

The board recognizes, as one of its educational goals, the advancement of student knowledge and appreciation of various social, cultural and political occurrences in society. However, except as allowed by this policy, no student or other person shall be subjected to partisan or nonpartisan political activities on school system property or using school system modes of communication, which are (i), conducted by or on behalf of political candidates or political organizations, or (ii) conducted by school system employees, contractors, volunteers or visitors.

Candidates for political office may be invited to speak to students at school or at school sponsored events only if they are resource speakers for a classroom activity that is a legitimate part of the regular instructional program and prior approval has been granted by the principal and superintendent or designee. If a political candidate is permitted to speak, equal opportunity shall be afforded to other candidates for the same office.

No person shall, on school system property, at or during any school system event or school-sponsored function held on school property, or using school system modes of communication, display, distribute or broadcast, any political or campaign related sign, banner, sticker, brochure or other material or information, through any medium, or engage in any political or campaign related activities or electioneering, except as may be allowed in accordance with this policy. Political and campaign related signs and other information may be displayed, distributed or broadcast on school system property in the following situations:

1. Political and campaign signs and banners may be placed at official voting sites on Election Day. Such signs and banners must comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations, both local and those of the State of North Carolina. Such signs and banners must comply with all applicable governmental restrictions including restrictions on size and distance from the polling place. However, no such sign or banner may be placed in or attached to any building, fence, structure, tree or landscape feature, may not interfere with any walkway, driveway or parking space, may not interfere with any educational activity at the school, may not have any moving or lighted parts and may not make any sounds.
2. Political and campaign buttons, pins, brochures, leaflets and similar items may be distributed on Election Days at official voting sites in the same areas where political signs and banners are allowed in subparagraph (1) above.
3. Political and campaign related materials and information may be displayed or broadcast to students by teachers in schools as part of a classroom activity that is a legitimate part of the approved instructional program when prior approval has been granted by the principal. In such cases, reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that there is equity between political candidates and political viewpoints.
4. Individuals, including candidates for political office but excluding school system employees and volunteers during school time, may wear t-shirts, buttons, pins or

stickers carrying political or campaign messages on their persons or personal effects while on school system property. All individuals, including school system employees and volunteers, may have political or campaign related bumper stickers on their personal vehicles while on school system property. Such persons must have a legitimate purpose for being on school system property other than solely for conveying the messages contained on their persons, effects or vehicles.

5. Individuals or groups may display, distribute or broadcast political or campaign signs, brochures and other materials and information inside school system buildings, during non-school hours, in areas being used by such persons or groups pursuant to the Community Use of School Facilities Policy, 5030.
6. Also during non-school hours and pursuant to Policy 5030, individuals or groups may use school property for the production of campaign advertisements and materials, provided further that they:
 - a. Refrain from any statement intended to or which has the effect of implying endorsement of any candidate or political issue by the Watauga County Board of Education or its students; and
 - b. Provide the Superintendent with an opportunity to review the said campaign advertisements or materials before they are broadcast or otherwise distributed in order to review them for compliance with this policy.
7. Approved student clubs may display, distribute or broadcast political and campaign related signs, brochures and other materials or information in areas used by such clubs for their meetings during approved meeting times.

Parents and volunteers who provide instructional, supervisory or administrative assistance to teachers or administrators shall be treated as if they were employees for purposes of this policy, while they are acting in such instructional, supervisory or administrative roles.

As used in this policy, the term “school system property” includes property owned, leased or rented by the school system.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this policy, no sign, banner, button, sticker, shirt, brochure, leaflet or other conveyance of information shall be allowed under this policy which is lewd, obscene, defamatory, pornographic, advocates illegal activities, depicts nudity, contains profanity, is sexual in nature, is likely to incite violence or to create a substantial interference with the school system’s educational activities, which with respect to students violates the Student Code of Conduct, or which is in violation of applicable laws, rules, regulations or ordinances.

Any person or entity that is denied a request to display, distribute or broadcast any sign or other material or information on school system property, pursuant to this Policy, may appeal such decision using to the building principal. In cases where the decision to deny the activity was made by a principal, the initial appeal shall be to the superintendent or his designee.

Legal References: Community Schools Act, G.S. 14-269.2; 115C-203 to -209.1, -524, -527; 160A-274; 163-129; G.S. 163-166.4

Cross References: School Volunteers (policy 5015); Community Use of Facilities (policy 5030); Employee Political Activities (policy 7720)

Adopted: January 9, 2017