



PEI

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS OF IOWA

Merry Christmas



Dear PEI Supporter,

This Monday I heard about "Giving Tuesday". That is the day that non-profit organizations all across the nation invite people to be as generous in giving as they were in spending on "Black Friday". The end of the year is a great time to give to your charities of choice. We at PEI Foundation invite you to give generously this year to help enhance our scholarship program, conferences, seminars, and other activities. With our new conference center we hope to provide more seminars in a variety of subjects. A healthy Foundation helps a healthy PEI Association.

The PEI Association has made great strides in the past year toward increased influence in our state education system. We are at the decision-making table more than ever with new appointments to the committees that are now forming education policy. Our growth is your strength. As you tell others about PEI, please consider putting PEIF on your support list. Whether it is a one-time gift or a monthly pledge, it is all important.

Sincerely,

Jodie Nation

Professional Educators of Iowa



Did you know?

The famous Christmas hymn "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" began as a poem written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in the 1860's. The poem was actually about the tragedy one felt during the civil war. The Carpenters did a great rendition.



The Christmas Season and My Classroom How can I celebrate? What can I teach?

The staff of PEI recognizes Christmas as the foundation for the Holiday season. We also respect the various religious choices that can be made in this great country. Christmas is a part of our American and world heritage, but questions still emerge about what and how much can be taught. In the past few years we have given you much of this information. We now have many new members and believe it should be reviewed. We hope that you can utilize some of the following.

The [Twelve Rules](#) for Christmas by the Rutherford Institute is a very good legal resource on what can be done within your classroom. Another place to browse is mymerrychristmas.com where you can look around for what is interesting to you in particular. We do not intend for you to ignore any local board policies, but what we have presented gives you the basic legal guidelines.

We received the calls. "Can I have a tree? Can I wear red and green? Can my classroom music be censored? What about freedom of speech? What is insubordination? Isn't this part of our history? Isn't Christmas part of our heritage? Isn't the celebration of Christmas part of World History?"

To help answer the questions, we are including the entire article from the Rutherford Institute. It is an easy read and full of answers.



The Twelve Rules of Christmas®

(Compiled by attorneys for The Rutherford Institute)

Unfortunately, Christmas has become a time of controversy over what can or cannot be done in terms of celebrating the holiday. In order to clear up much of the misunderstanding, the following twelve rules are offered:

1. Public school students' written or spoken personal expressions concerning the religious significance of Christmas (e.g., T-shirts with the slogan, "Jesus Is the Reason for the Season") may not be censored by school officials absent evidence that the speech would cause a substantial disruption.
2. So long as teachers are generally permitted to wear clothing or jewelry or have personal items expressing their views about the holidays, Christian teachers may not be prohibited from similarly expressing their views by wearing Christmas-related clothing or jewelry or carrying Christmas-related personal items.
3. Public schools may teach students about the Christmas holiday, including its religious significance, so long as it is taught objectively for secular purposes such as its historical or cultural importance, and not for the purpose of promoting Christianity.
4. Public school teachers may send Christmas cards to the families of their students so long as they do so on their own time, outside of school hours.
5. Public schools may include Christmas music, including those with religious themes, in their choral programs if the songs are included for a secular purpose such as their musical quality or cultural value or if the songs are part of an overall performance including other holiday songs relating to Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or other similar holidays.
6. Public schools may not require students to sing Christmas songs whose messages conflict with the students' own religious or nonreligious beliefs.
7. Public school students may not be prohibited from distributing literature to fellow students concerning the Christmas holiday or invitations to church Christmas events on the same terms that they would be allowed to distribute other literature that is not related to schoolwork.
8. Private citizens or groups may display crèches or other Christmas symbols in public parks subject to the same reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions that would apply to other similar displays.
9. Government entities may erect and maintain celebrations of the Christmas holiday, such as Christmas trees and Christmas light displays, and may include crèches in their displays at least so long as the purpose for including the crèche is not to promote its religious content and it is placed in context with other symbols of the Holiday season as part of an effort to celebrate the public Christmas holiday through its traditional symbols.
10. Neither public nor private employers may prevent employees from decorating their offices for Christmas, playing Christmas music, or wearing clothing related to Christmas merely because of their religious content so long as these activities are not used to harass or intimidate others.
11. Public or private employees whose sincerely held religious beliefs require that they not work on Christmas must be reasonably accommodated by their employers unless granting the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the employer.
12. Government recognition of Christmas as a public holiday and granting government employees a paid holiday for Christmas does not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

For more information contact The Rutherford Institute at: Post Office Box 7482 •
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Just knowing your rights helps you stop any accusations of insubordination. The fact is that many who are making the constraints don't really know their rights and are afraid of the "anti-Christmas" lobby. Let's have a Happy Christmas!