



Administrative Regulation 4501

DISTRICT EMPLOYEE SPEECH

Responsible Office: Office of Human Resources

PURPOSE

The Superintendent hereby adopts this Administrative Regulation to carry out the Washoe County School District (District) Board of Trustee's (Board) Board Policy 4500 - Staff Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression.

DEFINITIONS

1. "Controversial Issues" means a divergence of opinion, especially a public one, between sides with sincerely held opposing viewpoints.
2. "District Speech" is speech in alignment with current Board Policies and other Board actions adopted by the Board.
3. "Freedom of Speech" refers to a person's right to express ideas regardless of the medium used. The term includes, but is not limited to, the spoken word, clothing, gestures, images and video, and posts to social media.
4. "Political Activity" means any activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for political office, political group, political organization, political issue, ballot initiative, bill, petition, or any other matter currently before the state legislature or local government agency.
5. "Religious Clothing" means religious dress worn in accordance with the employee's sincerely held religious beliefs, including head coverings, jewelry, emblems, and other types of religious dress.

REGULATION

1. Violent, harassing, threatening, or discriminatory employee speech: Freedom of speech is not a defense for violent, harassment, sexual harassment, threatening, discrimination, or the intimidation of another person. This type of speech is not protected by the constitutional right to freedom of speech and may subject the speaker to discipline as an employee, up to and including termination of employment.
2. Employee political activity: District employees are prohibited from engaging in political activities in the workplace, unless speaking as a private citizen on a matter of public concern.

- a. District employees may not give the impression they are speaking on behalf of the District on an issue that amounts to political activity, unless the employee has been expressly authorized or directed to do so by the Superintendent and the activity promotes the educational mission and/or operation of the District.
 - b. Civil civic discourse on political issues in the classroom aligned with the Nevada Academic Content Standards or curriculum is encouraged, but District employees are required to instruct students on both sides of an issue and avoid advocating for one side of an issue over another and/or imposing their own political views.
5. Employee speech related to approved curriculum: The District manages the educational curriculum taught in schools and how it is taught. Educators may speak about an age-appropriate subject related to District approved curriculum, raise questions related to the curriculum, and select approved materials and teaching methodologies in delivering the curriculum. Educators must consider the age and maturity of students when engaging in such topics.
6. Student instruction related to controversial issues: Educators may engage students in conversations regarding controversial issues of public interest, in the news, if it is relevant to their class and aligned with the Nevada Academic Content Standards. Educators must recognize their influence on students; thus, these conversations are not opportunities to promote or advocate personal values or beliefs regarding politics, religion, or other cultural issues. The role of educators is to facilitate conversations about issues in an inclusive environment and create safe spaces for students to make sense of the world around them. Educators must consider the age and maturity of students when engaging in such topics.
7. Employee use of personal social media accounts: Personal social media accounts must be kept separate from work-related accounts and District identifiers should not be utilized on personal social media accounts, in order to preserve the status of private citizen.
8. Publications and activities that appear to represent the District: The District retains the right to exercise control over publications and activities that appear to represent the District, a school and/or its students. The District/school may limit controversial subjects if the District/school is sponsoring the speech, such as with school newsletters or student publications, if the content would substantially disrupt the ability of the District/school to perform its educational mission or is used to engage in bullying, cyber-bullying, or the intimidation of another person, and other forms of unprotected speech.

9. Employee religious expression: Employees have the right to sincerely held theistic and non-theistic, ethical and moral beliefs and practices. The District shall provide employees with appropriate religious accommodations to the extent possible and in a manner that does not disrupt or interfere with the duties of the employee or other employees, student instruction, or activities of the school or workplace.
 - a. The District does not restrict the wearing of religious clothing that does not substantially disrupt or materially interfere with the educational environment.
10. Patriotic Observances: The District encourages employees to express patriotism for the United States by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, historical documents or singing official anthems. Employees shall behave in a respectful manner during such observances, so as not to substantially disrupt or materially interfere with the educational environment.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

1. This Administrative Regulation reflects the goals of the District's Strategic Plan and aligns/complies with the following governing documents of the District, to include:
 - a. Board Policy 0100, Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity;
 - b. Board Policy 4500, Staff Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression;
 - c. Board Policy 4505, Standards of Professional Conduct; and
 - d. Board Policy 1310, Political Activity on District Property Including Schools.
2. This Administrative Regulation complies with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and Nevada Administrative Code (NAC), to include:
 - a. NRS Chapter 391, Personnel.
3. This Administrative Regulation complies with state and federal laws, to include:
 - a. U.S. Constitution; and
 - b. Nevada Constitution.

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Modification
11/18/2025	1.0	Adopted