

Arlington Public Schools

Guidance Regarding Protests and Walkouts

Student Participation in Walkouts, Protests and Other Political Activities

- APS respects our students' rights to engage in peaceful protest and express their opinions through speech and other ways if it is done respectfully, does not interfere with others' rights, and does not disrupt learning in the school.
- We respect students' rights to participate in walkouts during non-instructional time such as during lunch, study hall, activities, etc. They may wear t-shirts and other insignia advertising related messages as long as those clothes are not obscene, vulgar, disrupt the school environment or order, or otherwise in violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- Students must inform their administrator in advance of a planned walkout. With this advance notice, students will be allowed to leave classrooms and their buildings, although they are encouraged to remain on school property for safety reasons.
- Protests inside the school building are strictly prohibited given their impact and disruption to the learning environment.
- Students participating in marches or walkouts are expected to participate in class and to respond to administrative questions and directives in the same way as all other students.
- A student's first walk out of a school year will be considered an excused absence, any subsequent participation during that school year will be unexcused. Additionally, if students leave school property during a protest, their absence will be unexcused.
- If principals are approached about leafleting, rallies, speeches, flyers, use of tables for literature and discussion, etc., their approval or disapproval should be governed by the same rules that the school ordinarily applies to such activities. [Policy and PIP K-6 Distribution of Non-School Materials](#).
- Harassment of participants or any student or staff member will not be tolerated at any school. Our [Student Code of Conduct](#) states that students have the right to express themselves through speech, assembly, distributing literature, and other ways. They are expected to communicate their opinions in ways that do not interfere with the rights of others, cause disruption or harm, damage another's reputation, or break the law. Middle and high school students should submit materials they want to display or distribute to an administrator for review.

Staff Participation in Walkouts, Protests and Other Political Activities

- Teachers are directed to remain in class with students who do not participate in the walkout.
- Staff are not permitted to participate in, help plan, provide guidance, or endorse these student-sponsored activities unless directed to do so for safety and monitoring purposes

only. Staff may only direct the students planning a walkout to notify the principal of those plans.

- Staff may not distribute materials in the classroom unless the principal has approved distribution as part of a curricular activity.
- APS employees are encouraged to exercise their constitutional rights to participate in political activity---e.g., campaigning, running for office, registering voters, displaying, and distributing political materials---but should do so on their own time, or by taking leave. Political Activity of School Personnel is governed by the School Board [Policy](#) and [PIP](#).
- Instructional personnel may discuss political issues with students as part of the instructional program, following APS guidelines to ensure balanced and critical review of issues.
- APS employees may not participate, nor may APS facilities be used, in political campaigns during school or work hours. During work hours, employees and those acting on behalf of APS are prohibited from wearing campaign buttons, t-shirts, hats or other items designed to influence the outcome of an election. Staff are also prohibited from displaying such items in their workplaces or on school grounds and/or property.