



Frederick County Public Schools
Board of Education
POLITICAL ACTIVITY
Policy 314

A. Policy Purpose

To recognize the participation of employees in political campaigns and issues in accordance with the Maryland constitution and election laws regarding participation in political campaigns, partisan election activities, and distribution of political or partisan materials.

B. Definitions

1. “Political activity” is defined to mean activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group.
2. “School-sponsored” is defined to mean any activity that is taking place with the knowledge and approval of school-based administration and including the promotion, leadership, and/or participation of school employees. The assignment of a teacher, administrator, or other school employee to a meeting for custodial purposes does not constitute sponsorship of the meeting.
3. “School-sponsored activities” is defined to mean any school system activity, whether held on or off school property, in which a student directly participates (e.g., school field trip, athletic event, or class/graduation activity), or in which the student does not directly participate but represents the school or student body by simply being present (e.g., spectator at a school event).
4. “School premises” is defined to mean any property owned or leased by Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) for school-related activities.
5. “Voter registration drive” is defined to mean an event, whether sponsored by the State or Local government or a partisan or non-partisan organization on FCPS property where voter registration applications are distributed.

C. Policy Statement

1. The Board of Education (Board) affirms the principle that active participation is required by the individual citizen in our democratic form of government.
2. To the extent allowable by law, FCPS employees as citizens have the right and responsibility to vote, serve on juries, act as election judges, discuss political issues, serve the political party of their choice as party worker, delegate or official, campaign for candidates to public office, and campaign for and serve in public office. FCPS employees, however, have a responsibility to their students not to impose partisan political views in

the classroom or to exploit students by the use of political materials, or conduct political activities during the employee's work day.

3. Nothing in this policy will be construed to mean that employees are restricted from conversing with colleagues about political topics during breaks, lunches, or non-duty time outside of the presence of students.
4. The Board affirms that using FCPS resources for political activities is prohibited.
5. In weighing the importance of employees' First Amendment rights, encouraging the educational component of political advocacy and the responsibility not to unduly impose political views on students, the Board sets forth the following expectations regarding political activities on school premises.
6. To the extent allowable by law, the Board's preference is that FCPS facilities and likenesses are not used as part of election material to include, but not limited to, political advertisements.

D. Implementation

1. Political Activities on School Premises

- a. The following activities are permissible political activities during an employee's work time or during school-sponsored activities:
 - i. Special programs where each candidate for an office is given an equitable opportunity to present their candidacy may be scheduled with the approval of the deputy superintendent or their designee.
 - ii. Instructional activities where issues or political events are discussed as part of a broad-based instructional format or to discuss significant current events.
 - iii. Display of bumper stickers on personal vehicles, provided the content is not obscene or disruptive. FCPS employees who transport students in the regular course of their duties are encouraged to cover a political bumper sticker while on school premises.
- b. The following activities are impermissible political activities during an employee's work time or during school-sponsored activities:
 - i. Soliciting votes or contributions for or against a particular candidate or ballot proposition.
 - ii. Discussing opinions with students regarding a political candidate or ballot proposition, unless the topic is part of the approved curriculum.
 - iii. Distributing campaign literature, materials, or signs for or against a candidate or ballot proposition.
 - iv. Soliciting volunteers to assist with a campaign for or against a political candidate or ballot proposition.
 - v. Preparing for, organizing, or participating in any political meeting, petition, rally or event.

- vi. Using school system resources for any political campaign activities including, but not limited to, classroom bulletin boards, facsimile machines, copy machines, printers, scanners, computers, or email accounts.
- vii. Spending FCPS funds to urge voters to vote for or against a candidate or ballot proposition.
- viii. Requiring employees to engage in political campaign activities as part of their job duties.
- ix. Providing employees with additional compensation or benefits for engaging in political activities.
- x. Voter registration drives, except with the prior written approval of the deputy superintendent or their designee.

2. Voter Registration Activities

- a. Any non-partisan group or State or Local government office that seeks to sponsor a voter registration drive must receive written permission from the deputy superintendent or their designee and should not contact the principal or school directly.
- b. The Superintendent is directed to provide a regulation to establish a procedure for processing requests to sponsor voter registration drives on school premises.
- c. The Board authorizes the Superintendent, in their discretion, to include non-partisan voter registration information on the FCPS website.

3. Use of FCPS Facilities – Political Activities

- a. FCPS buildings and grounds may be used for non-partisan political debates and issues forums sponsored by FCPS or non-partisan organizations. FCPS buildings or grounds shall not be used for partisan political rallies, political fundraisers, and presentations by candidates for public office or related election activities. FCPS buildings or grounds shall also not be used for partisan activities associated with any issue scheduled to be included on the ballot of the next election. Nothing herein shall serve to restrict the county Board of Elections in the administration of early voting or Election Day activities.
- b. Except as indicated below, there shall be no temporary or permanent signs, banners, or pennants (collectively, “signs”) placed in or on FCPS buildings or on FCPS grounds by any group. The exceptions to the prohibition on signs are:
 - i. Signs associated with activities sponsored by FCPS or the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).
 - ii. Signs associated with activities carried on in FCPS facilities by the Board of Elections or related to early voting or Election Day activities, provided that any candidate or issue-based signs must be removed within twenty-four (24) hours of the end of the voting period. The Board also reserves the right to ban the posting of signs that violate Maryland Election Laws.
 - iii. Temporary identification signs by other groups that use FCPS facilities may be placed on FCPS grounds only during the actual hours the FCPS facility is used. At the conclusion of the use of the FCPS facility, the group must remove the signs.

E. Related Information

1. **Board Policy**
 - a. [Policy 203](#), *Facilities and Grounds*
2. **FCPS Regulations**
 - a. [Regulation 203-01](#), *Rental of School Facilities*
 - b. [Regulation 300-45](#), *Responsible Use of Digital Technology – Staff*
 - c. [Regulation 400-73](#), *Responsible Use of Digital Technology - Students*
3. **Maryland Statutes**
 - a. Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-108, *Use of Public School Property by Community*
 - b. Md. Code Ann., Elec. Law § 16-206, *Offenses Relating to Ballots and Balloting*

F. Policy History (Maintained by Legal Services)

<i>Responsible Office</i>	Office of Human Resources; Office of the Deputy Superintendent
Adoption Dates	11/09/05
Review Dates	2015, 2016, 2023
Revision Dates	02/24/16, 01/24/24