

Young Students Push for More Halloween Spirit

When a Bay Farm Elementary School student learned that Halloween celebrations were not supported in AUSD schools, she decided the issue was important enough to take action. So Sienna Arroyo, a third grader, did what any skilled education activist would do: she wrote to the superintendent and started a petition asking that the school be allowed to hold a Halloween parade.

The superintendent wrote back. He even went to the school to talk to the student. But then Sienna Arroyo, a third grader at Bay Farm Elementary School, went one step further. She gave public comment at a Board of Education meeting, explaining that she had “at least 23 ideas” on how Halloween could be incorporated constructively into a school day (including using candy corn to practice multiplication and weighing pumpkins). She also ask the Board to agendize a discussion about AUSD’s current Halloween practices and policies. And the Board agreed.

The issue was this: For almost 20 years, AUSD schools have been discouraged from holding Halloween celebrations and parades during the school day, because they can take away instructional time and be disruptive.

But Miss Arroyo, as well as a number of her friends and their parents, felt strongly that Halloween celebrations offer an opportunity for community building and fun. “I want to bring back the celebration and fun of Halloween Day,” Miss Arroyo said at the September 25 Board meeting. Besides, noted a third grader dressed in a big shiny princess dress noted at the October 9 Board meeting, “when we grow up we won’t really have a lot of chances to wear costumes.”

In response to the request that the Board re-consider AUSD’s Halloween practices, District staff prepared a PowerPoint on the history of the guidelines and the rationale behind them. After hearing the presentation, the Board gave



direction to discontinue the prohibition of Halloween activities and costumes in schools during instructional time.

Each school gets to determine what type of activities to hold and when, so families should confer with the principal and teachers to make sure the celebrations work for all involved. Please also note that all costumes must comply with AUSD's [dress code](#) and cannot:

- Be demeaning to any person or group based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, nationality, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or to any individual staff or student at the school
- Create a safety hazard
- Include weapons or replica weapons
- Hide the identity of the student or impair a student's vision or movement (e.g., ability to climb stairs)
- Include obscenities or references to prohibited substances

In addition, no student or staff member is required to engage in Halloween-related activities if doing so conflicts with their religious faith and/or personal or cultural practice. Students who do not participate in Halloween-related activities will be provided an alternate educational activity.

Again, please work with your student's teacher and principal before making plans for Halloween festivities, as they will have ideas on how to make this the event fun, safe, and convenient for all!