

322 SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES

The United States Constitution and the constitutions of the states, as well as federal and state laws and related court rulings, clearly establish the concept of “church and state separation” and the “preclusion of sectarian instruction in public schools.”

To help staff members abide by the spirit and letter of the law and to avoid compromising any student’s religious or conscientious beliefs or freedoms, the following guidelines have been established:

1. The Williams Bay School shall offer the Pledge of Allegiance or National Anthem at the beginning of the school day each day. No student shall be compelled, against his or her objections or those of his or her parents or guardians, to recite the Pledge or sing the National Anthem.
2. The observance of religious holidays is not the responsibility of the public schools.
3. Since a public school is not a place of worship, the instructional materials, activities, decorations or assembly programs that are introduced into the schools should not promote any religion.
4. While it is recognized that many activities are initiated with the approach to major holidays to capitalize on the readiness and interest that is generated at these times, it should be understood that such occasions frequently have religious underpinnings. Care should be taken to relate only to the secular aspects of these holidays.
 - a. Music programs given at times close to religious holidays should not use the religious aspect of these holidays as the underlying motive or theme. Although religious music is appropriate in the schools to the extent that it is sung or presented for musical rather than religious content, its use should not violate the secular nature of the school.
 - b. Pageants, plays, recitals and other literary or dramatic activities should not be used to convey religious messages.
 - c. While the holidays represent a valid source of ideas for meaningful school art experiences, teachers should avoid assigning or encouraging artwork that promotes religious aspects of such holidays. If, however, individual students choose to use a religious personage, event or symbol as the vehicle for an artistic expression, they should be allowed to take this action.

5. On the following days when school is held, the day shall be appropriately observed:

September 16	Mildred Fish Harnack Day
September 17	U.S. Constitution Day
Wednesday of 3 rd week in September	Wisconsin Day
Friday of 3 rd week in September	POW-MIA Remembrance Day
September 28	Frances Willard Day
September 28	Bullying Awareness Day
October 9	Leif Erikson Day
October 12	Christopher Columbus' Birthday
November 11	Veteran's Day
January 15	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
February 12	Abraham Lincoln's Birthday
February 22	George Washington's Birthday
March 4	Casimir Pulaski Day
March 17	The Great Hunger in Ireland from 1845 to 1850
April 9	Prisoners of War Remembrance Day
April 13	American Creed Day
April 19	Patriot's Day
April 22	Environmental Awareness Day

If by proclamation the Governor sets apart one day to be designated as Arbor and Bird day, that day shall be appropriately observed; otherwise the last Friday in April shall be observed as Arbor Day.

June 14	Robert M. LaFollette, Sr. Day
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If any special observance day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the observance shall be on a school day immediately preceding or following.

The above statements should not be interpreted to preclude the factual and objective teaching about religions, religious holidays and religious differences. Such instruction will be permitted in the schools since insights in this area can enhance the mutual understanding needed by all citizens in a pluralistic society.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Wisconsin State Constitution, Article I, Section 18, 24 Article X, Section 3
U.S. Constitution, First Amendment

APPROVED: January 13, 2003

May 8, 2017

REVIEWED: February 22, 2021