

POLICY 900-3

RELIGION AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Hawaii's public schools shall neither inculcate nor inhibit religion. Religion and religious convictions must be treated with fairness and respect. The First Amendment is upheld when the religious rights of students are protected, but religion is not promoted by public schools.

No religious instruction shall be given in any public school by any employee of the Department of Education during the regular school day. Teaching about religion shall be permitted where it is a natural part of the curriculum to study the history of religion, the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries, and the religious influence on the art, music, literature, and social customs of various cultures. Discussion, examination, and reinforcement of values, ethics, and morals commonly shared in this pluralistic society shall be expected of every teacher when such opportunities arise.

Prayer and other religious observances shall not be organized or sponsored by schools and the administrative and support units of the public school system.

Students may engage in voluntary, student-initiated religious activities and discussion as long as their behavior is neither disruptive nor coercive. Secondary students may meet in school during non-instructional time to pray, read religious materials, discuss their faith, and invite other students to join their religious group if the school establishes a limited open forum for one or more student-initiated groups.

Department of Education employees may engage in brief, quiet, and personal religious observances when not engaged in the responsibilities of their job duties as long as their observances are not disruptive or coercive.

[Approved: 05/19/2015 (as Board Policy 900.3); amended: 06/21/2016 (renumbered as Board Policy 900-3), 02/16/2023]

Former policy 2230 history: former code no.: 6122.81; policy approved: 1947; amended: 07/1960, 11/1960, 05/1966, 10/1970, 03/1988, 01/1999