

Community Relations

Political Activities in the Schools/On School Board Property

1311.2

1. Political Candidates/Issues

Debate or Forum: If a class or school-sponsored group plans a political debate or forum during the school day, the Principal/teacher/sponsor shall ensure that all candidates for the same public office or who have differing opinions on a political issue are given equal opportunity to participate.

Appearances: Elected politicians and political candidates are not allowed to appear at a school unless they are invited to visit or speak to a class or other school-related activity during school hours. However, they are entitled to the same rights of all citizens to visit the schools. The requirements for debates or forums are applicable and other candidates for the same public office should be invited to visit at the same time or be provided an equivalent opportunity.

Nothing in this policy shall preclude or prevent incumbent elected public officials from appearances on District property upon the invitation of the Superintendent, the Superintendent's designee or Principal provided that it is within their official capacity and not a campaign activity.

2. School Group Participation in Political Events

School groups may not participate in appearances that create an undue amount of interference with the regular school program or that cause an excessive amount of students' absences for rehearsal or preparation.

3. Use or Distribution of Political Materials During School Hours or on School Grounds

- a.** Any interschool or intraschool mail and/or email system may not be used to distribute any political materials to schools. A regular newsletter of an employee organization that is normally distributed by the District's/school's mail system will not be considered political material if it simply contains news of a political nature taken by the organization.
- b.** Any distribution of political materials by non-students, unless as part of as part of an event scheduled in accordance with the school reservation process, is prohibited on school grounds and/or on school buses, except as allowed under this policy.
- c.** Students may post or distribute student-government election materials in an appropriate time, place, and manner, as determined by the Principal, so as to avoid any disruption to the learning environment.
- d.** Student disruption or display of political material that is disruptive of the educational environment is not permitted.

- e. This policy should not be construed to limit citizens' political activity on an election day during polling hours in compliance with local ordinances or election law.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
7-421 Political activities of classified municipal employees.
7-421b Limitation on restriction of political rights of municipal employees.
9-369b Explanatory text relating to local questions.
10-156e Employees of boards of education permitted to serve as elected officials; exception.
10-239 Use of school facilities for other purposes
31-51q Liability of employer for discipline or discharge of employee on account of employee's exercise of certain constitutional rights.
Keyishian v. Board of Regents 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)
Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81)
Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. ss 4071-4074

Adopted by BOE 3/19/2018