

6.47 STUDENT EXPRESSION

Within the school program students should be provided the opportunity for free expression of ideas. Student expression shall include, but is not necessarily limited to, expression through speech, writing, hairstyles, clothing, buttons, badges, tattoos, physical gestures, and/or assembly. Responsible criticism and reasonable dissent are basic to the educational process. No idea should be suppressed simply because it is unpopular.

No student or individual seeking academic admission shall be required to affirmatively ascribe to, or opine about, specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles regarding political movements or ideologies. Additionally, statements of commitment to specific beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles regarding political movements or ideologies shall not be used in the academic evaluation of students or prospective students.

Student expression will be permitted in accordance with this policy and applicable law. Student expression in any form may be restricted in accordance with applicable law, including but not limited to when:

- A. It endangers the health or safety of students or staff;
- B. It threatens to substantially disrupt the educational process of the school;
- C. It is libelous or of an obscene or vulgar nature;
- D. It threatens any person or a group within the school, advocates discrimination, or infringes upon the rights of others; or
- E. It advocates activities, products, or services to minors that would be a violation of any law or official regulations; or
- F. It otherwise violates duly adopted District policy and/or state or federal law.

Just as students maintain the right to express their opinion freely by means of speech, they also do maintain the right to express themselves freely by means of publication. Within the scope of the limits set forth in this policy all written expression is subject to the following:

- A. School Newspaper
 - 1. The faculty advisor shall advise on matters of style, grammar, format and suitability of material.
 - 2. The school paper shall reflect the policy and judgment of the student editors.
 - 3. Materials of a controversial nature should not be prohibited unless it violates the limits set forth in this policy.
 - 4. The final decision as to the suitability of material shall rest with the principal after consultation with the student editor and faculty advisor.
 - 5. The parties shall have the right to appeal to the Superintendent or his/her designee.
- B. School-Sponsored Publications
 - 1. Students are entitled to express their personal opinions in writing. The distribution of such material may not interfere with or disrupt their educational process. These written expressions of personal opinion must be signed by the author.
 - 2. Students who edit, publish or distribute handwritten, printed or duplicated

matter among their fellow students within the schools shall be responsible for the content of these publications.

3. Obscenity and personal attacks are prohibited in all publications. The use of asterisks, dashes or any other subterfuge will not be sufficient to avoid this restriction.
4. Published material that results in any allegation of libel shall be the responsibility of the students and their parents.

C. Non-School Sponsored Publications and Material

1. Publications or materials may be distributed by students at locations not under the control of the Board of Education without authorization.
2. Students must request authorization in writing from the principal or designee to distribute on school property petitions, hand-outs, leaflets and other literature, written and signed by students.
 - a. The source of such material must be indicated on any printed matter.
 - b. Two (2) copies of the material to be distributed must accompany the request two (2) days prior to the time of distribution.
 - c. Upon receiving the copy and in consideration of the criteria set forth in this policy, the principal or designee may approve, disapprove, or refer the request to a student-faculty-administrative committee for recommendation.
 - (i) If approval is granted (all items signed by principal), time and place of distribution shall be designated by the school principal in such manner that there shall be no disruption of the educational process of the school.
 - (ii) If request is referred to a committee, said committee should be convened as soon as possible.
 - (iii) If the request is denied by the principal or designee, it should be in writing, stating reasons for denying the request. The request and a copy of the written statement by the principal should be forwarded to the Superintendent or his/her designee. Students requesting distribution of material will then have the right of appeal through the Superintendent.
 - d. No commercial material will be distributed in the school, unless authorized by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

D. School Communications

The administration, faculty and students shall jointly establish regulations as to the manner, time and place for using communication facilities of the school.

Based upon these established policies, access shall be made available to student groups for announcements and statements to the student body through the public address system, bulletin boards, and personal contact.

1. Public Address System
 - a. All announcements must be in the front office at least thirty (30) minutes before time for the announcement to be made.

- b. All announcements must have both the signature of the sponsor and the principal or designee.
- c. All announcements are limited to those school activities that fall within the jurisdiction of the Board of Education.
- d. No commercial information may be announced, unless authorized by the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee.

2. Bulletin Boards and Wall Posters

Students must request authorization from the principal or designee to place items on bulletin boards or on walls within the school building.

- a. The source of such material must be indicated on any such items.
- b. Two (2) copies of material to be posted must accompany the request two (2) days prior to the time of distribution.
- c. Upon receiving the copy and in consideration of the criteria set forth in this policy the principal may approve or disapprove.
 - (i) If approval is granted, time and place of posting shall be designated by the school principal.
 - (ii) If request is denied by principal, it should be in writing stating reasons for denying the request. The request and copy of the written statement by the principal should be forwarded to the Superintendent or designee. Students requesting the posting of materials will then have the right to appeal through the Superintendent.
- d. No commercial material may be posted in the school unless authorized by the Superintendent or designee.

E. Religious Observation Absences

- 1. Students may be absent for up to three (3) religious expression days each school year to take holidays for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief system or to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. Students shall be able to participate in athletic activities or other extracurricular activities on days they are absent due to religious observation.
- 2. Students who are absent under this provision shall be provided with alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements missed if, no later than fourteen (14) days from the start of the school year, or the date of enrollment for transfer students, their parent or guardian provides the school principal with written notice of up to three specific dates for which alternative accommodations are requested if a religious observance day conflicts with academic requirements.
- 3. The school principal shall approve not more than three written requests per school year from a student's parent or guardian for an excused absence. The principal shall not investigate the sincerity of requests under this policy. However, the school may verify a request by contacting a

student's parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian denies making the request, the principal may deny the request.

4. Upon approval of a request, the principal shall require relevant classroom teachers to schedule a time and date for an alternative examination or other academic requirement if the approved student absence creates a conflict, which may be before or after the time and date the examination or other academic requirement was originally scheduled.
5. The list of holidays for which students may be absent under this section includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Ramadan
 - b. Eid
 - c. Yom Kippur
 - d. Passover
 - e. Rosh Hashanah
 - f. Good Friday
6. Excused absences under this section shall not be unreasonably denied.
7. The District shall annually convey to parents and guardians the policy adopted under this section, including a description of the general procedure for requesting accommodations.
8. If a student, parent, or guardian feels that this policy has been implemented incorrectly with respect to their request, they may contact the Superintendent with a detailed description of their concerns and/or grievance. The Superintendent shall promptly and reasonably respond to any such complaint.
9. Any days excused under this section shall not be considered in determining absence hours for the purposes of parental notification.