

## Religion and Schools

The **First Amendment (Amendment I)** to the United States Constitution is part of the Bill of Rights. The amendment prohibits the making of any law respecting an *establishment of religion*, impeding the *free exercise of religion*, abridging the freedom of speech, infringing on the freedom of the press, interfering with the right to peaceably assemble or prohibiting the petitioning for a governmental redress of grievances.

An excellent guide, Teaching About Religion, has issued by the First Amendment Center. It includes these very helpful guidelines:

- \* The school's approach to religion is academic, not devotional.
- \* The school strives for student awareness of religions, but does not press for student acceptance of any one religion.
- \* The school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion.
- \* The school exposes students to a diversity of religious views; it does not impose any particular view.
- \* The school educates about all religions; it does not promote or denigrate any religion.
- \* The school informs students about various beliefs; it does not seek to conform students to any particular belief.

*How should teachers respond if students ask them about their religious beliefs?*

*What does it mean to teach "about" religion under the First Amendment?*

*Why should study about religion be included in the curriculum?*

*How should religious holidays be treated in the classroom?*

*How should religious objections to holidays be handled?*