



NATIONAL  
ART EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION

## **Position Statement on Freedom of Speech Through Visual Expression**

**[Adopted July 2011; Update of 1991 Statement on Censorship and the Arts Reviewed and Revised April 2014; Reviewed and Revised March 2019]**

Open communication is essential to the preservation of a free democratic society and a creative culture. The visual, performing, and literary arts are among our most effective instruments of freedom. They are powerful means for expressing ideas feelings, responding to social justice issues and current events, envisioning new possibilities for humankind, problem solving, and improving human life.

As the professional association for visual art educators, NAEA supports the following:

- Freedom of expression in the arts must be preserved.
- Individuals have the right to accept or reject any work of art, but do not have the right to suppress works of art for or by others. Censorship is contrary to democratic principles.

Visual Art Educator Responsibility:

- It is the role of the visual art educator to introduce students to diverse art experiences and to help support students in developing the ability to interpret and to think critically. The visual art educator need not like or endorse all images, ideologies, and artists made available to students, but should both allow and help equip the individual student to explore and engage with differing images, opinions, and ideologies.
- The visual art educator should responsibly support the right of individuals to freely express and create in a personal voice and to experience, accept, or reject any particular work of art. The visual art educator should impress upon students the vital importance of freedom of expression as a basic premise in a free democratic society and support students in guarding against efforts to limit or curtail that freedom.
- In practice, visual art educators must consider age appropriate content, and be sensitive to the distinct nature of their community and education system, as they support their students' freedom of expression. Visual art educators engage students in identifying, understanding, recognizing, and acknowledging the power of visual art and valuing freedom of expression for all.

**[Note: The April 2014 revision amended the title “Position Statement on Freedom of Speech” to “Position Statement on Freedom of Speech Through Visual Expression.]**

901 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

T: 703-860-8000 | F: 703-860-2960 | E: [info@arteducators.org](mailto:info@arteducators.org) | [www.arteducators.org](http://www.arteducators.org)



NATIONAL  
ART EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION

Resources:

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Constitution.

<https://constitutioncenter.org/interactiveconstitution/amendments/amendment-i>

<https://constitutionus.com/>

<https://www.aclu.org/free-speech/censorship>

<http://www.ncac.org/>

Censorship - Legal Dictionary - The Free Dictionary

[legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/censorship](http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/censorship)

Censorship. The suppression or proscription of speech or writing that is deemed obscene, indecent, or unduly controversial. The term censorship derives from ...

Censorship | American Civil Liberties Union <https://www.aclu.org/free-speech/censorship>

Censorship, the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are "offensive," ... Censorship can be carried out by the government as well as private pressure ...

What is Censorship? - Global Internet Liberty Campaign [gilc.org/speech/osistudy/censorship/](http://gilc.org/speech/osistudy/censorship/)

Censorship -- the control of the information and ideas circulated within a society -- has been a hallmark of dictatorships throughout history. In the 20th Century, ...

901 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

T: 703-860-8000 | F: 703-860-2960 | E: [info@arteducators.org](mailto:info@arteducators.org) | [www.arteducators.org](http://www.arteducators.org)