

WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

Administrative Rule – Religious Music in Schools

Use of religious music within public schools and the Wausau School District is permitted as long as the music is not used to advance or inhibit religious practice. Music of a religious nature must be justified through educational and instructional reasons. The goal is to seek balance, respect, and sensitivity towards all cultures and beliefs.

The following questions are relevant to the constitutional standards of religious neutrality necessary in the public schools *:

1. What is the purpose of the activity or selection? Is the purpose secular in nature?
2. What is the primary effect of the activity or selection? Does the activity or selection enhance or inhibit religion? Does it invite confusion of thought or family objections?
3. Does the activity or selection involve excessive entanglement with a religion or religious group or between the school district and a religious organization?

Guidelines for use of religious music include *:

1. Is the music selected on the basis of its musical and educational values rather than its religious context?
2. Are the traditions of different people shared and respected?
3. Is the excessive use of sacred music, religious symbols or scenery, and performance in devotional settings avoided?
4. Is the role of sacred music a neutral one, neither promoting nor inhibiting religious views?
5. Are all Wausau School District policies regarding equity and religion observed?
6. Is there an understanding of the various religious beliefs and sensitivities represented by the students and parents?
7. Are viable options made available to students who do not wish to participate in a particular musical selection or activity because of their personal beliefs?
8. Is there a method or process through which a student or parent can make his or her objection known to the teacher and school officials?

These guidelines should be responded to in the affirmative for the selection to be considered for use in programs, activities, and presentations by the Wausau School District and its individual schools. Musical and performance selections for school-sponsored events must be cleared through the school's principal.

(* Adapted from the Position Statement on Religious Music in the Schools, a publication of the Wisconsin Music Educators Association.)