

STUDENT SPEAKER POLICY

The District intends to comply fully with the Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools issued February 7, 2003 by the United States Department of Education (“Guidance”).

The District hereby creates a limited public forum consisting of an opportunity for a student to speak for a maximum of 1 minute to introduce the following school-sponsored events and programs: sports events, assemblies, opening of the school-day, pep-rallies, concerts, banquets, and other school sponsored events as the Principal of each school designates.

In so doing, the District affirms its belief that allowing students’ public speaking opportunities promotes important educational goals by providing students experience with speaking in public, organizing their thoughts, and making concise oral presentations before live audiences; presenting educational opportunities for students in the areas of speech, English, grammar, drama, and civics; giving students a greater sense of ownership in their school's activities and events through additional student participation and involvement; and promoting a continuation of student maturity, growth, and education through placing additional reasonable responsibilities upon students.

The designated forum shall be limited in the following ways: (1) As to high schools, only students of the high school shall be eligible to use the limited public forum; As to middle schools, only students of the middle school shall be eligible to use the limited public forum. As to elementary schools, only students of the elementary school shall be eligible to use the limited public forum. (2) The topic of the introductions must be related to the purpose of the occasion, to bringing the audience to order, to formalizing and marking the opening of the event, and to honoring the occasion, the participants, and those in attendance.

Selection of Speakers: Any student in the final year of his or her school level (elementary, middle school, high school) who is a student council officer, class officer, or officer/captain of a school sponsored organization, athletic team, or competition group wishing to participate as a speaker under this policy shall submit his or her name to the school’s student council (or Principal, if there is no student council) during an announced three-day period at the beginning of the school year. After the three-day period, the names of all such volunteering students shall be randomly drawn by the president of the student council (or Principal if there is no student council) until all names have been selected. This process shall be witnessed by at least one school official (who shall be present only to assure the fairness of the drawing and the accurate listing of names drawn).

The students' names shall be listed in the order drawn and matched chronologically to the occasions for introductions in the order in which they arise. Each volunteering student shall be notified by the student council (or Principal if there is no student council) of the particular occasion for which he or she is asked to give an opening introduction. If there are more speaking occasions than there are volunteers, once each volunteering student has been matched to a speaking occasion, the same list of students, in the same order, shall be repeated as many times as necessary to fill all occasions. If there are students who during the

year achieve one of the above described positions who did not hold such positions at the beginning of the year, those students may volunteer and have their names added to the list during the course of the school year upon obtaining their new position.

At each event and program in which a student will deliver an opening introduction, a disclaimer shall be either (1) Printed in the program for the event; or (2) Stated by a student or school official prior to the student message; or (3) Stated by the student speaker prior to delivering the message.

In each instance the following information is to be provided: "[Name of Student] is a volunteering student selected at random to give a short opening introduction of [his/her] choice for [tonight's/ today's] [name of event]. The content of the introduction, whether religious or nonreligious, is the expression of the student and does not reflect any endorsement, sponsorship, or expression of the District."

The topics have been designated for the forum and student speakers are required to stay on the designated topics for which the forum was created. Nothing in this policy abrogates the District's prohibition against obscene speech, which is not protected by the First Amendment [*Ginsberg v. New York*, 390 U.S. 629, 635 (1968)], the use of "vulgar speech" or "offensively lewd and indecent speech" [*Bethel Sch. Dist. v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675, 685 (1986)], slanderous (defamatory) speech, and "student activities [that] would materially and substantially disrupt the work and discipline of the school." [*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Conn. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 513 (1969)].

In addition to students giving opening messages at school activities, per above, there are certain students who hold or have attained special positions of honor within the school structure who have traditionally addressed school audiences from time to time, but only as a tangential component of their achieved positions of honor (such as the captain of the football team, captains of other various sports teams, student council officers, class officers, homecoming kings and queens, prom kings and queens, and the like). Nothing in this policy is intended to take the place of the continuation of the practice of having such students address school audiences in the normal course of their respective positions of honor, and to continue to be allowed to do so.

Special Rules for Graduation Ceremonies:

The District hereby creates a limited public forum consisting of an opportunity for a student to speak for a maximum of 1 minute to begin graduation ceremonies and another student to speak for a maximum of 1 minute to end graduation ceremonies.

The designated forum shall be limited in the following ways: (1) Only students who are graduating and whose selection is based upon neutral criteria (such as academic ranking, holding a class office, or holding an office in the student council), and who will not otherwise be delivering a graduation address, shall be eligible to use this limited public forum; and (2) The topic of the opening and closing must be related to the purpose of the graduation ceremonies, to formalizing and marking the opening and closing of the event, and to honoring the occasion, the participants, and those in attendance.

Students who are eligible based on such neutral criteria and who volunteer to give the opening and closing for the graduation ceremonies shall be selected by random draw. The first name drawn will present the opening, and the second name drawn will present the closing.

In addition to the students giving the opening and closing, there are certain students who have attained special positions of honor based upon neutral criteria who have traditionally had speaking roles at graduation ceremonies (such as valedictorian, salutatorian, and sometimes class officers, student council officers, and the like). Nothing in this policy shall affect the continuation of same.

In addition to the students doing the opening and closing, any other students who may be addressing the audience such as the valedictorian or salutatorian shall each be permitted to address the audience for a reasonable length of time at graduation ceremonies. For this purpose, the District creates a limited public forum for the students to deliver such addresses. The topic of the addresses must be related to the purpose of the graduation ceremonies and honoring the event.

A written disclaimer shall be printed in the graduation program that states the following: “The students who will be speaking at the graduation ceremonies were selected based upon neutral criteria to deliver the introduction, addresses, and closing (collectively “messages”) of their own choice. The District does not suggest or endorse the content of the students’ messages. The content of each student speaker’s message, whether religious or nonreligious, is the private expression of the individual student and does not reflect any position or expression of the District, its Board of Trustees, administration, or employees, or indicate the views of any other graduate. No person is compelled to participate in or agree with the selection of content made by the student speakers, nor should anyone feel compelled to do so.”

Topics have been designated for the forum and student speakers are required to stay on the designated topics for which the forum was created. Nothing in this policy abrogates the District’s prohibition against obscene speech, which is not protected by the First Amendment [*Ginsberg v. New York*, 390 U.S. 629, 635 (1968)], the use of “vulgar speech” or “offensively lewd and indecent speech” [*Bethel Sch. Dist. v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675, 685 (1986)], slanderous (defamatory) speech, and “student activities [that] would materially and substantially disrupt the work and discipline of the school.” [*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Conn. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 513 (1969)].