

STUDENT EXPRESSION

Within the school program students should be encouraged the opportunity for free expression of ideas. Responsible criticism and reasonable dissent are basic to the educational process. No idea should be suppressed simply because it is unpopular.

Student expression of the following types will be permitted in accordance with this policy:

- A. Expression by speech;
- B. Expression by writing;
- C. Expression through hair styles;
- D. Expression through clothing;
- E. Expression through buttons, badges, etc; and
- F. Expression through physical gestures.

Students expression should not be prohibited unless:

- A. It clearly endangers the health or safety of students;
- B. It eminently threatens to substantially disrupt the educational process of the school;
- C. It is libelous or of an obscene nature;
- D. It threatens any person or a group within the school or advocates racial or religious discrimination;
- E. It advocates violation of any law or official regulations; or
- F. It is considered false in the light of available facts.

Students who continually refuse to abide by these guidelines may forfeit their right to an education through suspension and/or expulsion.

For the purpose of this policy, symbolic expression may be defined as the type of expression, exclusive of verbal or written expression, which conveys the personal ideas, feelings, attitudes, and opinions of an individual. In determining whether or not a form of expression is in fact symbolic, some consideration must be given to the intention of the person who is expressing himself/herself in a demonstrative, symbolic manner.

The following items may be subject to suspension and/or expulsion if violated:

- A. Symbolic expression through hair style or body piercing
 - 1. The health or safety of a student is endangered.
 - a. Working with or near machinery, working in a laboratory, working in a food preparation class.
 - b. Obviously dirty and/or odorous.

- c. Impairment of vision to a harmful extent.
 2. The educational system is disrupted.
 - a. Dirty, odorous or repulsive to others.
 - b. Causes reactions in others which are disruptive to the class.
 - B. Symbolic expression through clothing (refer to student handbook)
 1. The health or safety of the student is endangered.
 - a. Loose clothing around machinery or in laboratories.
 - b. Clothing is dirty or odorous.
 2. Potential and/or proven disruption is in evidence.
 3. The school community is degraded or embarrassed.
 - C. Symbolic expression through buttons, badges, armbands, tattoos, and other symbols of political or controversial significance
 1. Obscene words or figures or implications of such appear.
 2. Disrespectful phrases or figures toward a student or group.
 - a. Racial
 - b. Ethnic
 - c. Individual
 - d. Sexual
 3. Potential or proven disruption is in evidence.
 - D. Symbolic expression through physical gestures
 1. Malice or disrespect is intended.
 2. Obviously obscene.
 3. Public display of affection.
 - a. Petting
 - b. Kissing
 - c. Lewd body movements
 - d. Actions distracting to others

Expression of speech should include the personal opinion of students relevant to the subject matter being taught, to school activities and policies, to school administration and to matters of broad social concern and interest. In so expressing themselves, students must be held responsible and are subject to the limits set forth in this policy.

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 the 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.

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.

- d. If request is referred to a committee, said committee should be convened as soon as possible. Student request should be answered within two (2) days.
- e. 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.

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 Toronto 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.
 - (iii) No commercial material may be posted in the school unless authorized by the Superintendent or designee.

E. Religious Expression

1. Students may engage in religious expression before, during, and after school hours in the same manner and to the same extent that students are permitted to engage in secular activities or expression before, during, and after school hours.

2. The Board shall give the same access to school facilities to students who wish to conduct a meeting for the purpose of engaging in religious expression as is given to secular student groups, without regard to the content of a student's or group's expression.
3. The Board shall not prohibit a student from engaging in religious expression in the completion of homework, artwork, or other written or oral assignments. Assignment grades and scores shall be calculated using ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance, including any legitimate pedagogical concerns, and shall not penalize or reward a student based on the religious content of a student's work.

LEGAL REFS: O.R.C. §§3313.20; 3313.47; Ohio Student Religious Liberties Act of 2019

Adopted: August 27, 2020