

BOARD POLICY

1. STUDENT EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINTS

The District shall treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner the District treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular or other viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject and may not discriminate against the student based on a religious viewpoint expressed by the student on an otherwise permissible subject.

2. STUDENT SPEAKERS AT NONGRADUATION EVENTS

The District hereby creates a limited public forum for student speakers at all school events at which a student is to publicly speak. If a student is to speak at an event, the District shall set a maximum time limit reasonable and appropriate to the occasion. The forum shall be limited in the manner provided by law.

3. STUDENT SPEAKERS AT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CEREMONIES

- a. The District hereby creates a limited public forum consisting of an opportunity for a student to speak at graduation ceremonies.
- b. For each speaker, the District shall set a maximum time limit reasonable and appropriate to the occasion.
- c. The forum shall be limited in the manner provided by law.
- d. The District shall treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner the District treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular or other viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject and may not discriminate against the student based on a religious viewpoint expressed by the student on an otherwise permissible subject.
- e. A written disclaimer shall be printed in the graduation program that states, "The students who will be speaking at the graduation ceremony were selected based on neutral criteria to deliver messages of the students' own choices. The content of each student speaker's message is the private expression of the individual student and does not reflect any position or expression of the Tupelo Public School District, the Board of Trustees, the District's administration, the employees of the District, or the views of any other graduate. The contents of these messages were prepared by the student volunteers, and the District refrained from any interaction with student speakers regarding the student speakers' viewpoints on permissible subjects."

4. RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Students may express the students' beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the

religious content of the students' submission. Homework and classroom work shall be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school. Students may not be penalized or rewarded on account of religious content. If a teacher's assignment involves writing a poem, the work of a student who submits a poem in the form of a prayer (for example, a psalm) should be judged on the basis of academic standards, including literary quality, and not penalized or rewarded on account of its religious content.

5. FREEDOM TO ORGANIZE RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

a. Students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, "see you at the pole" gatherings, and other religious gatherings before, during and after school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other non-curricular student activities and groups.

b. Religious groups must be given the same access to school facilities for assembling as is given to other non-curricular groups, without discrimination based on the religious content of the group's expression. If student groups that meet for nonreligious activities are permitted to advertise or announce the groups' meetings, for example, by advertising in a student newspaper, putting up posters, making announcements on a student activities bulletin board or public address system, or handing out leaflets, school authorities may not discriminate against groups that meet for prayer or other religious speech.

c. School authorities may disclaim sponsorship of non-curricular groups and events, provided they administer the disclaimer in a manner that does not favor or disfavor groups that meet to engage in prayer or other religious speech.

6. This policy shall not be construed to authorize the District to (a) require any person to participate in prayer or in any other religious activity; or (b) violate the constitutional rights of any person.

7. The Board authorizes the superintendent to adopt procedures consistent with this policy.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

1. Student speakers at graduation events shall be limited to speaking for a maximum of ten minutes.

2. Any graduating senior who is interested in delivering the commencement address will complete a Commencement Address Application, available in the Tupelo High School administrative offices. The applicant will include on the Commencement Address Application only the student's identification number only, not his/her name.

3. The graduation committee will review all Commencement Address Applications that have been submitted by the stated deadline and select one to

deliver the commencement address.

4. The subject of the addresses should be appropriate to the occasion, for example, to mark and honor the occasion, to honor the participants and those in attendance, to state the student's perspective on purpose, achievement, life, school, graduation, and looking forward to the future. The commencement speaker must stay on the subject outlined in his/her Commencement Address Application, and the student may not engage in obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd or indecent speech.

LEGAL REF.: Mississippi Student Religious Liberties Act of 2013