
Student Freedom of Expression

Policy 3-300

Scope:

This policy affirms students' rights to freedom of expression under the U.S. Constitution, California Constitution, and relevant education codes, while outlining limits necessary to maintain a safe and orderly educational environment.

1. General Principles

Students have the right to freedom of speech and expression, including written, oral, and symbolic expression, provided that such expression does not:

- Materially and substantially disrupt the orderly operation of the school
- Incite violence or unlawful acts
- Contain obscene, libelous, or slanderous content

This right applies to student dress, religious expression, written publications, social media (when school-related), petitions, assemblies, and other forms of communication.

2. Student Media and Publications

In accordance with Education Code § 48907:

- Students may publish and distribute materials at school, including school-sponsored publications, subject to reasonable time, place, and manner regulations.
- Editorial control over school-sponsored media may be exercised by school authorities only when necessary to prevent the publication of material that:
 - Is libelous, slanderous, or obscene
 - So incites pupils as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises, the violation of lawful school regulations, or the substantial disruption of the school or District's orderly operation

Purpose

The District recognizes that students do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate. This policy affirms the rights of students to express themselves freely, consistent with the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the California Constitution, and applicable state and federal law.

- In the view of the assigned teacher, would violate professional standards of English and/or journalism.
- A student publication advisor shall support the development of high-quality journalism, uphold legal rights to free expression, and help students navigate ethical and responsible content creation.
- School sites issuing student publications shall adopt their own written publications code that addresses time, place, and manner consistent with this policy.

3. Equal Access to Facilities

If the District allows student groups to use school facilities for meetings or events, it shall do so in a viewpoint-neutral manner consistent with the Equal Access Act. Nothing in this policy shall be applied to deny equal access or a fair opportunity to students at a District secondary school in violation of the Equal Access Act, where applicable.

4. Policy Review

This policy shall be reviewed annually and updated as needed to reflect changes in law or court interpretation.

Administrative Regulations

1. Distribution of Materials

- Students may distribute flyers, petitions, or other written material during noninstructional time (before/after school, lunchtime) in designated areas.
- Materials must not be defamatory, obscene, or likely to cause a substantial disruption.

2. School Publications and Journalism

- School newspapers, yearbooks, and digital media are considered student forums. Students may determine content within the bounds of law and district policy.
- A staff advisor shall support student journalists in producing content that is responsible, factual, and consistent with journalistic standards.

3. Speech at Assemblies and Events

- Student speakers at school events shall be selected based on content-neutral criteria (e.g., leadership roles).
- Personal views expressed by students shall not be attributed to the school or district.