



Know Your Rights at

K-12 SCHOOLS

Q. Do I have First Amendment rights at school?



Yes. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that “neither students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” School officials may not censor expression unless it substantially interferes with the operation of the school or infringes on the rights of other students.

Q. Can I express my religious beliefs at school?



Yes. Among other things, and subject to the limitations mentioned above, students have the right to share their beliefs, pray, and read Scripture during free time. They also are free to express their religious views in a class discussion or assignment that invites any personal, religious, or other views.

Q. Can my school tell me not to speak on certain “offensive” topics, such as abortion or religion?



Generally no. As set forth above, administrators may only restrict specific speech if it substantially interferes with the operation of the school or infringes on the rights of other students.

Q. Can I distribute religious material at school?



Yes. Schools may not ban student distribution of literature, and students are permitted to distribute religious materials to the same extent that non-religious literature distribution is allowed.

Q. Can I form a religious club at school?



Religious clubs must be given equal access to all school facilities, resources, and equipment that are available to other non-curriculum, student-initiated clubs.

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Q. Can I wear religious clothing or jewelry to school?

Students may wear religious clothing or jewelry to the extent that other similar articles of dress or jewelry are permitted. Schools may not single out religious clothing or jewelry for unfavorable treatment.



Q. Can schools and teachers provide instruction related to religion as part of the curriculum?

Yes. A teacher may share information in an objective manner so long as it is reasonably related to the curriculum. For example, the Bible can be taught in a school for its historical, cultural, or literary value.



Q. Can I engage in religious expression during school organized events such as a talent show or graduation ceremony?

Yes. Schools cannot censor student expression because of its religious or other viewpoint, even where the event is organized by the school.



Q. I'm just one student. Could I really make a difference by standing up for my constitutional rights?

Yes. With the help of ADF, your courage could pave the way for thousands of students, faculty, or staff members across the country.



Q. What can I do if I have questions or suspect my rights are being violated?

Students and parents should contact Alliance Defending Freedom before attempting to work with the school administration to resolve a given situation by using the Request Legal Help Form at ADFlegal.org or calling 1-800-835-5233. Any advice or assistance ADF provides is rendered free of charge.

Public schools must give all students the same equality of opportunity. The advice provided above is general in nature, and the specific facts of your situation may lead to a different result. If you have any questions about your rights on campus, or if you have been punished for expressing your views, contact us or visit ADFlegal.org/K-12 to learn more about your rights on school grounds.

