

Instruction

Extra-Class Activities: Limited Open Forum

The *Equal Access Act* requires that public secondary schools grant access to student groups who wish to meet for religious, political or philosophical purposes if the school allows other types of non-curriculum related student groups to meet. The law establishes that the open forum be held during the lunch hour or as determined by the building administrator to ensure equal access to student groups wishing to meet.

The Building Administrator may approve student groups the use of facilities to conduct a meeting during the open forum provided that:

1. The meeting will take place during the open forum. The open forum is defined as the lunch hour or non-instructional time as determined by the Building Administrator.
2. The meeting is voluntary and student initiated. The Building Administrator must be assured that students are the ones promoting such activities and that they are participating of their own volition. Only students enrolled in the school may request the meetings.
3. The school does not sponsor the meetings (i.e. authorities or District employees do not promote, lead or participate in such meetings). Building Administrators may assign personnel to supervise these meetings. However, this action does not constitute sponsorship of such meetings by the District.
4. The presence of school authorities or District employees at any student religious meeting is non-participatory in nature. The presence of school authorities is for the purpose of observation only.
5. The meeting does not in any way interfere with the conduct of regular instructional activities of the schools. Since the education of the student is the primary responsibility of the school, any other activities are secondary. The school may deny facilities to students on the basis that such activities or meetings interfere with the instructional program.
6. Student meetings are not controlled, conducted or directed by person or groups not affiliated with the schools. Such persons may attend student meetings but not on a regular basis. Visitors to the school must be approved by the Building Administrator, and clearance obtained prior to the meeting.
7. The meeting is open to all students without regard to race, gender, religion or national origin.

Access to School Media

Schools are not required to provide any student groups, clubs or organizations with access to school media. However, if the Building Administrator chooses to allow access, then all student groups shall have equal access to the school media to announce meetings.

Should the Building Administrator decide to allow student groups access to school media, then the Building Administrator shall develop regulations that specify the forms of school media available and any limitations associated with their use. School media includes, but is not limited to, the public address system, school newspapers and/or magazines, school bulletin boards, and the school website.

Equal Access for Patriotic Groups

No Building Administrator shall deny equal access, or a fair opportunity to meet, to any group intended to serve youth under the age of twenty one (21) listed in Title 36 of the United States Code, which includes, but is not limited to, Big Brothers & Big Sisters of America, Boy Scouts of America, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Civil Air Patrol, Girl

Scouts of America, Little League Baseball, Inc., and Naval Sea Cadet Corps, for reasons based on the membership criteria or oath of allegiance to God and country.

Related Policies:

0521.2 – Commitment to Religious Neutrality

1250 – School Visitors

1330 – Use of School Facilities

6141.2 – Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

Legal References:

Westside Community Board of Education v. Mergens

Title 20, United States Code

Sections 4071-4074 – “Equal Access Act”

Section 7905 – “Equal Access to Public School Facilities”

Title 36, United States Code, Subtitle II – Patriotic and National Organizations

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LEDYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Ledyard, Connecticut