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Religion in Public School

Religion in the public schools has become a very heated debate over the past century. According to a National Public Radio article, "The U.S. Supreme Court banned school-sponsored prayer in public schools in a 1962 decision, saying that it violated the First Amendment." Many people debate whether or not it is appropriate for school leaders to express any type of religious opinions and whether or not religion has any place in school.

When we debate the place for religion in education, Noddings (1997) said, " Indeed the result is too often a bland acceptance (in the name of tolerance) of all sense of nonsense. What I have in mind is an education that faces the common doubts and commitments squarely and honestly." (p. 245) What if we were to create a safe space for everyone to feel comfortable and feel that being their own individual self and having their own personal beliefs was supported?

Personally speaking about religion in the public school, I would focus on leading by example. There is a definite way to be a light to the darkness in the classroom without ever saying anything about Jesus. Students are much more likely to emulate the behavior that you model rather than what you tell them to do. Teachers have an opportunity each day to set a Christian example of living a Christ-like life without ever mentioning the Bible.

Character education and many religions have some type of overlap. For example, the Golden Rule is a well known standard for which people live by and use to teach students how to

treat others. Technically the golden rule is based on Christian principles, but many individuals who do not consider themselves a Christian would agree that the Golden Rule does have a place in public schools.

Many people believe that religion should be included for the fact that historically speaking religion was very much a part of public education. Noddings (1997) said, "Religion belongs in our public schools because it is part of our heritage, and more importantly, because it expresses a universal longing." (p. 247) Religion was definitely a founding principle in public education. Overall, we should honor our heritage by keeping the values of religion a large part of our public education; however, while respecting the diverse beliefs throughout the families we serve.

References

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