

Suggested Talking Points for Principals/Curriculum Leaders

1. Prepare your students in advance by informing them that it is your priority (responsibility) to ensure that classrooms and schools are safe and respectful learning environments. The goal is to teach students how to have healthy debates that respect differences, including different political opinions, without engaging in ways that are harmful, disruptive or personal.
2. Teach students how to focus on issues and support their opinions with legitimate information.
3. Set the expectation that opinions should be expressed with supporting information, voices should remain calm and they should refrain from making comments that are personal.
4. Clarify that in our classrooms and in our schools, we will not use words that are vulgar or threatening, and that resorting to inflammatory slogans or catchphrases is far less effective than discussing and debating the substance of a political position.
5. Students have a First Amendment Right to engage in political speech within the school environment, and school personnel cannot infringe upon that right based on disagreement with the content of the student's speech. However, school personnel may restrict speech that is causing or is likely to cause a substantial disruption to the school environment, create a physically unsafe space for students, or interfere with designated instructional time.

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

It is imperative that all staff members understand their moral and legal responsibility as public employees to keep their own political sentiments private while on duty. Under Oregon law (ORS 260.432) public employees, including school staff members, may not engage in political activity while on the job. This would include demonstrating support for any political candidate or position. Be mindful of any Board Policy in your district which might limit political activity by employees in which any discussion by employees about political candidates or positions while on duty must be free of persuasion or an indication of approval or disapproval by the employee.