

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS - LIMITED OPEN/CLOSED FORUM

The Equal Access Act (Title VIII of Public Law 98-377) requires that public secondary schools grant equal access to student groups who wish to meet for religious, political, or philosophical purposes, if the school allows other types of non-curriculum-related student groups to meet. This policy establishes the open forum be held during the lunch hour or as determined by the school Principal to ensure equal access to student groups wishing to meet.

The Principal may approve student groups use of facilities to conduct a meeting during open forum provided that:

- A. The meeting will take place during the open forum. The open forum is defined as the lunch hour or non-instructional time as determined by the Principal.
- B. The meeting is voluntary and student initiated. The Principal must be assured that students are the ones promoting such activities and that they are participating of their own volition. Only students enrolled in the school may request the meetings.
- C. School authorities or district employees do not promote, lead or participate in such meetings. Principals may assign personnel to supervise these meetings. This action does not constitute sponsorship by the district of such meetings.
- D. The presence of school authorities or district employees or district personnel at any student religious meeting is non-participatory in nature. The presence of school authorities is for the purpose of observation only.
- E. The meeting does not in any way interfere with the conduct of regular instructional activities of the schools. Since the education of the students is the prime responsibility of the school, any other activities are secondary. The school may deny facilities to students on the basis that such activities or meetings interfere with the instructional program.
- F. Student meetings are not controlled, conducted or directed by person(s) or groups not affiliated with the schools. Such persons may attend student meetings but not on a regular basis. Visitors to the school must be approved by the Principal and clearance obtained prior to the meeting.
- G. The meeting is open to all students without regard to race, gender, religion or national origin.

Legal Reference: 5 MRSA § 4592

Adopted: April 14, 2003
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