

## **SPEAKERS AT DISTRICT EVENTS**

Some district events, such as graduation, classes, assemblies and professional development meetings, include the use of student speakers or speakers from outside the district. The purpose of this policy is to establish the parameters for such speakers.

### **Rules for All Speakers**

Regardless of the type of speaker or the event, the speaker is required to follow all district policies and procedures including, but not limited to, the following:

1. The topic of the presentation must reflect the mission of the district and be directly related to the curriculum or the purpose of the event.
2. The presentation must be appropriate for the age level of the students attending and must also be appropriate for any parents/guardians and children who may attend or for a professional environment, when applicable.
3. Speakers will be given a general topic or theme upon which to speak. The speech must be consistent with that topic or theme.
4. Obscene, vulgar, lewd or indecent speech is not permitted.
5. Speakers will not plagiarize, will properly attribute material authored by another person and will respect copyright, trademark and other applicable state or federal laws.
6. Speakers may not advertise or promote any product, practice or service not permitted to minors by law or district policy.
7. Insulting or fighting words, the very expression of which injures or harasses other people (e.g., threats of violence, defamation of character or of a person's race, religion or ethnic origin), are not permitted.
8. The district does not permit speech that, because of its content, presents a clear and present likelihood that it will cause a material and substantial disruption of the proper and orderly operation and discipline of the school or school activities or will cause the commission of unlawful acts or the violation of lawful school procedures.

## **Outside Speakers**

The Board, superintendent, principals or teachers may invite speakers from outside the district to speak at school or district events, such as classes or assemblies, or present at professional development programs for district employees or the Board. For the purposes of this policy, outside speakers are those who are not students, district officials or employees.

Any event at which outside speakers are invited to speak is considered a closed forum, and the content of the speech is limited to the purpose of the forum and the specific topic or theme the speaker was directed to address. Outside speakers may be required to submit a copy of their presentation for the purpose of determining whether it meets the intended purpose of the event and otherwise satisfies the rules established in this policy.

Building administrators are responsible for approving and monitoring the use of outside speakers in their buildings and may revoke an invitation or stop a presentation if the speaker is in violation of this policy or for any legal reason.

Outside speakers at meetings of student-initiated groups are subject to the same rules as other outside speakers who speak at district-sponsored events.

## **Student Speakers**

### ***Student Speakers in Classrooms and at Events Not Open to the Public***

Students may be requested or required to speak on a variety of issues in the classroom, in curricular-related events, at assemblies, at performances and in other forums that are not open to the general public. In those situations, the district maintains a closed forum, and students are expected to follow the directions of district staff. Student speech must be respectful and conform to district policies and procedures and building and classroom rules.

### ***Student Speakers at Public Events***

Students may be invited to speak at public events, including assemblies and graduation celebrations, that are open to the general public. In general, district events are considered a closed forum; however, when students speak at public events, the district will consider the student's speech to be presented in a limited public forum, as required by law. In addition, particular events may have more specific purposes directly related to the event. The district is under no obligation to expand the forum or create a new forum to include students other than those invited to speak in accordance with this policy.

A student speaker may be required to submit a copy of his or her presentation for the purpose of determining whether it meets the intended purpose of the event and otherwise satisfies the rules established in this policy and other policies and procedures.

Students will not be disciplined based on the viewpoint expressed, including religious viewpoints, for otherwise permissible speech. If, in the opinion of the school official supervising the event, the student's speech is in violation of this policy or other district policies and procedures, the official may require the student to stop speaking, and the student may be disciplined or directed to modify his or her speech appropriately.

In accordance with law, the following disclaimer shall be read aloud and/or printed on any written materials distributed at graduation: "Student speakers are speaking as individuals, and their speech does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position or expression of the district." The district will also provide this disclaimer at any other public district event at which a student speaks if the district considers it necessary to clarify to the audience that the student does not speak on behalf of the district.

### ***Selection of Student Speakers at Public Events***

It is a privilege for students to be allowed to speak at district-sponsored public events. All student speakers must be in good standing with the district, as defined by the district, in order to be eligible to speak.

Student speakers at public district events will be selected based on viewpoint-neutral criteria in accordance with law including, but not limited to, the following:

1. The district will select student speakers for graduation from among those graduates with the highest grade-point average, those with notable accomplishments or those who served as the senior class or student body president.
2. Student speakers for other public district or school events are limited to:
  - < Student government officers or candidates.
  - < Club and organization presidents.
  - < Team captains.
  - < Exchange students.

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- < Students who have received a particular honor or award, such as success at a state or national competition.
  - < Students selected by a random drawing from a pool of volunteers.
3. The superintendent or designee may allow a student who does not meet the above criteria to speak at public school or district events upon the recommendation of a district employee. Approval will not be given unless the employee recommending the student articulates an alternative neutral criteria used to select the student.

These selection criteria are not required for students who are speaking as part of a school- or district-sponsored event when the student's speech is scripted or where a staff member specifically directs the students in what to say.

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*Note: The reader is encouraged to check the index located at the beginning of this section for other pertinent policies and to review administrative procedures and/or forms for related information.*

Adopted: 7-16-15

Cross Refs: AC, Prohibition against Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation  
KK, Visitors to District Property/Events

Legal Refs: ' 160.2500, RSMo.  
U.S. Const. amend. 1

Dent-Phelps R-III School District, Salem, Missouri