

3233 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

The Board of Education recognizes and encourages the right of all citizens, including teaching staff members, to engage in political activity. The Board prohibits the use of school premises and school time, however, for partisan political purposes.

The Board establishes the following guidelines to govern teaching staff members in their political activities:

1. A teaching staff member shall not engage in political activity on school premises except in accordance with Board Policy 7510 and/or applicable Federal and State laws;
2. A teaching staff member shall not post political circulars or petitions on district property, distribute such circulars or petitions to pupils or staff members, solicit campaign funds nor recruit campaign workers on school premises;
3. A teaching staff member shall not display any material that would tend to promote any candidate for office on an election day in a school facility that is used as a polling place.
4. A teaching staff member shall not display nor distribute to any pupil any material or literature which, in any manner promotes, favors or opposes any candidate for election, or the adoption of any bond issue, proposal, or public question submitted at any general, municipal or school election.
5. A teaching staff member shall not engage in any activity during performance of the employees' duties or in the presence of pupils, which is intended or designed to promote, further or assert a position on any candidate for office, partisan political issue, voting issue, school-related issue, board issue, or collective bargaining issue, nor shall any pupil be requested or directed to engage in any activity which tends to promote the same.

Exception: The provisions of this policy do not apply to the discussion and study of politics and political issues expressly related to the curriculum, the conduct of pupil elections for student government, the conduct of mock elections, or the conduct of employee representative elections.

Elective Offices:

A teaching staff member who also serves as an elected member of the New Jersey State Legislature shall be entitled to time off from his/her duties as a school employee, without loss of pay, during the periods of his/her attendance at regular or special sessions of the legislature and hearings or meetings of any legislative committee or commission.

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A teaching staff member who also serves as an elected member of the Board of County Commissioners of any county in New Jersey is entitled by law to time off from school district duties, without pay, during the time the member attends meetings of the Board of County Commissioners or any committee of that body.

No teaching staff member who holds any other elective or appointive office is so entitled, except as such time off may be provided for by Board policy or negotiated agreement.

N.J.S.A. 11:17-2
N.J.S.A. 18A:6-8.1; 18A:6-8.2; 18A:6-8.4;
18A:42-4
N.J.S.A. 19:34-42
P.L. 2020, c.67

Board Policy 7510

Approved: December 17, 2002
Revised: August 30, 2016
Revised: June 15, 2021

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A. Prohibited Activities

The following political activities are prohibited on school district premises:

1. Posting of political circulars or petitions on bulletin boards;
2. The distribution to employees, whether by placing in their school mailboxes or otherwise, of political circulars or petitions, except as delivered by the U.S. Postal Service;
3. Collection of and solicitation for campaign funds;
4. Solicitation for campaign workers;
5. Use of pupils for writing or addressing political materials or the distribution of such materials to or by pupils;
6. Display of any materials that promote the candidacy of any candidate for office by a person working on an election day in a district facility used as a polling place;
7. Inviting of any candidate for partisan political office, including any current holder of elective office once a campaign for reelection or other office has been announced, to speak before any class or the student body at-large, without prior Superintendent's approval.

B. Permitted Activities

The following political activities are permitted on school premises:

1. Conducting of pupil elections for student government and any campaigning connected with those elections, and the conduction of student mock elections.
2. Classroom discussion and study of politics and political issues, when such discussion and study are appropriate to studies such as history, current events, or political science.

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3. Distribution of historical political materials related to the course or curriculum shall be permitted without prior approval. However, the distribution of political and campaign materials related to current elections and partisan issues shall require the approval of the curriculum supervisor. Any such material shall be presented by the teacher without bias or discrimination, in accordance with Policy 2240.
4. Conducting employee elections and the distribution of materials related to employee representation elections, provided the elections are conducted outside of school hours and any such materials are not distributed nor displayed in areas regularly accessible to pupils.

C. Westfield High School Publications

1. This policy is not intended to restrict the ability of Westfield High School programs subject to regulation under Board Policy 2432 – School Sponsored Publications in All Media (Hi’s Eye, Blue Devil TV, etc.) from inviting elected officials and/or candidates for elective office to interview with their respective editorial boards and news reporters.
2. Where WHS programs choose to interview candidates as part of a pre-election publication, all reasonable efforts shall be made to include all candidates for such office and to provide equal time and equitable coverage to all candidates, regardless of political affiliation.
3. To maintain the long history of editorial autonomy, Westfield High School sponsored publications: The Hi’s Eye and Blue Devil TV shall be explicitly exempt from the requirements of the above sections A and B of this policy, but shall continue to be governed by the requirements of Board Policy 2432.

D. Employee Office Holders

Employees who hold elective or appointed office other than state legislator or county commissioner (as provided in statute) are not entitled to time off from their school duties for reasons incident to such offices, except as such time may qualify under the leave policies of the Board of Education or a currently valid negotiated agreement.

- E. Nothing in this Regulation shall be interpreted to impose a burden on the constitutionally protected speech or conduct of a staff member or pupil.

Reference: Board Policy 2432

In Effect: December 17, 2002
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