

Guidelines for Students' Right of Free Expression

Students have a right to freedom of expression and may participate in free speech activities, including political or religious speech, while on school campus. Students may distribute literature reflective of their views and opinions. Students may assemble on campus during non-instructional time to discuss their views and opinions and may participate in peaceful protests and demonstrations on campus. Students may exercise these rights as long as their speech, expression, or conduct is not obscene, lewd, libelous, slanderous, incite students to destroy property or inflict injury upon any person, or cause a substantial disruption to the operations of the school.

California law permits school site administrators to establish reasonable parameters for those students who wish to exercise their free speech rights on campus or during the school day. School site administrators may establish reasonable restrictions on the time, place, and manner of the speech or activity in order to maintain a safe and peaceful campus for all students and District employees.

While Los Angeles Unified School District recognizes and respects a student's freedom of speech rights, District employees shall not promote, endorse, or participate in any student demonstration, distribution of materials, assembly, sit-in, or walk-out.

Below are some examples, not exhaustive, of protected student activities:

- (1) Silent protests during a school assembly or activity, including wearing a ribbon or armband;
- (2) Peaceful demonstrations during noninstructional time that do not disrupt the educational program (e.g., are not so loud as to make instruction impossible, do not block entrance/exit to a common area);
- (3) Opinions/editorials in the student newspaper, within the parameters of a school-sponsored publication (see Board Rule 1275 for more information).

From Board Rule 1275:

D. Material Not Permitted in Official School Newspapers:

1. *Material which is libelous or which violates the right of privacy;*
2. *Material which is obscene, according to current standards of our community;*
3. *Profanity, hereby defined as that language which would not be used in the L.A. Times or the L.A. Herald-Examiner;*
4. *Material which advocates the breaking of any law;*
5. *Material which criticizes or demeans any race, religion, sex, or ethnic group;*
6. *Ads for cigarettes, liquor, or any other product not permitted to teenagers;*
7. *Any material, the publication of which would cause substantial disruption of the school. Substantial disruption is hereby defined as the threat of physical violence in the school or nearby community and/or the disruption of the school's educational program;*
8. *Official endorsements of political candidates or ballot measures whether such endorsements are made by editorial, article, letter, photograph or cartoon. A student newspaper may not officially advocate a position. It may, however, present through article, letter, photograph, or cartoon opposing positions and candidates so long as all major issues and candidates are given equal space, content, and strength of argument.*

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