

## Community Relations

### Political Activities in the Schools

The Board of Education strongly supports the concepts of representative government and elected office. The Board encourages District employees to exercise their right to vote, and the Board expresses its admiration for those who seek and obtain public office. Further, the Board recognizes that the public schools are tax-supported and should be accessible to the community. The Board, however, does believe that the educational process should be clearly separate from the political activities associated with campaigns for public office.

Therefore, political activities in the schools during school hours shall be restricted to those of an educational nature that are beneficial to students as part of their program of study. The Board shall promulgate regulations in conjunction with this policy governing the following:

- Access to school system information
- Display and distribution of political literature
- Employee political activities
- Participation by student groups
- Use of school facilities
- Use of district resources
- Conduct of candidates

(cf. 1140 – Distribution of Materials by Students)

(cf. 1311.1 – Political Activities of School Employees)

(cf. 1330/3515 – Community Use of School Facilities)

(cf. 3543.13 – Mail and Delivery)

(cf. 4118.21 – Academic Freedom)

(cf. 6144 – Controversial Issues)

(cf. 6153.2 – Student Participation in Election Process)

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

Policy adopted: May 5, 2015

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
 Newtown, Connecticut

**EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2015**

## **Community Relations**

### **Political Activities in the Schools**

#### **A. Purpose**

To provide guidelines to candidates, candidate representatives, Board employees and students related to the conduct of political activities as it may involve District schools and school activities.

#### **B. Access to School System Information**

Any candidate or other Connecticut citizen may have access to school records and information pursuant to the provisions of the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act.

Requests for information from candidates or their representatives related to political campaigns and issues regarding the District should be directed to the Office of the Superintendent. To ensure impartial cooperation with candidates in elections for the Board of Education, responses to campaign requests will be shared with all announced candidates.

#### **C. Display and Distribution of Political Literature**

Display and distribution of political materials in the schools during school hours shall be restricted to those of an educational nature and as part of the educational program. Teachers, who elect to use such materials for instructional purposes, shall present them in an impartial and objective manner that is relevant to the course content and appropriate to the knowledge and maturity of the students. Existing District procedures permit the distribution in schools of materials related to parks and recreation, scouting and other non-profit or service organizations. Consistent with these procedures, political campaign materials or materials that support or oppose political candidates, parties or issues shall not be sent home from school with students. Also such literature shall not be distributed during school hours or on a school bus by students, Board employees or others. Campaign-related posters or signs may not be displayed at or within schools.

Candidates, or their representatives, desiring to distribute campaign or political materials to those attending school-related activities occurring after school hours must do so outside the building or other school facility. The distribution of political literature at events or meetings that are not school-related may be subject to the conditions governing Community Use of School Facilities.

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### **Political Activities in the Schools**

#### **C. Display and Distribution of Political Literature** (continued)

Candidates or their representatives, who do not comply with these limits on the distribution of campaign or political materials after being so informed, will be requested by a building administrator to leave school property. If the candidate or their representative does not comply with this request to leave, the building administrator will warn the individual(s) that they are trespassing and will notify the police.

Schools will not accept political advertisements in co-curricular publications (example: school newspaper as part of Journalism class). As with other advertisements, paid political advertisements may be placed in school publications unrelated to the curriculum, subject to the review and approval of the Principal (example: programs for athletic events).

During the times that polls are open and schools are serving as polling locations, Connecticut election laws will govern any associated political activity, including the distribution of political literature or posting of political signs.

#### **D. Employee Political Activities**

Employees are encouraged to exercise their constitutional rights as citizens, but they shall not involve their schools in political activities. Employees shall not participate in campaign activities during hours of official employment; however, employees may participate in political activity after hours of official employment.

Employees shall not poll students on the political opinions of their parents and shall not attempt to indoctrinate students or other employees with their personal political views. Student mock elections are permitted when conducted as part of the educational program.

No employee shall be expected or required to participate in any campaign or to support any candidate as a condition of employment.

#### **E. Participation by Student Groups**

School-sponsored student groups shall not participate in partisan political activities.

#### **F. Use of School Facilities for Political Activities**

When space is available, candidates may use school facilities during non-school hours subject to Board policy pertaining to Community Use of School Facilities and the associated regulations.

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### Political Activities in the Schools (continued)

#### G. Use of Other District Resources

Any use of the District's website for political activities is prohibited. Use of any other resources for political activities, including but not limited to copiers, computers or facsimile machines, is prohibited.

#### H. Conduct of Candidates

Candidates for election, or their representatives, shall not use District resources, District personnel (except those employees who may voluntarily participate during non-duty hours), District events at which they are official participants, District stationery, or the District logo in support of their campaigns.

Candidates, or their representatives, may not access students or employees during school hours for campaign purposes. With the prior review and approval of the Principal, candidates may be invited to address specific classes or groups on specific topics related to the curriculum and educational program. The Principal's review shall ensure all candidates are treated impartially and objectively.

- (cf. 1140 – Distribution of Materials by Students)
- (cf. 1311.1 – Political Activities of School Employees)
- (cf. 1330/3515 – Community Use of School Facilities)
- (cf. 3543.13 – Mail and Delivery)
- (cf. 4118.21 – Academic Freedom)
- (cf. 6144 – Controversial Issues)
- (cf. 6153.2 – Student Participation in Election Process)

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### Political Activities in the Schools (continued)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

31-51q Liability of employer for discipline or discharge of employee on account of employee's exercise of certain constitutional rights

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Regulation approved: May 5, 2015

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