

GUIDANCE ON STUDENT WALKOUT (High School)
Updated 10-17-23

- Middle/High Students Off Campus Protests: Middle and high school students have the right to participate in protests off campus and will not be prevented from doing so. Students with parent permission to be off campus will receive an excused absence. This provision shall not be construed to permit staff to solicit, recruit, direct or control students' expression of religious, political or philosophical off-campus expression. When feasible, a site administrator may grant staff permission to attend an off-campus protest with students in a supervisory and non-participatory capacity. ([Board Policy 5145.2 , Freedom of Speech/Expression](#))
- Middle/High Students Excused Absences: A middle or high school student's absence for the purpose of engaging in a civic or political event will be excused, provided that the pupil notifies the school ahead of the absence. A middle school or high school pupil who is absent under this provision is required to be excused for only one school day-long absence per school year, but may be permitted additional excused absences in the discretion of a school administrator as described in EC 48260. ([SFUSD AR 5113 Excuses and Absences](#), Education Code 48205)
- Parental Notice: If a student chooses to leave the school without permission, staff must notify administration immediately and follow the appropriate protocols for notifying parents of the unexcused absence or student leaving site without authorization. If the absence is excused based on pupil advance notification to the school (AR 5113), the parent/guardian should still be notified that the student has left campus to participate in a civic or political event.
- Supervision of Off Campus Protests: Staff are not authorized to lead students in a walkout, however, if the administration determines that the students should be supervised as they participate in the walk out the principal must contact their assistant superintendent and decide if staff will follow students who are walking out to ensure their safety. Administrators may not authorize staff to accompany

students for the purpose of staff engaging in political activity (e.g. hold protest signs).

- Limits on Employee Participation: While SFUSD recognizes and respects a student's right to free speech, District employees shall not organize, promote, endorse, or encourage students to participate in any student demonstration, distribution of materials of a political nature, sit-in, or walk-out. Staff is not authorized to lead students in a walkout - *this is not an authorized field trip at any grade level.*
- Limits to Student Speech on Campus: Students are prohibited from making any expressions or distributing or posting any materials that are obscene, libelous, or slanderous. Students also are prohibited from making any expressions that so incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises, the violation of school rules, or substantial disruption of the school's orderly operation. (Education Code 48907) The use of "fighting words" or epithets is prohibited in those instances where the speech is abusive and insulting, rather than a communication of ideas, and the speech is used in an abusive manner in a situation that presents an actual danger that it will cause a breach of the peace. ([SFUSD BP 5145.2 Freedom of Speech/Expression](#))
- Can Deny Visitor Access to Campus Protests: The principal can deny visitor access to school if it reasonably appears that the visitor will commit an act likely to interfere with the peaceful conduct of school activities. A visitor is defined as any person who comes to a school site, not including the students and staff who are assigned to the school. ([SFUSD BP 1250 Visitors](#))
- Prohibit Discrimination or Harassment: Students have a right to free speech *but the school does not tolerate bullying, harassment, or hate speech targeted against other students based on their characteristics such as ethnicity or race.* Students are expected to communicate ideas without being abusive or insulting toward their peers. ([SFUSD BP 5145.3 Nondiscrimination/Harassment](#)). *School staff who witness an act of bullying or harassment shall immediately intervene to stop the incident when it is safe to do so.* ([SFUSD 5131.2 Bullying and Harassment](#), Education Code 234.1)

- Staff may exercise their right to take personal days and they should make arrangements for a substitute just as they would on any other day they plan to be absent. They must follow normal substitute request procedures,
- If the student demonstration or walkout causes a disruption local law enforcement may respond to the situation.
- Please contact your Executive Director & Assistant Superintendent immediately if you have students walk out or need any assistance.
- Please direct all media requests to SFUSD's Communications Office at (415) 241-6565.