

RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

In accordance with the mandate of the Constitution of the United States prohibiting the establishment of religion, it is the policy of this School Board that the Essex Schools shall be neutral in matters of religion. This means that the Essex Schools:

- assume no role or responsibility for the religious training of any student; and
- do not become involved in the religious belief, disbelief or doubt of any student.

This requirement of neutrality need not preclude nor hinder the Essex Schools in fulfilling their responsibility to educate students to be tolerant and respectful of religious diversity. The division also recognizes that one of its educational responsibilities is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization.

Therefore, the division shall approach religion from an objective, curriculum-related perspective, encouraging all students and staff members to be aware of the diversity of beliefs and respectful of each other's religious and/or non-religious views. In that spirit of respect, students and staff members may be excused from participating in activities that are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of compelling public interest that would prevent it.

The school board may authorize, as an elective in grades nine through 12 with appropriate credits toward graduation, a comparative religion class that focuses on the basic tenets, history, and religious observances and rites of world religions.

Adopted: April 9, 2012

Legal Refs.: U.S. Const. amend. I

Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-78, [22.1-202.1](#).