

# Austin Independent School District

Office of the General Counsel



February 15, 2017

Team AISD,

The District and specifically our campuses are being approached by a host of groups and organizations with various requests. These include requests to have information handed out to students and their families, to have and hold informational "Know your Rights" meetings, to join in organized efforts during the work day, after the work day, and on the weekends.

This is a list of what you can and cannot do.

Can do:

1. Approve the use of meeting space on your campus provided the request has gone through the campus principal and the building use request paperwork has gone through the Office of School, Community and Family Education (Dr. Gloria Williams' office at 512-414-0113. Simply allowing the use of your facilities without requiring the paperwork and approval gives the appearance we are making the meeting or presentation a District sponsored event. That could be interpreted not only as taking "sides" in the current political concerns but also the gifting of District resources to make that happen.
2. Can make a wide variety of literature, brochures, and pamphlets available at your campus on a public information table or bulletin board. These groups will provide sufficient copies of their information to be displayed. Keep in mind though that some groups may request to provide information on the same table that you may find is contrary to your political beliefs or philosophy. If space is provided to one organization, you are going to have to make space available on that same table or bulletin board for other organizations as well.
3. Can engage in political activities on your own time, e.g. Evenings and weekends.
4. If officers, including ICE officers come to the campus, you are able to request ID. Some officers may not necessarily come in an easily identifiable uniform. You are able to request if they are conducting a lawful investigation. You are able to request to see any paperwork they may have to search a certain area or arrest a person. This is very similar to the protocol used when CPS comes to our campuses and takes a child from the school.
5. You can encourage individuals (students and parents) to become informed and advise them that a variety of resources with contact information is available at the campuses.
6. You can model informed and respectful behavior for your staff, students and parents, recognizing some of the current issues are very divisive.
7. You can redirect employees who are found to be engaging in political activities while on the job. Our mission, after all, is to be providing educational instruction to the students.

8. You can talk about how political activities unfold and differing viewpoints are contemplated in your government, sociology, humanities, debate or world cultures classes, but teachers need to be careful again about taking one side in the discussion without exploring respectful discussion into opposing viewpoints.

Cannot do:

1. You cannot make copies on the school copiers for the groups because that will be the use of District resources.
2. You cannot hand out the information to every student in every classroom. If they or parents are interested in the information, they can pick it up from the public information table(s) or bulletin boards and take it with them.
3. You cannot promise the use of District resources, whether facilities, copiers, supplies to any group. Policies must be respected that have been adopted by the Board and which govern our day to day operations. That is why requests must be made to the campus principal for use of classrooms, cafeterias, etc. in accordance with our policies. You must be fair and consistent in the application of those policies and requests.
4. You cannot engage in political activities during your work time on the job. This includes the use of District equipment to convey political messages or to try to schedule rallies, protests. You are reminded the District email is to be used for District business and all email created by every employee is subject to being requested by any member of the public, and the requestor is not required and cannot be asked to explain why he or she wants the information.
5. You cannot attempt to represent or assert that you represent the District in any official capacity when engaging in political activities. If you speak, you are speaking in your own personal capacity.
6. You cannot interfere with a lawful apprehension of an individual, e.g. Arrest with a warrant, hot pursuit of a fleeing individual.
7. As a government employee, you cannot give the appearance of taking sides in the current matters while on the job and exercising your duties of that job. We recognize this is oftentimes difficult, but it is important to remember there are impassioned individuals on both sides of the current issues. We have to practice and exhibit respectful behavior.

Thank you for your patience.

Ylise Janssen  
General Counsel