Series 4000: District Employment

4200 Employee Conduct and Ethics

4221 Employee Speech

As role models, employees must exercise sound judgment in their interactions with students, Parents, and members of the community and maintain a high degree of professionalism and objectivity. Employees must act within the scope of their respective duties and responsibilities.

A. Curriculum, Instruction, and Controversial Topics

During instruction and discussion of controversial issues, employees must follow these guidelines:

1. the issues discussed must be relevant to the curriculum and be part of a planned educational program;

2. students and Parents must have free access to appropriate materials and information for analysis and evaluation of the issues;

3. employees must allow discussion of a variety of viewpoints so long as that discussion does not substantially disrupt the educational environment;

4. the topic and materials used must be within the students' range, knowledge, maturity, and competence;

5. employees must obtain pre-approval from the building principal before instructing students about sensitive or controversial issues;

6. employees must not advocate partisan causes, sectarian religious views, or self-propaganda of any kind during school or school-related functions. Employees may express a personal opinion as long as students are encouraged to reach independent decisions; and

7. if a Parent objects to their student's instructional materials, employees will refer the Parent to Policy 5407 and Form 5407-F.

Employees who are unsure of their obligations must confer with their building principal or supervisor.

B. Speech on Matters of Public Concern

The District respects and supports its employees' right as citizens to exercise free speech in a responsible manner.

Free speech rights are not absolute and are subject to restriction when the employee is acting within the course and scope of their employment.

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When speaking as a citizen on a matter of public concern, an employee must not make written, verbal, online, or nonverbal statements that cause a substantial disruption to the school environment, violate federal or state law, or otherwise violate these Policies. An employee's right as a citizen to comment upon matters of public concern must be balanced against the District's interest in promoting the efficiency of the public services it performs through its employees.

Employees do not speak on behalf of the District or a school unless specifically authorized by the Board or Superintendent.

Legal authority: U.S. CONST. amend. I; Const 1963, art I, § 5

Date adopted: October 26, 2026

Date revised:

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