

## POLITICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

1. Authority. These guidelines are enacted by the Superintendent of Schools to augment School Board Rules 9.043 – Political Activity in the Schools and 6.46 – Political Activities of Employees.
2. Introduction. The St. Johns County School District encourages employees to be involved in the political process, recognizing that informed and involved citizens are crucial to a healthy democracy. However, political activity at school or school activities cannot be allowed to create the appearance of partisanship on the part of the School District, teachers and staff, disrupt the school environment, or otherwise interfere with the educational mission of the School District.
3. Political Activity. These guidelines regulate political activities (a) at School District schools and on District property; (b) by School District employees while they are on duty; (c) by District students while they are at school or at school-sponsored activities; and (d) by means of School District media. Regulated political activities include activities in connection with political campaigns for public office, proposed constitutional amendments or other referendum issues, political movements, political causes, and political parties and organizations.
4. Use of School District Property and Media. District schools and School District property shall not be used for political campaigning, fundraising, solicitation, rallies, announcements or photo opportunities.
  - a. Photo Opportunities. Political candidates shall not be allowed to take video and photographs for campaign purposes except at public events.
  - b. Meetings. Political parties and groups are eligible to enter into facility use agreements with the District for the purpose of holding business meetings. However, at such meetings, the following political activities are prohibited:
    - i. Campaign rallies;
    - ii. Campaign speeches or presentations by or on behalf of any proposed candidates or proposed constitutional amendment or referendum;
    - iii. Fundraising; and
    - iv. Distribution of campaign material.
  - c. Media. School Board media, including the District email system, telephone system, social media accounts, newsletters and intercom systems, shall not be used for political purposes. Provided however, a newsletter of an employee organization that is normally distributed using District media will

not be considered political material simply because it reports on the political activity of the organization. However, political advocacy, as distinguished from mere reporting, shall not be permitted by such an employee organization over District media.

5. Political Signs and Materials. Campaign signs and other signs and materials pertaining to regulated political activity as defined in paragraph 3 shall not be displayed or distributed on School District property. However, signs and materials relating to an authorized political forum conducted under paragraph 6 are permissible. Candidates, their supporters and advocates for or against public issues shall not distribute campaign materials or solicit the support of employees, students or the general public, on school property or at school activities except as part of an authorized political forum under paragraph 6. Soliciting includes seeking signatures for a petition to qualify a candidate or issue on the ballot.
6. Forums: A political forum is an event hosted by the School Board, an individual school, or classroom teacher in which all candidates for a particular office or recognized organizations in support and opposition to an issue are given an equal opportunity to present their viewpoint in an orderly and structured environment.
  - a. If the forum is sponsored by a classroom teacher, the forum must be reasonably related to the teacher's subject matter and the principal shall have given his or her prior permission.
  - b. Forums featuring candidates for elected office shall only occur after the qualifying period has ended.
  - c. All participants shall be invited in writing and the rules of the forum shall be provided in writing.
  - d. The rules of the forum shall allow all participants an equal opportunity to present their qualifications, positions, and rebuttal (provided however, rebuttal is not required).
  - e. At a forum under this paragraph, the host may provide space for the passive distribution of campaign material to attendees who choose to pick it up. For example, it would be appropriate to provide tables in the lobby of the auditorium where the forum is being held for candidates to display their campaign material and to allow the attendees to visit and receive material if they would like. However, it would be inappropriate for candidates or their supports to stand at the door of the auditorium and distribute material to everyone that enters.
  - f. Campaign signs or other decorations in support or opposition to candidates or issues should not be displayed at the forum.
7. Political Activity of Students. A student has the right to wear buttons and other items (T-shirt, hats) in support or opposition to a candidate or issue, provided that

the items do not violate the dress code when considered separately from the message. For example, if hats are not permitted, it is immaterial whether the hat contains a political message or not, the student may not wear a hat. However, if T-shirts are permitted, a student cannot be sanctioned for the political message printed on the shirt, unless it meets the constitutional test where the message threatens to disrupt the educational environment.

Further, the student has the right to express his or her viewpoint on candidates and issues verbally and in writing. However, students must do so in a manner that does not unduly disrupt the educational process or violate the Student Code of Conduct.

8. Vehicles. Not more than two bumper stickers, or other signs, not to exceed 64 square inches each in size are permissible on vehicles parked on School Board property when the occupant of the vehicle is on School Board property for an otherwise valid purpose (student, employee, parent pick-up or visitor attending a school function or an athletic event). However, a vehicle parked on School Board property serving no other purpose than a "moveable billboard" is not permitted.
9. Political Activity of Employees. School Board Policy 6.46 – Political Activity of Employees provides that employees shall not solicit support of or opposition to any candidate or issue while on duty during regular work hours (including breaks). This prohibition includes (a) participating in a political activity while on duty; (b) attempting, either directly or indirectly, to solicit support from any other School Board employee while on duty; or (c) soliciting funds from a School Board employee on behalf of any candidate, party, or issue while on duty.
  - a. Display of Political Logos, etc. Employees shall not display logos, messages, flags, banners or symbols of a political nature on bulletin boards, walls, posters, coffee mugs, water bottles, magnets, stickers, electronic devices or otherwise, in their classroom or workspace or elsewhere on school property. However, employees are allowed to display the American and State of Florida flags in such spaces.
  - b. Apparel. While on duty, at school or on District property, employees shall not wear buttons or apparel (including COVID 19 masks) that display a political message, logo or symbol, or written message of any kind, except for :
    - i. District and School Related Messages. Employees may wear buttons or apparel with the name or logo of the District, a District school, a District or school program, a school athletic team, a school extracurricular activity, or a school or District sponsored event. However, employees may not wear apparel with the name or logo of a) a SJCMSAA team, or b) a student club, except as provided under subsection ii below.

- ii. Student Clubs. An employee who is a student club sponsor may wear a shirt or hat with the club logo at club meetings. Furthermore , a principal may allow sponsors to wear their club's shirt or hat at a club fair or similar event open to all school clubs, including a shirt or hat with a club logo that contains a political message or logo. Otherwise, while on duty, at school or on District property, employees shall not wear apparel with a student club name or logo.
- b. Other Activities. Employees may display political bumper stickers on their personal vehicles on school property in compliance with paragraph 8. Moreover, employees shall have the right to participate in political activities in their individual capacity when they are not scheduled for duty and are not on District property or at a school-sponsored event or activity.
- c. Political Views. Employees shall not inject their personal preferences on political issues in their conversations and interactions with students except as provided in paragraph 11. While they may express their political views with other adults at school while on break, they should not do so if it interferes with their duties.
- d. Exceptions. Nothing contained in these guidelines shall be interpreted to prohibit a School Board member or employee from performing any statutory or assigned duty with respect to any issue which directly affects the School District or which is placed on a ballot by or at the request of the School Board.

10. Political Discussions and Assignments in the Classroom. Teachers may use political materials as part of the instructional program, provided the material is germane to the instructional objectives of the course. Any presentation of political materials, or issues, or expression of views, however, must be balanced and fair.

Teachers shall be responsible for providing students with the opportunity to investigate various sides of the topics presented in their courses, particularly in relation to controversial subjects, within such limits as may be imposed by relevance to the course, the maturity level and intellectual ability of the students, and the time available.

Teachers shall permit freedom of expression on those topics that are matters of opinion so that students may weigh alternative views and make up their own minds. Students shall be encouraged to examine, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize the information available to them before drawing conclusions in order to develop as fully as possible their capacities for rational judgment.

Teachers shall strive to promote tolerance for the opinions of others and respect for right of all individuals to hold and express differing opinions.

As a part of the class discussion, a teacher may express his/her opinions in regard to political, social and religious values or issues provided that the total presentation

is essentially balanced and fair. Teachers shall not use professional contacts with students to further his/her own political aims or views or those of any other individual or group.

11. Elected Public Officials. Elected officials are always welcome on School Board property upon the invitation of a School Board Member, the Superintendent, or the principal. The purpose of such visits should be for teaching or sharing about their office and its role in our system of government, to learn about public school issues, or to participate in school activities. They may be invited to attend school functions, speak to students and employees, and otherwise share and receive information during such visits.
  
12. Town Hall Meetings. School Board property may be used for "town hall meetings." These are public meetings when the general public is invited to meet with one or more elected officials for the purpose of giving and receiving information on issues relevant to the office of the elected official hosting the event. The use of School Board property for this purpose shall be governed by School Board Rule 9.04 and related procedures. Provided, however, such meetings shall not be permitted after qualifying and prior to the final election when the elected official is running for reelection.

ADOPTED this 5 day of December, 2025.

  
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Brennan Asplen  
Superintendent of Schools