

## Public Schools of Brookline Policy Manual

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***I 3 c. Flag Protocol and Pledge of Allegiance*** (Voted 4/28/11, #11-30; Note: this policy was moved from Section K School/Community Relations to Section I Instruction, 6/5/14, #14-43)

### **Definitions**

*Flag*: The Flag of the United States of America.

*Pledge of Allegiance*: “I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” (*Public Law 829, Chapter 806, Section 7, as amended June 14, 1954*).

*Recitation*: Aloud, verbatim repetition of the Pledge of Allegiance.

*Opportunity*: A regular, planned time when all members of a school community present in school have equal chance to participate in saying the Pledge.

*Active acknowledgment*: Co-recitation, standing, and/or use of hand gestures (e.g., a salute or placement of hand over heart) that accompanies recitation of the Pledge.

### **Flag Protocol**<sup>1</sup>

#### *Display of the Flag of the United States*

The Flag must be displayed, weather permitting, on school buildings or grounds on every school day and on every legal holiday or day proclaimed by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the President of the United States for special observance.

#### *Display Inside the Building*

A Flag must be displayed in the assembly hall or other room where opening exercises/announcements on each school day are held as well as in every classroom.

#### *Flag Code for Buildings*

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) shall observe the flag protocols for raising and lowering the flag, including designation of full mast or half mast, pursuant to MGL Chapter 71, Section 69 and/or as followed by other public buildings in the Town of Brookline.

#### Amendment Passed by the [Select Board of Selectmen](#) on May 18, 1970

“Flags are to be flown on such other occasions of local, state or national significance as may from time to time be determined by the Executive Secretary to the [Select Board of Selectmen](#) upon receipt of a specific request and recommendation from a Board, Committee or Commission, or from its duly authorized representative(s).”

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<sup>1</sup> Flag protocol based on 1966 Manual of Administration.

***I 3 c.1. Lowering the Flag:*** (Voted 6/4/73, #73-174; amended 4/28/11, #11-30)

It is the policy of the Brookline School Committee (BSC) that the American Flag at all PSB buildings shall be lowered to half-mast in the event of a death of a presently enrolled student.

**Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag**

While Massachusetts General Laws c. 71, s. 69 requires teachers to lead their classes in a daily recital of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, the Courts have determined that it is unconstitutional for any student or staff to be compelled to participate in the Pledge. Therefore, we believe that no member of the school community can be compelled by policy to recite or lead a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The BSC is committed, however, to honoring longstanding civic tradition and practice, which is for Brookline students to learn and have an opportunity to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in school. The following, therefore, will guide all PSB schools regarding recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

*Learning/Recitation of the Pledge in Schools*

A PSB Principal/Head of School (or his/her designee) shall allow a member of the school community an opportunity to recite the Pledge of Allegiance once a week as a part of school-wide morning announcements.

The Pledge of Allegiance will be preceded with the following statement: “

*Non-Coercive Environment*

PSB Goal 4 - Celebration of Respect for Human Differences, a Core Value of the PSB, informs our practice will be observed. The Pledge of Allegiance will be preceded with the following or a substantially similar statement by the Principal/Head of School or their designee: “We will next recite the Pledge of Allegiance. In our community of many nationalities and beliefs, we recognize that the United States Pledge of Allegiance is less meaningful for some community members. Reciting the Pledge is not required; a respectful silence is expected from everyone who chooses not to participate.” Public recitation of the Pledge will be received with respectful silence, as would be the norm for all school-wide announcements. Any individual in the school may choose to recite the Pledge along with the public recitation.

No staff member or student shall cause or encourage any other individual in a school to recite the Pledge of Allegiance or establish in any way a norm of active acknowledgment.

No staff member or student may prevent, prohibit, or demean active acknowledgment (or absence of acknowledgment) of the Pledge by another student or staff member.

**Pedagogical Context and Learning**

The BSC believes the most important lessons to be drawn from the Pledge of Allegiance are best learned in the context of the regular curriculum and therefore supports Brookline Learning Expectations that promote age- and grade-appropriate discussion of the Pledge, its historical practice and significance, and the debates around compulsory recitation in schools.

*Nothing in this policy shall be construed as requiring recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in the Public Schools of Brookline.*