

Policy 1313: Civility

Status: ADOPTED

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CSBA NOTE: The following policy is optional and may be revised to reflect district practice.

The Governing Board recognizes the impact that civility has on the effective operation of the district, including its role in creating a safe and positive school climate and enabling a focus on student well-being, learning, and achievement. The Board believes that each person should be treated with dignity and respect in their interactions within the school community.

CSBA NOTE: The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article 1, Section 2 of the California Constitution provide strong protection as to speech related to district business.

In addition, pursuant to Government Code 54954.3 and the court's decision in *Baca v. Moreno Valley Unified School District*, the Governing Board must not prohibit public criticism of district policies, procedures, programs, services, acts, omissions, or employees, even if the speech is clearly defamatory. See BB 9323 - Meeting Conduct. Pursuant to Government Code 54957.9 and the court's decisions in *Norse v. City of Santa Cruz* and *City of San Jose v. Garbett*, the Board is authorized to remove persons who willfully disrupt or disturb a meeting, provided that the action actually interferes with the proceedings of the meeting or poses a credible threat of violence that would place reasonable persons in fear for their safety or the safety of others.

Compared to community members, districts have greater authority to regulate the speech of district employees when they are acting in the scope of their employment with the district. Furthermore, court decisions have found that the First Amendment rights of public school students in the school setting are not necessarily the same as the rights of adults in other settings and must be applied in light of the special circumstances of the school environment. In *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that when a school has not, by policy or practice, opened up a school-sponsored activity for unrestricted use by students, the school may limit student expression as long as its decision is reasonably related to "legitimate pedagogical concerns." See BP/AR 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression.

Districts should consult legal counsel before placing restrictions on employee, student, or community member speech/expression in an effort to maintain civility.

The Board understands that the First Amendment provides strong protection for speech. However, the Board expects that all speech and expression will comport with norms of civil behavior on district grounds, in district facilities, during district activities or events, and in the use of district electronic/digital systems and platforms.

CSBA NOTE: The following optional paragraph reflects traits included in the definition of civil behavior provided by the National Council for the Social Studies Connected.

Civil behavior is polite, courteous, and reasonable behavior which is respectful to others and includes integrity, honesty, acceptance, timeliness, dependability, observance of laws and rules, and effective communication.

The Board and district staff shall model civil behavior as an example of behavior that is expected throughout the district. Practices that promote civil behavior include actively listening, giving full attention to the speaker, and refraining from interruptions; welcoming and encouraging participation, input, and feedback through stakeholder engagement; promptly responding to concerns; and embracing varying and diverse viewpoints. Such practices may be incorporated into governance standards adopted by the Board or Superintendent and/or professional standards or codes of conduct for employees as specified in district policies and regulations.

Students, staff, parents/guardians, and community members should be educated in the recognition, development, and demonstration of civil behavior. The Superintendent or designee may incorporate related concepts in the curriculum, provide staff development activities, and/or communicate this policy to the school community.

Students, staff, parents/guardians, and community members shall not communicate or behave in a manner that causes disruption; hinders the orderly conduct of district operations, the educational program, or any other district program or activity; or creates an unsafe learning or working environment. The Superintendent or designee may respond to disruptive, violent, or threatening behavior in accordance with law and as specified in BP/AR 3515.2 - Disruptions.

Behavior by students or staff that is discriminatory, harassing, or intimidating, including sexual harassment, bullying, and/or hate violence, or behavior that is in any other way unlawful, is prohibited and is subject to discipline in

accordance with law and as specified in district policy and regulations.
