

## RELIGION AND THE SCHOOLS

As the contribution of religions to civilization is one of the crucial keys to understanding human history and development, the study of religious history and traditions should be part of the school curriculum and can play a vital role in enhancing an understanding among people of different religious backgrounds and beliefs. Such study should give neither preferential nor derogatory treatment to any single religion or to religion in general, and should not be introduced or utilized for devotional purposes. Furthermore, no religious belief or non-belief should be promoted by the school district or its employees.

Criteria used to guide academic inquiry in the study of religion should seek the same objectivity and educational effectiveness expected in other areas of the curriculum. In addition, materials and activities should be sensitive to America's pluralistic society and should educate rather than indoctrinate. All instructional and other school-sponsored activities should meet the three-part test established by the Supreme Court to determine constitutionality: 1) the activity must have a secular purpose; 2) the activity's principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and 3) the activity must not foster an excessive governmental entanglement with religion.

Legal Reference: Iowa Code §§ 279.8; 280.6  
U.S. Const. amend. I.  
*Lee v. Weisman*, 112 S.Ct. 2649 (1992)  
*Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971)  
*Graham v. Central Community School District of Decatur County*, 608 F.Supp. 531 (S.D. Iowa 1985)

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