

*Congress shall make
no law respecting an
establishment of religion
or prohibiting the free
exercise thereof; or
abridging the freedom
of speech, or of the press,
or the right of the people
peaceably to assemble,
and to petition the
Government for a redress
of grievances.*

CHAPTER 8

8

Student Religious Practices

Our first challenge in America today is simply to open our eyes to these changes, to discover America anew, and to explore the many ways in which the new immigration has changed the religious landscape of our cities and towns, our neighborhoods and schools.

—Diana L. Eck
A New Religious America

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Many school districts are making efforts to inform administrators and teachers about the religious practices of their students. Knowledge about students' religious needs and requirements promotes understanding between parents and school officials and prepares teachers for questions or concerns when they arise.

Adherence to religious requirements such as special diet or dress is the responsibility of parents and students, not of the public school. In some cases, however, parents may request special accommodation (e.g., excusal from participation in certain school parties or events). Most of these requests may be easily granted without disrupting the educational work of the school.

In rare cases, requests for accommodation may be impossible to grant for practical or constitutional reasons. Even in these instances, some accommodation may be offered. For example, schools are unable to prepare special foods for some religious needs, but they can label foods and offer a variety of choices. When considering these requests, school officials should use the First Amendment framework discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 as a guide to treating the claims of religious conscience seriously and sensitively without putting the school in the position of endorsing or sponsoring religion.

The following information about student religious practices was compiled by the Religious Community Task Force in the Dallas Independent School District as part of a comprehensive policy on religion and schools issues. It is included here as an example of how a large, religiously diverse school district has acted to inform teachers and administrators about the religious practices of many students in the community. For the complete policy of the DISD and for more information about the task force that helped create the policy, contact Jane Didear, Communications Division, Dallas Independent School District, 3700 Ross Avenue, Dallas, TX 75204.



An Educator's Classroom Guide to America's Religions

Greenwood Press publishes Benjamin Hubbard, John Hatfield and James Santucci's guide to the beliefs and practices of a number of the world's religions. Designed specifically for teachers, the book examines each religious group in terms of its origins, beliefs, sacred scriptures, practices, main subgroups, common misunderstandings and stereotypes, and classroom concerns.





Religious Practices Within Dallas Public Schools

A NOTE FROM THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

The following information was collected from members of the Dallas Public Schools Religious Community Task Force. The items listed are general in nature. Some situations described are a blend of religious/ethnic/cultural practices which might have an impact on students during the school day. If you have questions or need more information about any of the items mentioned, inquiries are invited.

Most of the members of the Task Force represent large organizations, within which are many different levels of religious observation. Some students within each faith may follow all the dictates of the religion and others may observe only a few rituals. If the school can allow those things which do not disrupt normal classroom operations to occur, it avoids conflict for the student who feels under obligation to comply with family and religious mandates. If there must be an accommodation made for a practice to occur away from class, please arrange that through the principal.





Regarding the following material: Task force members have submitted the following information for easy reference, to cover areas which do not follow general cultural trends. The symbolic reference codes below indicate:

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|--|
|  | Medical restrictions |  | Observances or rituals during school hours |
|  | Special diet or foods | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Possible absences due to High Holy Days |
|  | Particular dress/clothing | | |





Various Protestant Christian Traditions

The following Christian denominations on the task force: **Baptists, Disciples, Episcopalians, Evangelicals, Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians**, have students in Dallas Public Schools whose beliefs and practices are culturally predominant, and therefore do not require special accommodations during school time. For example, many families worship on Sunday mornings and/or on Sunday and Wednesday evenings, when school is not in session. There are no medical, dietary, clothing or holiday needs that require special attention. However, some denominations report that extracurricular school activities and parent conferences conflict with some evening worship.





Baha'i

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | None. |  | None. |
|  | Students 15 years and older may refrain from eating or drinking during school hours between March 2-20. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Eleven holy days throughout the year, during which students may be absent or not allowed to do ordinary work. |
|  | None. | | |





Buddhism






























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|---|---|--|--|
|  | Ethnic medical attitudes may differ. |  | Beliefs do not include the existence of a creator. Terms such as idol-worshippers or heathens are offensive to these students. Students follow five moral Precepts & the Noble Eightfold Path which include respect for all animal and human life. Some students may object to participation in the dissection of animals and insects. |
|  | Students may prefer to be vegetarians; and some may abstain from dairy products and eggs. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Holy Days established on lunar calendar: Birth of the Buddha; Bodhi Day; the Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese New Year. |
|  | None. | | |





























Christian Science

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|---|---|--|-------|
|  | Reliance on prayer for effective health care. Legal exemptions from inoculations, vaccinations and immunizations. Request exemption from disease study. No medications, no physical exams, no testing of vision, hearing or intelligence. |  | None. |
|  | No caffeine, tobacco or alcoholic beverages. |  | None. |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | None. |

Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|-------------------------|
|  | None. |  | None. |
|  | No coffee, tea, tobacco, alcoholic beverages. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Normal school holidays. |
|  | Modest clothing. | | |

Religious Practices		
<p>Eastern Orthodox (includes: Antiochan, Armenian, Ethiopian (Coptic), Greek, Kenyan, Korean, Lebanese, Mexican, Syrian, and 5 Slavonic peoples: Bulgarian, Romanian, Russian, Serbian and Ukrainian)</p>	<p> None.</p> <p> Fasting (abstinence) is the refraining from eating identified foods and is not considered a special diet. Certain Feast Days are observed with a fast either prior to or on the feast day itself. If a student is fasting, he/she may: 1) fast every Wednesday and Friday except for designated fast-free periods, or 2) fast from at least meat or dairy products. Students who observe strict fasts may bring food from home. Lunchroom menus provide a varied selection for either fast.</p>	<p> None required.</p> <p> None other than fasting, which occurs during lunch hour; no academic interruptions.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students may attend services on their nameday to celebrate the Saint whose name they bear; or the following: Elevation of the Cross, beginning of the 40 Day Fast of the Nativity; Nativity; Epiphany; Great Lent; Annunciation of the Virgin Mary; Holy Week; Pasca (Resurrection) and Ascension Thursday.</p>
<p>Hare Krishna</p>	<p> No animal-derived medications.</p> <p> Lacto-vegetarians (do not eat meat, fish, fowl or eggs).</p> <p> Male students may have small tail of hair at back of head (Sikha).</p>	<p> None. Students respectful of authority.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dates according to lunar calendar. Janmastami; Vyasa-Puja Day; Diwali; Govardhana-Puja; Srila Prabhupada's Disappearance Day; Nityananda's Appearance Day; Gaura Purnima; Ram Navami; Nirshringhadev's Appearance Day.</p>
<p>Hinduism</p>	<p> None.</p> <p> Students may be strict vegetarians.</p> <p> An area at home or office is often designated as an altar.</p>	<p> Students may have paint-like mark on the forehead from morning worship, usually done with family at home.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dates according to Lunar calendar. Diwali; Govardhana-Puja, Ram Navami.</p>
<p>Islam</p>	<p> Males examined by male doctors; females examined by female doctors. No injections during Ramadan.</p> <p> No alcohol. No pork and any blood. No animals unless they are slaughtered (with prayer). Fish, if caught alive, may be eaten.</p> <p> Males must cover bodies from abdomen to knees; females must cover all except face, hands, feet.</p>	<p> Worship prayers (Salah) five times: at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and night. Students need silent and convenient places to perform daily prayers. Weekly Friday noon prayers for males. Polytheistic or atheistic statements and negative words against any Holy Books may not show respect for students.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ramadan Feast or Eidul-Fitr (end of fasting month); Eidul-Adha. Dates depend on actual sighting of the moon.</p>
<p>Jain Society Temple</p>	<p> None</p> <p> No eating of root plants (for some members)</p> <p> None</p>	<p> Fasting from 1-14 days.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Late August through early September.</p>
<p>Jehovah's Witnesses</p>	<p> Parents may request no blood transfusions.</p> <p> No addictive or habit-forming drugs or tobacco.</p> <p> None.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The only celebration is the memorial of Christ's death (lunar calendar—the first full moon after spring, after sunset).</p>	<p> Views on nationalism prohibit participation in flag saluting, the singing of national anthems or voting on elective offices. No participation in any religious celebrations or national holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Valentine's Day, etc. Areas that are a matter of conscience include extra-curricular activities such as sports, cheerleading, dating, attending parties or joining clubs. Alternative classroom materials and assignments could be directed to seasons versus holidays (such as "winter" rather than Christmas).</p>
<p>Judaism</p>	<p> None.</p> <p> Some boys may wear a skull cap and/or a fringed undergarment under their shirts. Some girls may dress with arms and legs covered.</p> <p> Some students may ask to wash hands or pray before a meal. Some students may refrain from doing school projects that occur on Friday evenings and/or Saturdays before sundown. Some students will not be able to participate in musical experiences and on programs whose content affirms religious positions that differ from their own.</p>	<p> Kosher food (marked with Kosher seal, "K", , etc.). Meat and chicken slaughtered by ritual law allowed. No shellfish or fish that do not have scales. No mixing of milk and meat products. No pork products. During Passover, a restricted diet allows no leavened food items such as bread; other holidays may require fasting.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Holidays begin at sundown the day before. Sabbath begins at sundown each Friday night and is complete at sundown on Saturdays. <i>Rosh Hashanah</i>; Yom Kippur; <i>Sukkot</i>; Shemini Atzeret; Simchat Torah; Chanukah; Purim; <i>Passover</i> (first two and last two days of eight); and <i>Shavuot</i>. (Holidays in italics may be observed for two days.)</p>

Religious Practices, <i>continued</i>		
<p>Native American Religions <i>(American Indians: 114 tribes)</i></p>	<p> None.</p> <p> None.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Pueblo Indians of New Mexico, a few of whom attend Dallas Public schools, observe religious feast days throughout the year. Importance of attendance at religious or healing ceremonies in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Dakota or Arizona is related to the tribe with which the student is affiliated; children are expected to accompany their parents. Some tribes have "days of mourning" or "mourning periods" for the deceased of immediate or extended-family members.</p>	<p> Longer hair length for some male students; some older high school students wear medicine bags which may be seen conspicuously. Beaded and silver-crafted bolo ties. Girls wear hair/braid tie and beaded hair combs.</p> <p> Religious observances vary from tribe to tribe. Students' practices and self image are derived from the tribes in which they are enrolled. Dallas Schools observe American Indian Heritage Month in November. The Parents Advisory Committee of the American Indian Education Program plans various cultural enrichment activities for the month.</p>
<p>Roman Catholic</p>	<p> No "contraceptive" teaching.</p> <p> No meat on Ash Wednesday or Fridays of Lent, for students 14 or older. There is a period of fasting during the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter.</p> <p> Modest. Some wear religious medals. Ashes are placed on the foreheads of Catholics on Ash Wednesday as reminder of mortality.</p> <p> Sign of the Cross before taking a test, before meals, as an act of thanksgiving or petition.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Holy Days include: Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary; All Saints Day; All Souls Day; Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary; Our Lady of Guadalupe (preceded by 9 days of special prayers and services); Advent, 4 weeks before Christmas, observed as a "waiting" period; The Posada, celebrated 9 days before Christmas, with visiting each evening to different homes and churches; Christmas Day; Mary, Mother of God; Lent, 40 days before Easter; Ascension Thursday; Pentecost. <i>Special note:</i> Many Hispanic families travel to their native countries for Holy Week celebrations at Easter time. Family ties are strengthened by summer visits to grandparents.</p>
<p>Seventh Day Adventists</p>	<p> None.</p> <p> No pork or pork products. May prefer to be lacto-vegetarians. No habit forming drugs, alcohol or tobacco.</p> <p> Modest dress.</p>	<p> None.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sabbath begins at sundown Friday and concludes at sundown on Saturday. Students may not be able to participate in school events on Friday nights.</p>
<p>Sikh</p>	<p> None.</p> <p> No alcohol or tobacco.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Baisakhi (Brotherhood), Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev.</p>	<p> None.</p> <p> Boys wear headgear or turbans.</p>
<p>Unitarian/ Universalists</p>	<p> None.</p> <p> None.</p> <p> None.</p>	<p> Families would like to have their children participate in public school activities without having them required to pray publicly. Students have the choice of whether or not to salute flags or pledge certain allegiances.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> During the spring, 13-14 year old students are often taken to U/U historic sites in other parts of the country.</p>
<p>Zoroastrian</p>	<p> None.</p> <p> None.</p> <p> Muslin undershirts with wool cords at waist for boys and girls (may be taken off for sports).</p>	<p> None.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Year at Vernal Equinox, usually during March of each year.</p>
<p>Quick reference symbolic codes:</p>	<p> Medical restrictions</p> <p> Special diet or foods</p> <p> Particular dress/clothing</p>	<p> Observances or rituals during school hours</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Possible absences due to High Holy Days</p>
<p>For more information from RCTF members, call Dallas Schools Communications Department, 989-8329</p>		