

Students

Civil and Legal Rights and Responsibilities

Preamble

The board of education approves the following policy with the advice and consent of its administrators. The following statement in no way diminishes the legal authority of school officials or the board of education to deal with disruptive students. It applies to all schools. It recognizes and extends the range of the student's responsibility.

One of the major goals of this statement is to establish a working relationship based on the human values of self-respect and respect for others. No student has the right to interfere with the education of his/her fellow students. If dialogue is interrupted or destroyed, then the bonds that hold us together are broken. It is thus the responsibility of each student to respect the rights of all who are involved in the educational process.

The privileges and rights of all students shall be guaranteed without regard to race, religion, handicap, sex, creed, or national origin.

Freedom of Expression

It is the intention of the board of education to promote the dissemination of diverse viewpoints and to foster discussion of all political and social issues. Students shall have the right to advocate change of any law, policy or regulation. Students may exercise their right to freedom of expression through speech, assembly, petition, and other lawful means. The exercise of this right may not interfere with the rights of others. Freedom of expression may not be utilized to present material which tends to be obscene or slanderous or to defame character, or to advocate violation of federal, state, and local laws, or official school policies, rules and regulations.

- A. Official school publications shall reflect the policy and judgment of the student editors. It is the obligation of the student editors to be governed by the standards of responsible journalism, such as avoidance of libel, obscenity, and defamation. Student publications shall provide as much opportunity as possible for the sincere expression of all shades of student opinion.

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- B. Students may exercise their constitutionally protected rights of free speech and assembly so long as they do not interfere with the operations of their regular school program.
1. Students have a right to wear political buttons, arm bands, and other badges of symbolic expression, as long as these do not violate the limits set in this policy.
 2. Student who edit, publish, post, or distribute printed, handwritten, or duplicated matter among their fellow student within the school are responsible for the content of such publications. Libel, obscenity, profanity, personal attacks, and encouragement of the violation of laws are prohibited. Students may distribute petitions, circulars, leaflets, newspapers and other printed matter subject to the following guidelines:
 - a. The time of distribution shall not be limited except when such restrictions are deemed necessary to prevent interference with individual class programs.
 - b. The manner of distribution shall be such that:
 - All literature distributed on school property must bear identification as to its source.
 - Coercion is not used to induce students to accept printed matter or to sign petitions.
 - Funds or donations are not collected for the material distributed.
 - The distributor must be a student of the school involved and a non-student must have the building administrator's permission.
 - Student distributors have the responsibility of cleaning up any littering of said materials that may result.
 - Leaflets and printed material to be distributed shall be submitted to the designated building administrator at least 12 hours prior to distribution. Approval or disapproval of such distribution shall be indicated within six hours or by the same time the next school day. The building administrator may limit the number of students or groups of students who may distribute materials in any one day.

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- Materials are not left undistributed or stacked for pickup while unattended at any place in the school or on school grounds.
 - The distribution of materials shall not hinder the normal flow of traffic within the school.
3. Students shall be provided with ample bulletin board space, convenient to students, for the use of posting student materials.
- The location and numbers of such bulletin boards shall be by joint agreement of the student government representative and the building administrator.
4. Students shall be allowed to present outside speakers, films, and other media to students with approval of the building administrator, principal, or designee.
- It is the responsibility of the building administrator or a designee to inform the speaker and students of the rules which govern speakers.
 - If a speaker openly violates the rules, the program will be stopped and the speaker reminded of the regulations. If violations continue, the speaker will be requested to leave.
 - An open mike may be made available to students, faculty, or non-student with the building administrator's permission. A location will be provided that will accommodate those interested, that will not interfere with other school activities, and where the speaker may exercise freedom of expression without interference. The rules governing outside speakers apply to all users of the open mike.
 - Any section of the school which can be used at all times without disruption of the main body of students and which is available to students during non-academic periods, shall be available to students during non-academic periods, shall be available for peaceful assembly of students for the purpose of voicing opinions.
5. The content of official school newspapers and yearbooks shall be subject to the restrictions as stated under Section C on the rights contained in this policy.

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- C. In the exercise of the student rights described in this policy, no person shall speak or distribute materials, wear buttons, or make other displays or post notices or other materials which are obscene according to legal definitions, are libelous or slanderous according to current legal definition; incite students so as to create a clear and present danger of the imminent commission of unlawful acts on school premises or the violations of lawful school regulations or the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school; or express or advocate racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice so as to create clear and present danger of imminent commission of unlawful acts on school premises or the violation of lawful school regulations or of the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.
- D. Faculty advisors to student activity groups shall be appointed by the building administrator after consultation with the prospective advisor.
- E. Any student who, after going through the normal channels of appeal, still feels the rights given him/her under this policy have been infringed upon, should appeal to the student advisory committee. From there the council may take it to the building administrator and faculty advisory committee, then the superintendent and finally the student advisory committee may place it on the board of education agenda. All such appeals shall be decided as quickly as possible.

Student Participation in Town Government

Inasmuch as there is no better way to inculcate an appreciation of the responsibilities of citizenship in our American life, the board of education encourages the Brookfield Secondary School Administrators to establish and maintain a plan whereby students in grades 9-12 may participate in the various branches of our town government. Approval of such participation shall be secured from all boards and commissions involved in this plan.

Student Involvement in Decision Making

A primary task of the school is to create a stimulating learning climate which develops active involvement of students in their education and develops a spirit of inquiry. This climate is created when students work together with school staffs in such activities as planning and evaluating school programs.

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Student Involvement in Decision Making (continued)

The board of education believes that students should

1. be encouraged to participate in establishing course goals, in planning classroom activities, and in improving courses of studies.
2. feel free to express, without fear, their own opinions, recognizing that every privilege and right has a corresponding responsibility.
3. be involved in the planning of assembly programs and school-sponsored forums of interest.
4. be encouraged to participate in student government organizations that provide students with a voice in school affairs.
5. be encouraged to participate in a variety of extra-class activities to broaden their educational experiences.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-15c Discrimination in public schools prohibited.

Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81)

Policy
adopted: 6/20/1

BROOKFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Brookfield, Connecticut