

# **SLZUSD**

## **Board Policy**

### **Graduation Ceremonies And Activities**

BP 5127

#### **Students**

High school graduation ceremonies shall be held to recognize those students who have earned a diploma by successfully completing the required course of study, satisfying district standards, and passing any required assessments. The Governing Board believes that these students deserve the privilege of a public celebration that recognizes the significance of their achievement and encourages them to continue the pursuit of learning throughout their lives.

Invocations, prayers, or benedictions shall not be included in graduation ceremonies. The school or district shall not sponsor other ceremonies or programs for graduates that include prayer.

#### Honors and Awards

To honor superior academic achievement, graduation ceremonies shall include recognition of valedictorian(s) and salutatorian(s). Valedictorian(s) and salutatorian(s) shall be selected based on established criteria and procedures that use multiple measures of academic performance.

#### Conduct at Graduation Ceremonies

Any student participating in a graduation ceremony shall comply with district policies and regulations pertaining to student conduct.

The commencement ceremony is intended to be a dignified yet joyful one to showcase the accomplishment for families and friends of the graduates. The Superintendent or designee may require graduating students to wear ceremonial attire, such as cap and gown, at the ceremony except as exempted by religious belief.

However, any graduating student who has completed basic training and is an active member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces may, at his/her option, wear his/her military dress uniform at the ceremony. (Education Code 35183.3)

#### Cultural Regalia

A student may wear traditional tribal regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance as an adornment at school graduation ceremonies. (Ed Code 35183.1). "Adornment" means something attached to, or worn with, but not replacing the cap and gown customarily worn at school graduation ceremonies. "Cultural" means recognized practices and traditions of a certain group of people. The school principal may prohibit an item that is likely to cause a

substantial disruption of, or material interference with the ceremony.

A student may wear an item of cultural significance in addition to the graduation tassel or as a separate lei, necklace, cord or stole around the neck and shoulders. Items worn around the neck or shoulders shall be in-animate and shall not exceed the width and length of district-issued honor stoles or cords. No item of expression shall be enhanced by audio, video, light or movement.

The cultural adornments and expressions may not:

1. Incite students to commit unlawful acts, violate school rules, invade the rights of others, or cause disruption to the ceremony;
2. Include expressions, words, materials or content which are obscene, libelous or slanderous;
3. Include any use of 'fighting words' including epithets or gestures or depictions;
4. Include language or visual expressions that are abusive and insulting;
5. Include expressions or words that are discriminatory or harassing to others;
6. Include expression or words that infringe upon the rights of other students.

At least three weeks before the graduation ceremony school principals will meet with senior level students on the path toward graduation and either at the same time or another time, hold a meeting for parents/guardians of those students. Students and parents will have the opportunity to share the unique regalia that represent their religious or cultural traditions. The principal will review the requests and determine what will be allowed and what may cause a substantial disruption or material interference with the ceremony. At those meetings principals will also explain the traditions and practices that limit other adornments that may or may not be allowed. Parents may appeal a decision of the principal to the superintendent no fewer than 10 calendar days before the ceremony.

### Disciplinary Considerations

In order to encourage high standards of student conduct and behavior, the principal may deny a student the privilege of participating in graduation ceremonies and/or activities in accordance with school rules. Prior to denial of the privilege, the student, and where practicable his/her parent/guardian, shall be made aware of the grounds for such denial and shall be given an opportunity to respond. If a privilege is to be denied, the student and parent/guardian shall receive written notice of the denied privilege and the means whereby he/she may appeal the decision to the superintendent.

### Legal Reference:

#### EDUCATION CODE

35183.3 Graduation ceremonies; military dress uniforms

38119 Lease of personal property; caps and gowns

48904 Liability of parent or guardian; withholding of grades, diplomas, transcripts

51225.5 Honorary diplomas; foreign exchange students

51410-51412 Diplomas

COURT DECISIONS

Cole v. Oroville Union High School District, (2000, 9th Cir.) 228 F.3d 1092

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe, (2000) 530 U.S. 290

Lee v. Weisman, (1992) 505 U.S. 577

Sands v. Morongo Unified School District, (1991) 53 Cal. 3d 863

Lemon v. Kurtzman, (1971) 403 U.S. 602

Management Resources:

WEB SITES

California Department of Education, High School: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/>

Approved: April 2, 2019