

Overview of District Halloween Practices

October 9, 2018

Teaching and Learning, Educational Services

Presentation Goals

- Review current AUSD BP/AR concerning ceremonies, observances, and recognition of religious beliefs and customs.
- Review existing district position, rationale, and past communications regarding Halloween celebrations in schools/instructional time.
- Outline considerations regarding reintroduction of Halloween celebrations into schools/instructional time.

AUSD BP/AR 6115: Ceremonies and Observances

Board Policy:

The Board of Education recognizes the importance of having students observe holidays, celebrate events of cultural or historical significance, and acknowledge the contributions of outstanding individuals in society. On days designated by the Board, staff shall provide students with appropriate commemorative exercises so that they may acquire the knowledge, skills, and principles essential for informed, responsible citizenship in a democratic society.

AUSD BP/AR 6115: Ceremonies and Observances

Administrative Regulation:

District schools shall hold exercises to commemorate the following special days: (Education Code [37220](#)*, [37221](#)**, [45460](#)***, 37220.5****)

- U.S. Constitution and Citizenship Day**
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day*
- Lincoln's Birthday*
- Susan B. Anthony Day (February 15)**
- George Washington's Birthday*
- Black American Day (March 5)**
- Conservation, Bird, and Arbor Day (March 7)**
- Cesar Chavez Day (March 31)****
- Cinco de Mayo
- Classified Employee Week***

AUSD BP/AR 6115: Ceremonies and Observances

District schools shall be closed in observance of the following holidays:

- New Year's Day, January 1
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Lincoln Day
- Washington Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day, July 4
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day, November 11
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day, December 25

AR 6141.2: Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

Programs and Exhibits

When school programs and exhibits are in any way related to instruction about religion or religious holidays, the following guidelines shall be observed:

1. The principal or designee shall ensure that school-sponsored programs are presented in an objective manner, consistent with Board policy.
2. The principal or designee shall be kept informed of the program's development.
3. Program or exhibit planners shall take into consideration the diverse religious faiths represented in the community, student body and staff.

2004 Policy Memorandum

On 9/1/04 a memorandum was sent to all principals and District Office staff from the office of the Assistant Superintendent. This memo clarified the district's position regarding Halloween celebrations.

The policy outlined in the memorandum:

- For K-8 schools, there are to be no costumes worn during the instructional day for students and adults. Any celebrations are to be conducted during non-instructional hours. Parades/carnivals at the elementary level can occur as part of the PE instructional minutes at the last period of the day.
- High schools allow costumes as part of Spirit Week or leadership activities, but no interruption of instructional minutes is to occur.
- District office staff will not wear costumes.

2004 Policy Memorandum

The memorandum stated the following rationale for the Halloween policy:

1. The Halloween celebrations during the instructional day are not appropriate because they result in loss of instructional time.
2. Concern for disruption to the instructional learning environment.
3. Safety
4. BP/AR 6115: Halloween not listed as a holiday or celebration.

The memorandum also clarified that this policy had existed for the previous five years.

Recent Reminders

In October 2015 a memorandum was sent to all sites reminding them that Halloween activities should not occur during the instructional day. The 2004 memorandum was attached as reference and the language from AR 6115 was included within the updated memorandum.

An additional reminder was sent in October 2016.

Considerations for Planning Holidays in Public Schools

- How does this activity serve the academic and other goals of the course, or the educational mission of the school?
 - Loss of instructional time
 - Celebration of holiday vs. education about holiday
 - Safety (physical, socioemotional): masks, weapons, other
- Will any student or parent be made to feel like an outsider, not a full member of the community, by this activity?
 - Family or religious beliefs
 - Socioeconomic pressure
 - Food limitations
 - Cultural appropriation

Resource: State of Washington Policy Document:

Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools

Questions?