

From: Al-Hanooti, Shayma <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, December 07, 2023 5:06 PM EST
To: Shivers, Timica <[REDACTED]>; Hall, Antonio <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: MSA Students - Walkout for Palestine

Respectfully, I'm not interested in meeting to discuss the questions I posed. I would appreciate written responses to my questions, with policies cited.

What I relayed to you in my email regarding what took place on Nov. 28 is what students shared with me. If you want to ensure that students feel seen, heard, and supported, I think that is a matter between WL administration and our students.

Shayma

From: Shivers, Timica <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, December 7, 2023 10:28:37 AM
To: Al-Hanooti, Shayma <[REDACTED]>; Hall, Antonio <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: MSA Students - Walkout for Palestine

Good morning, Shayma,

Thank you for your email. I would like to invite you to talk with me and Tony. There are some details mentioned below that are not accurate that I would like to clear up but would also like to have a thoughtful discussion to address your questions and more importantly, to ensure all of our students always feel seen, heard and supported! Please allow me to connect with Tony this afternoon and I will be back in touch with our combined availability.

Best,
Timica

Timica Shivers
Assistant Principal

Washington-Liberty High School
1301 North Stafford Street
Arlington, Virginia 22201
[REDACTED]

From: Al-Hanooti, Shayma <[REDACTED]>
Date: Thursday, December 7, 2023 at 11:07 AM
To: Hall, Antonio <[REDACTED]>, Shivers, Timica <[REDACTED]>
Subject: MSA Students - Walkout for Palestine

Good morning, Tony and Timica,

I met with my MSA students last Tuesday. I knew that was the day they had conducted their walkout for Palestine, so I asked how it went. I was disheartened to learn that, on the whole, students were shaken and angry; they felt censored and intimidated by the fact that there seemed to be a disproportionate number of administrators and security guards, and that administrators and security guards restricted their speech and use of signs. I'm very troubled by what I heard, and I would imagine any school/district leader would be, too.

According to several students, Ms. Shivers took away signs from students and told students what they could and could not say during their walkout. One student said her sign was taken away; it was an image of the Palestine flag with "Free Palestine" written in the white. Ms. Shivers said she had to take the sign away because "free Palestine" is antisemitic, that she would give the poster back after the walkout. Students said they had estimated there were about 10 adults (admin and security) facing them on the balcony, as if they were doing something wrong. One student (WL Junior) shared with me: "It was so overwhelming being watched like that. A lot of people left because we couldn't say anything. They were like crows staring at us. They were standing there, waiting for us to say something so they can take us out. Why else would Mr. Hall be out there? I feel like it was more supervised than other walkouts."

Several students reported that they were told they could not say "Free Palestine." A student reported that her flag was taken away. Another student said that a security guard told students they couldn't say "Free Palestine" or hold posters that say free Palestine. He told students they can only chant things in support of humanitarian aid.

I have a few non-rhetorical questions for you both that I hope you will address, so that I can be better informed:

1. Besides the PIP I've attached, are there APS policies that outline students' rights with regards to walkouts? FCPS has a policy on "Student Participation in Political Activities and other Causes" (See attached) - do we have anything similar?
2. Is it fair to expect that all walkouts will be handled by admin in the same fashion, regardless of students' political message?
3. The ACLU has put together a pamphlet for students about their rights. Is it fair to assume these apply to our APS students? Are there any PIPs that contradict any of these rights?
4. Is it a requirement that students notify admin of their plan to walk out ahead of time? If so, can you point me to any PIP or language in the handbook?

5. What gives Ms. Shivers or any administrator, staff, or security guard the right to confiscate signs or restrict speech?
6. Is it appropriate for Ms. Shivers or any other administrator/staff member to tell a student that “free Palestine” or “From the river to the sea” is anti-Israel or antisemitic? Is this within her rights or any other administrator’s right to tell a student?
7. Is there a policy or law I’m unaware of that has forbidden the chants “free Palestine” or “from the river to the sea”?
8. Is it within the realm of a security guard’s job duties to tell students what they can or cannot say in their protest chants?
9. As a club sponsor, what can I share with my students to be supportive of their rights to express themselves?
10. Wakefield had a walkout of almost 200 people. They did not require approval from admin, and admin was supportive. No signs were confiscated, and no student speech was censored. Can you explain the lack of consistency across county high schools?

I think it is important that we have clear, consistent implementation of policies that protect all students, regardless of their personal views. And if any administrator is under the illusion that calling for the liberation of Palestine (or any country under apartheid, occupation, being decimated by an active genocide) is antisemitic, I think it behooves them to educate themselves. We are teachers, after all. We owe it to our students, staff, families and to the tens of thousands of Palestinians being slaughtered with our tax dollars. American students have the right to criticize policies of their own country as well as foreign entities.

Thank you, and I look forward to your response.

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Shayma M. Al-Hanooti (she/her)
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