

First Amendment Schools: Where students practice the Five Freedoms in their schools

“Freedom and justice, however important, can never be enough; learning about democratic citizenship must be more than an academic exercise.”

~ *First Amendment Schools*, p. 21

Now is the time to introduce the concept of [First Amendment Schools](#). IPS and township school students who are marching out in the streets and protesting police actions shootings are practicing their right to speak, assemble, and petition their government. Thus, these same students will be interested in continuing to practice the five freedoms, including freedom of the press and religion, in their classrooms and schools.

“*Cui bono?* Who benefits when Black American students do not attend 1st Amendment schools?”

~ John Harris Loflin

Proposed Action Item: Make Indianapolis public schools 1st Amendment schools

AACI will organize a contingent of 5 of Mayor Hogsett’s charters schools (2 elementary, 2 middle and 1 high school) and 4 IPS schools (1 elementary, 2 middle, and 1 high school) each to become 1st Amendment schools. A committee will be set up at each school to study, plan, and implement the daily practice of the 5 Freedoms. Every year for 3 years, the resulting data and recommendation from the longitudinal study will be critiqued and published for public input.

The responsibilities of the group are:

- Create consensus guidelines for applying the 5 Freedoms of the 1st Amendment in public schools.
- Develop schools where First Amendment principles are understood and applied.
- Encourage curriculum reforms that deepen teaching about the First Amendment.
- Educate stakeholders in public schools about First Amendment principles and ideals.
- Before and after surveys will be created and given to students, teachers, and parent/s to see how the 1st Amendment ethos affected school climate, student academic performance and support.

Students will carry a card published by this AACI action explaining their First Amendment Rights in school and in the public.

Long-time 1st Amendment Schools supporter Sam Chaltain's book, [American Schools: Creating a Democratic Learning Community](#) provides a deep profile of 3 schools that use a framework as to how to bring a democratic learning community into being.

Here are more resources:

- <https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/about/faq/does-the-first-amendment-apply-to-public-schools/>
- <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/103054/chapters/Foreword.aspx>
- <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/103054/chapters/Part-II.-Core-Issues-for-All-Schools-to-Consider.aspx>
- <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/103054/chapters/Part-III.-50-Key-Legal-Cases.aspx>
- This is from the National Coalition Against Censorship <https://ncac.org/resource/first-amendment-in-schools>.