

UTLA Proposal 2-18-25
District Counter 5-19-25
UTLA Counter 6-17-25
UTLA Counter 10-27-25
District Counter 11-3-25
UTLA Counter 11-10-25
District Counter 12-2-25 revised 3-2-26, 3-24-26

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ARTICLE XXV

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

1.0 Lesson Content: In the investigation, presentation and interpretation of facts and ideas within the prescribed course of study, teachers shall be free to examine, present and responsibly discuss various points of view in an atmosphere of open inquiry, provided that the instruction, material, or discussion:

- a. is appropriate to the age and maturity level of the students;
- b. is related to and consistent with the prescribed curriculum, course of study, and textbook/materials for the class in question; and
- c. is a fair and balanced academic presentation of various points of view consistent with accepted standards of professional responsibility, rather than advocacy, personal opinion, bias or partisanship; and
- d. is aligned with applicable California State Standards.

1.1 Guest Speakers: Teachers may invite guest speakers to address their classes. They shall request approval by the site administrator as soon as possible or, in unusual circumstances, no later than 48 hours prior to the proposed appearance. The administrator shall as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours prior to the proposed appearance, approve or disapprove the guest speaker, after considering the following factors:

- a. competency of the proposed speaker to address the proposed subject, including the speaker's experience, training and expertise;
- b. the educational value of the proposed program or address; and
- c. whether the proposed presentation, in the context of the teacher's overall instructional program, is consistent with the standards of Academic Freedom and Responsibility contained in Section 1.0 above. If the proposed guest speaker meets all of the criteria of 1.0 and 1.1 except 1.0 c., the proposed presentation may nonetheless be approved if the overall presentation in question adequately presents the opposing points of view (e.g., by providing a balancing advocate speaker, film, etc.).

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1.2 Appeal Procedure: If lesson content (including instructional materials, publications, videotapes, films, graphics, etc.) or a proposed guest speaker is the subject of a challenge or complaint to the site administrator by a student, parent, administrator or other person, the teacher shall be given appropriate notice and a reasonable opportunity to respond. Such a response shall be given (either verbally or in writing) in a private conference between the employee and the site administrator. If the lesson content or speaker is disapproved or restricted by the site administrator or other District administrator, the reason(s) therefore shall, upon verbal request, promptly be provided to the teacher in writing.

The teacher shall have the right to appeal any such determination(s) including the right to a hearing before the Region Superintendent or Designee.

1.3 This appeal procedure is intended to provide an avenue for review of administrative restrictions which have not resulted in disciplinary action or unsatisfactory evaluation or in critical material placed in the personnel file. Nothing herein shall preclude recourse to the grievance procedure for matters which are otherwise grievable under Article X, Evaluation and Discipline.

2.0 Ownership of Materials and Publications: Unless otherwise provided by a separate contract, the respective rights of an employee and the District as to ownership of materials and publications developed by the employee are to depend upon the origins of the material in question, as follows:

a. If the materials were developed by the employee as a project commissioned by the District, or in fulfillment of a specific job assignment, the materials are the exclusive property of the District. (e.g., a course outline developed by a teacher on special assignment for that purpose).

b. If the materials were developed by the employee in the course of performing regular duties, but were not specifically required or specifically assigned as a part of the job, the materials are to be owned by the employee, but the District shall be deemed a licensee (without fee) for purposes of internal District use only (e.g., classroom teacher, in furtherance of regular planning obligations, develops lesson plans which turn out to have value to other teachers and to the District).

c. If the materials were developed by the employee independent of regular duties, and on the employee's own time and without use of District resources, the materials are the exclusive property of the employee (e.g., working at home, English teacher with personal interest in computers develops a software package for tracking and computing grades; or teacher writes textbook on own time, drawing upon prior District experience).

d. Before an employee or the District utilizes any student produced material beyond the purpose for which it was initially submitted by the student, a written consent or waiver in favor of the District and

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employee must be obtained from the student and parent/guardian. Subsequent use and ownership shall depend upon the nature of the resulting material/publication produced by the employee pursuant to a, b and c above.

3.0 Determination of Grades: The grade to be given to any individual student shall be determined in the good faith professional judgment of the teacher and shall not be changed by the District except in situations of clerical or mechanical mistake, fraud, bad faith, incompetency, or failure to comply with the then-current District grading policies, procedures and criteria adopted in accordance with Education Code Sections 49066 and 49067.* A grade shall not be changed for any of the above reasons unless the responsible teacher has, to the extent practical, (a) been given prior notice and an opportunity to explain, verbally and/or in writing, the reasons for which the grade was given; and (b) been included in discussions relating to the change of grade. Claimed violations of this section are subject to the grievance procedures of Article V.

4.0 Academic Freedom and Ethnic Studies: As created by the LAUSD/UTLA Ethnic Studies Committee and approved by LAUSD in April 2022, Ethnic Studies is defined as:

Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary and comparative study of the social, cultural, artistic, political, historical, and economic expression and experience of race and ethnicity that primarily centers the studies of American Indians/Native Americans, Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders, Black/African Americans, and Chicanx/Latinx.

Ethnic Studies centers holistic humanization and critical consciousness, providing every student the opportunity to enter the content from their own space, positionality, and perspective. Ethnic Studies affirms the student identity, experience, and the building of empathy for others. This includes the self-determination of those who have ancestral roots and knowledge who have resisted and survived settler colonialism, racism, white supremacy, cultural erasure, as well as other patterns, structures, and systems of marginalization and oppression. The discipline uses culturally and community-responsive pedagogical practices to empower students to become anti-racist leaders.

Ethnic studies reconstructs and transforms the traditional narrative and curriculum by highlighting the contributions people of color have made in shaping US culture and society.

Teachers shall be supported and provided with ongoing resources, professional development opportunities, and curriculum to successfully implement Ethnic Studies and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. Implementation of Ethnic Studies in all grade levels shall be consistent with applicable state standards/requirements, District policies and applicable Board Resolutions.

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The LAUSD-UTLA Ethnic Studies Committee (Article XXV-A, Section 4.0) may provide input regarding these resources.

5.0 Consultation Rights: As outlined in Article III, Sections 2.0 and 3.0, Article IV, Section 12.0 and subject to Government Code 3542.3, prior to the implementation of District adopted curriculum, educational tools and student testing, the District shall seek input from UTLA on such matters which may include collecting input from a group that includes educators appointed by UTLA.