

# What Do Educators (Teachers) Need to Know?

*If you are the teacher-sponsor  
of an on-campus ministry*

OR

*just an educator who loves Jesus  
and wants to impact the lives of your students,  
this section will inform you of your rights  
and give you some ideas  
to empower your students.*

# Empowering Your Students & Your Rights

## HELPING YOUR STUDENTS...*knowing your rights as a teacher will free you to support your students*

Many Christian students have a hard time standing up for their faith in high school...having a teacher who loves Jesus and supports them is a great encouragement! And when it comes to starting a ministry or club on campus, knowing they have the support of at least one teacher on staff is a big deal!

### You have the right to:

- Sponsor their ministry and give them a room to hang out and meet in.
- Walk closely with Christ and live out your faith. It will be a powerful influence and example to your students, whether they are Christians yet or not.
- Foster a spirit of inquisitiveness and open-discussion in your classroom.
- Get involved in sports or extracurricular activities to have more time with students outside of the classroom.
- Help them know and understand their legal rights.
- Encourage the on-campus ministry in which they participate.
- Help direct them to the right people, whether they are looking for approval for an event or permission to use a room, etc.
- Be in their lives! Be available and willing to “be there” and spend time with your students. Consider having an “open door” policy so they can come ask you questions or just hang out.
- Be committed to their growth in Christ.

## YOUR RIGHTS AS AN EDUCATOR

### YOU MAY:

- If you present all facets of a subject objectively, you may discuss religion in its relationship to a specific topic as long as the information is related to the curriculum and you remain neutral. For example: When discussing evolution, you may also mention other debated theories such as Creation or abrupt appearance. However, in many of these issues, school administration has the final say.
- You may act as the advisor to a student group (acting as a “custodian” who monitors the group, but not a “sponsor” who participates). You may, however, participate in religious activities or meetings outside of contract time.
- You may instruct students in virtues, values, and morals as long as you do not teach them as part of a specific religious belief system.
- You may pray silently on your own as long as it is out of sight of students and not on official school time.

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### YOU MAY NOT:

- You must be neutral and objective in all things. You must be fair and present all sides of a subject, secular and religious.
- You must teach evolution as a scientific theory even if it violates your beliefs.
- You may advise a student group but you may not participate in or lead/control any religious activities or Christian clubs.
- You may not encourage or discourage religious activities in the classroom, such as prayer, and may not take part in such activities. You also may not delegate a student to do it in your place.
- You may not initiate the start-up of a Christian club. Clubs must be student-initiated.
- You may not teach religion with any sort of bias. You must teach it fairly. For example, you may not solely teach one religion’s impact on history.

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# Your Rights As An Educator

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## YOU MAY:

- Religion may be taught from an objective academic standpoint, but you may not influence the students to accept one set of beliefs over another.
- Although you may not wear overtly religious or evangelistic clothing, you may wear modest personal jewelry (such as a cross necklace).
- Released time religious education programs are allowed if school officials participate as little as possible.
- You are allowed to have bible studies with other teachers outside of official school hours (lunch, before/after school) and outside of your teaching role. You may also share your religious views when communicating with other teachers.
- In regards to holidays, art, music, drama, etc., you must mix the secular with the religious. For example, you must display a nativity scene along with a secular symbol like Santa Claus, and you may sing "Silent Night" as long as you also include a song like "Here Comes Santa Claus."
- You may invite speakers to your classroom to present their view on a specific topic as long as you are careful not to only invite speakers with a specific viewpoint. It may be a good idea to invite two speakers to present contrasting ideas in a debate format.

## YOU MAY NOT:

- You may not display overtly religious or evangelistic symbols or messages in your classroom. You also may not wear clothing with blatant evangelistic messages.
- You may not show preference to religious speakers in speaking to a public audience or select a speaker specifically because they favor religious speech.
- Depending on school administration, you may not be able to read your Bible silently during class time and you may not be able to display your Bible on your desk. You may also not be permitted to include religious books in your classroom book collection.
- You may not distribute religious literature to students and should not make religious literature available in the classroom unless it is objectively being used as part of the class curriculum.
- During school hours, schools may not allow outsiders to give religious instruction to students on school grounds. There is a difference between a speaker presenting a viewpoint and giving religious instruction to students.

# Legal Resources for Educators

## **Christian Educators Assoc.**

### **International**

David Schmus, Executive Director  
Phone: (626)798-1124 / Fax:(626)798-2346  
Email: info@ceai.org  
Web site: <http://www.ceai.org>

## **American Assoc. of School**

### **Administrators**

Paul Houston  
Address: 801 N. Quincy St. Suite 700  
Arlington, VA 22203  
Phone:(703)528-0700 / Fax:(703)528-2146  
Web site: <http://www.aasa.org>

## **National PTA**

Nancy Segal  
Address: 1090 Vermont Ave, NW, Ste  
1200 Washington, DC 20005  
Phone:(202)289-6790 / Fax:(202)289-6791  
Web site: <http://www.pta.org>

## **Christian Legal Society**

Greg Baylor  
Address: 4208 Evergreen Lane, #222  
Annandale, VA 22003  
Phone:(703)642-1070 / Fax:(703)642-1075  
Email: legalaid@clsnet.org Web site:  
<http://www.clsnet.org>

## **National Association of Evangelicals**

Jennifer Haglof, Legis. Counselor  
Address: P.O. Box 23269  
Washington, DC 20026  
Phone:(202)789-1011 / Fax:(202)842-0392  
Web site: <http://www.nae.net>

## **National School Boards**

### **Association**

Laurie Westley  
Address: 1680 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone:(703)838-6722 / Fax:(703)683-7590  
Email: info@nsba.org  
Web site: <http://www.nsba.org>

## **Freedom Forum**

Charles Haynes  
Address: 1101 Wilson Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22209  
Phone:(703)528-0800 / Fax:703)284-3770  
Email: news@freedomforum.org  
Web site: <http://www.freedomforum.org>

## **American Center for Law and Justice**

Jay Alan Sekulow, Chief Counsel  
Address: P.O. Box 64429  
Virginia Beach, VA 23467-4429  
Phone:(757)226-2489 / Fax:(757)226-2836  
Web site: <http://www.aclj.org>

## **The National Legal Foundation**

Steven W. Fitschen, President  
Address: P.O. Box 64427  
Virginia Beach, VA 23467-4427  
Phone:(757)463-6133 / Fax:(757)463-6055  
Email: nlf@nlf.net  
Web site: <http://www.nlf.net>

## **Pacific Justice Institute**

Brad Dacus Address: P.O.  
Box 276600  
Sacramento, CA 95827-6600  
Phone:(916)857-6900 / Fax:(916)857-6902  
Email: pji@pacificjustice.org  
Web site: <http://www.pacificjustice.org>