

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Student organizations that have purposes and activities supportive of, and consistent with, the educational program of the Bethlehem Central School District (the District) are encouraged and sanctioned by the Board of Education (the Board). Students participating in such organizations build sound social relationships, develop interests in an academic area, and gain an understanding of the elements and responsibilities of good citizenship.

In that the District receives, directly and indirectly, federal financial assistance, it is bound by the Equal Access Act, which requires that nonsanctioned student groups have equal access to school facilities in accordance with the terms and provisions thereof, and administrative rules and regulations promulgated to govern the use of school facilities by such groups shall not conflict with the requirements of the Equal Access Act.

The District considers participation in extracurricular activities to have an inherent educational value and therefore requires that any such organization or activity have meaningful physical, educational, social or cultural content, and professional direction and management. Such organizations or activities shall be open to all students who meet the specific school or activity requirements related to the purpose of such activity, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, religion, age (except where such organization or activity is age specific or qualified), economic status, marital status, or disability.

The superintendent, with the aid of students, faculty, and administration, is charged with developing procedures for registering and regulating student groups or clubs. Such procedure shall ensure that the District will register any group organized for a purpose not prohibited by Board policy or by law, if such group submits a list of its members designated as contacts, a copy of its constitution and/or bylaws, and the constitution and bylaws of any off-campus organization with which it may be affiliated. Any student organization or activity, and any student group exercising its right to meet on school premises pursuant to the Equal Access Act, may be prohibited from meeting or otherwise holding its activities if, in the judgment of the superintendent, it causes or creates, or is likely to cause or create, a disruption or interference with the operation of the school program or curriculum, or if it violates any rule or regulation governing the same. The decision of the superintendent may be appealed to the Board of Education, which may base its decision solely on the facts available to the superintendent or, in its absolute and complete discretion, allow the affected schools or, in its absolute and complete discretion, allow the affected organization or group to make a presentation of the facts supporting its position.

Each student organization, whether it be sanctioned or otherwise allowed to utilize the limited open forum, shall have a District employee approved by the principal as an advisor or sponsor, although no such advisor or sponsor shall actively participate in any religious meeting or activity.

Students desiring to form an extracurricular activity shall petition their Student Senate and principal in writing. The petition shall state the purpose and describe the activities of the proposed extracurricular activity, and shall be signed by at least seventeen students before it is presented to the Student Senate and the principal for action. A faculty advisor will be appointed to supervise the activity, according to school rules and regulations.

All extracurricular activities shall be approved by the Board. The principal shall maintain an up-to-date register of all extracurricular activities that are approved or discontinued.

The Board prohibits the formation of any clubs, including fraternities or sororities, or any other secret society, that promotes exclusive membership, whose deliberations and activities have caused or created, or are likely to cause or create a disruption of or interference with the school program.

Administrative regulations governing the use of school facilities shall abide by the Equal Access Act in the creation of a “limited open forum.” All noncurricula-related student activities, regardless of religious or political content, shall have the same opportunities as any other such activity to operate on school grounds.

Cross-ref: 5252, Student Activities Funds Management

Ref: Education Law §§207; 1709-a; 2503-a; 2554-a
 Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. §§4071-4074
 8 NYCRR Part 172
 Board of Education of the Westside Community Schools v. Mergens, 496 U.S. 226 (1990)
 Garnett By Smith v. Renton School Dist. No. 403, 865 F.2d 1121 (9th Cir., 1989)
 Thompson v. Waynesboro Area School Dist., 673 F.Supp. 1379 (M.D. Pa. 1987)
 Student Coalition v. Lower Merion School Dist. Bd., 633 F.Supp. 1040 (E.D. Pa. 1986)
 Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School Dist., 393 U.S. 503, 89 S.Ct. 733 (1969)
 Healy v. James, 408 U.S. 169, 92 S.Ct. 2338 (1972)

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