

A large, realistic illustration of an apple sits atop a stack of several books. The entire scene is set against a background that transitions from a deep blue at the top to a lighter teal at the bottom. The apple and books are rendered in a style that blends with the background colors.

Back to School

GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

The bottom of the page features a white background with a series of grey silhouettes of people. Some of the silhouettes are holding up rectangular signs, suggesting a protest or a public demonstration.

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LAW

Back to School GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Free Speech and Clothing Overview

- As a general rule, public school teachers have a constitutional right to freedom of speech and freedom of expression. Clothing and accessories are generally considered a form of speech or expression.
- However, certain teacher speech or expression can be limited by school administrators, particularly if it is determined to **materially and substantially interfere** with the operation of the school. That should be a very fact-specific inquiry. You do not have to figure this out on your own. StandWithUs is here for you!

What should I do if I see another teacher saying or wearing something offensive?

- If you feel physically unsafe or have been threatened, immediately leave the setting and contact a security guard or police officer.
- Stay calm.
- Remember that speech is very often protected even if offensive.
- Do not confront the other person or engage with them about their message.
- Do not escalate the situation.
- Document only if doing so is permitted and would be safe.
- If you cannot take a photograph or video, take notes with all details afterwards

Title VII Overview

- Title VII is a federal law that protects employees of employers with 15 or more employees from discrimination based on the employee's race, color, religion, sex or national origin.
- For more information, please review StandWithUs' [Know Your Rights: Employment Law Fact Sheet](#). Please contact StandWithUs if you have questions about your specific situation.

Should I report another teacher's offensive or distracting speech?

- In general, if you see something that you are concerned about, you should submit a formal complaint to your administration with the simple details—what you saw, where, when and who. Yes. [Feel free to contact StandWithUs](#) first to discuss the specific situation.
- Do not name-call anyone else. You can describe the facts as you saw them and how it made you feel personally and how it impacted your ability to do your job.



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