



Superintendent's Circular

School Year 2011-2012

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DISPLAY OF FLAG AND SCHOOL CEREMONIES

Massachusetts General Law requires that a "flag shall be displayed, weather permitting, on the school building or grounds on every school day and on every legal holiday." In addition, we are required to ensure that "a flag shall be displayed in every classroom...and in each assembly hall" (MGL, c.71, §69). The important patriotic and historic holidays celebrated during the school year place a focus on our responsibility with respect to the display of the American flag in all schools and classrooms.

Patriotic and national holidays offer the opportunity in our history and social studies classes to provide instruction about the flag, its origin, care and symbolic significance. This instruction complies with State Learning Standard 18 (Principles of American Government). In addition, student projects may afford the opportunity for students to conduct in-depth research on subjects such as the flag and other patriotic symbols, documents, speeches and literature.

School Committee Policy and Massachusetts State Law require that "public school teachers at the commencement of the 1st class of the day lead the class in group recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance" (GL, c.71, §69). The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, however, has ruled that although schools must provide the daily opportunity for students and teachers to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance, teachers and students have a constitutional right not to participate in the pledge. Students who choose not to participate (i.e. recite and/or stand) may not be penalized for declining to do so. All schools must comply with our responsibility to display the flag and to provide daily opportunity for recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

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