



Forest Ranch Charter School

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Board Policy – Freedom of Expression

1. Purpose

- a. The Forest Ranch Charter School Governing Board recognizes that students of the School have the right to exercise free expression. The Board respects student's rights to express ideas and opinions, take stands and support causes, whether controversial or not through their speech, their writing, their clothing, and the printed materials they choose to post or distribute.

2. Methods and Limits of Expression

- a. Students attending the School have the right to exercise free expression including, but not limited to, the use of bulletin boards, distribution of printed materials or petitions, and wearing buttons, badges and other insignia.
- b. Student liberties of expression shall be limited only as allowed by law in order to maintain an orderly school environment and to protect the rights, health and safety of all members of the School community.
- c. Students intending to distribute any materials or present petitions for signatures must first disclose this intent to the Director and obtain content approval from the Director, ensuring that the materials or information are in compliance with this policy and all applicable laws.

3. Procedures for Student Expression

- a. Circulation of Petitions and Other Printed Matter
 - i. Students shall be allowed to distribute petitions and other printed matter subject to these procedures.
 - ii. The time of distribution shall be limited to the half hour before school begins, during the lunch period, and the half hour after school is dismissed.
 - iii. The manner of distribution shall be such that coercion is not used to induce students to accept the printed matter or to sign petitions.
 - iv. Materials are not to be left undistributed or stacked for pick-up while unattended at any place in the School or on School grounds.
- b. Buttons, Badges, and Other Insignia of Symbolic Expression
 - i. Students will be permitted to wear buttons, badges, armbands, and other insignia as a form of expression.

ii. Students will be subject to disciplinary action when expressive activities such as the distribution of materials, wearing of buttons or displays, or posting of notices or other materials:

1. Are obscene, libelous or slanderous;
2. Incite students so as to create a clear and present danger of the imminent commission of unlawful acts on school premises or of the violation of lawful School regulations or of the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the School;
3. Express or advocate racial, ethnic or religious prejudice so as to create a clear and present danger of imminent commission of unlawful acts on School premises or of the violation of lawful School regulations or of the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the School;
4. Are distributed in violation of the time, place and manner requirements;
5. Are in violation of current federal, state and local laws.

c. Unofficial School Publications

- i. School officials may not ban the distribution of non-School-sponsored publications on School grounds. Writers and editors of unofficial student publications who violate any state or federal law may be disciplined after distribution.
- ii. Students distributing or posting any materials which are obscene, libelous or slanderous, or which demonstrably incite students to commit unlawful acts on School premises, violate School rules, or substantially disrupt the School's orderly operation will be subject to disciplinary action.
- iii. The School may disassociate itself from the material printed inasmuch as it is not an official publication of the School.
- iv. School officials may reasonably regulate the time, place and manner of distribution. This distribution will be limited to:
 1. One half hour before school begins, during the lunch period, or the half hour after dismissal.
 2. In locations that do not obstruct the normal flow of traffic within the School or at entrances.
 3. Without undue noise.
- v. "Distribution" means dissemination of a publication to students at a time and place of normal School activity, or immediately prior to or subsequent thereto, by means of handing out free copies, selling or offering copies for sale, accepting donations for copies of the publication, or displaying the student publication in areas of the School which are generally frequented by students.

vi. School officials cannot:

1. Prohibit the distribution of anonymous literature or require that literature bear the name of the sponsoring organization or author,
2. Ban the distribution of literature because it contains advertising, or
3. Create regulations that discriminate against non-School-sponsored publications or interfere with the effective distribution of non-sponsored publications provided such publications abide by time, place and manner regulations.

4. Other Forms of Student Expression

- a. Forms of student expression may include, but are not limited to speech, debate, assemblies, posters, bulletin board announcements, and the wearing of buttons, badges and armbands.
- b. In general, the laws pertaining to all forms of student expression are the same. The rights of students to express their opinions are recognized by law and are not limited to verbal expression. The basic guidelines listed above for publications apply to all forms of student expression.
- c. No teacher or administrator shall interfere with such expression on the grounds that the message may be unpopular with students or faculty.
- d. In conforming to state and federal laws, student expression must obey copyright laws; for example, student posters cannot use nationally registered and copyrighted characters.

5. Distribution of Procedures Governing Student Rights

- a. The Director is responsible for distribution of copies of this policy to all teachers who are advisors of students who produce publications or present public performances.
- b. It is the responsibility of the Director to ensure that these guidelines are kept up-to-date and accurate.

6. Appeals

- a. The pupil and a School staff member shall attempt to resolve the problem before consulting with the Director.
- b. If the issue cannot be resolved between the staff member and the pupil, the pupil may appeal the decision to the Director, or his or her designee.
- c. As a final step, the pupil may request a hearing under this Board policy. The hearing shall be held before the Board or an impartial person appointed by the Board within ten (10) school days after the hearing is requested. Both sides shall be given the opportunity to demonstrate that the Board policy was properly applied.
- d. The Board will render a decision within ten (10) school days. The decision of the Board will be final.

7. Adoption

- a. This board policy was reviewed and adopted by the Forest Ranch Charter School governing board on October 17, 2017.
- b. This board policy was reviewed and approved by the Forest Ranch Charter School governing board on March 21, 2023.
- c. The next annual review will occur on or before March 21, 2024.