-belief are consistent with school rules and respect the rights of others.

The RSUB directs its administrators, teachers, and students with cooperation of parents and community, to make practical and reasonable decisions regarding religious holidays when in school. This requires a sensitivity to the needs of every student and a willingness to steer a course between the avoidance of all references to religion, on the one hand, and the promotion of religion on the other.

The intent of this policy is to reflect and balance the academic and instruction mission of our schools, the law, and legal guidelines related to the separation of church and state, the richness and diversity of our population and sensitivity to the rights and dignity of the individual, as they relate to the celebration of holidays.

The RSUB approves the following regulations in support of celebrating holidays in its school system:

- A. Holidays, which have a religious origin, may be acknowledged in the public schools.
- B. The historical and contemporary values and the origin of those holidays may be explained in an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.

- C. Music, art, literature, and drama, having religious themes or basis, will be permitted as part of the curricula for school-sponsored activities and programs, if presented in an objective manner.
  - 1. The duration of such programs and activities, which should be linked to the school's curriculum, should not exceed a period of time equivalent to the academic value of the program or activity.
- D. Symbols that are a part of a religion are permitted provided such symbols are displayed as examples of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature.
- E. Acknowledgement of a holiday will emphasize the historical, cultural, and social value of the holiday and the associated religion and will not be used to endorse any religion or holiday.

First Read: March 1, 2016

Adoption: