

DISTRIBUTION AND DISPLAY OF NON-SCHOOL MATERIAL

Policy Code:

5210

Students and the educational program must be the focus of the school system. In order to maintain an educational environment conducive to learning and to minimize intrusions upon instructional time, distribution and display of non-school material will be limited in accordance with this policy and policy 5240, Advertising in the Schools. School officials shall screen and approve the distribution or display of non-school material on school property. (The term “non-school material” is defined in Section F below.)

This policy applies only to distribution and display of non-school material by students and school-related groups (as defined in Section F below) and by governmental agencies, educational institutions, and non-profit entities as permitted in Section C below. This policy does not apply to the distribution and display of materials by individuals or groups that are on school property in accordance with policy 5030, Community Use of Facilities. Except as provided in Section A below, this policy will not be construed as applying to or prohibiting the display of compliant political signs permitted by G.S. 136-32.

A. DISPLAY OF COMPLIANT POLITICAL AND FARM SIGNS IN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY DURING DESIGNATED PERIODS

Any person may display compliant political or farm signs in the right-of-way of the state highway system accordance with the standards established in G.S. 136-32, even if such right-of-way constitutes school grounds. Compliant political signs may be displayed in such right-of-way from 30 days before the first day of “one-stop” early voting to 10 days after the primary or election day. School officials may remove and dispose of any political sign remaining in the right-of-way more than 40 days after the primary or election day and may remove and dispose of any farm sign remaining in the right-of-way more than 30 days after the end of the farm’s season. School officials shall observe any different rules established by applicable local ordinance for placement and removal of political signs on municipal street rights-of-way. Compliant political signs may also be placed in municipal street right-of-way in accordance with the standards established in G.S. 136-32 and any applicable local ordinance.

School officials shall not remove any political or farm sign lawfully placed except as provided in this section but may request the Department of Transportation to remove a sign that is not in compliance with G.S. 136-32. Compliant farm signs may be displayed in the right-of-way until the end of the farm season.

B. DISTRIBUTION AND DISPLAY BY STUDENTS

Students wishing to distribute or display on campus any publication, leaflet, or other written material that is not school-sponsored must submit the publication or material to the principal for review prior to distribution. The principal shall prohibit distribution or display when the publication or material contains speech that is prohibited as specified in Section

D below but otherwise shall not discriminate on the basis of viewpoint in granting or denying a student permission to distribute or display non-school publications or materials. If permission to distribute or display a publication or material is denied, the student may request review of the principal's decision as specified in Section E below.

C. DISTRIBUTION AND DISPLAY BY NON-STUDENTS

Except as provided in this policy and any guidelines published by the Superintendent in accordance with this policy, non-school groups or persons are not permitted to distribute publications on school grounds during the school day or at school activities if the materials are not directly related to instruction or a school-sponsored activity.

1. Distribution and display of "school-Sponsored or curriculum-related publications and materials" as defined in Section F are permitted during the school day, on school grounds and at school activities.
2. Distribution and display of publications and materials from school-related groups that have received prior approval of the principal pursuant to the standards in Section D below and the standards for review of the decision in Section E below are permitted at reasonable times and places as designated by the principal. The term "school-related group" is defined in Section F. The principal shall not discriminate on the basis of viewpoint in granting or denying permitted school-related groups permission to distribute or display non-school material.
3. The following agencies and organizations are permitted to distribute or display educational information or information about programs and activities of interest to students:
 - a. Local, state and federal government agencies and departments;
 - b. Non-profit organizations that offer educational, recreational, cultural or character development activities or programs for school-aged children, including but not limited to scouts, YMCA or YWCA, organized youth sport leagues, etc.;
 - c. School/business partnerships or incentive programs that directly enhance or support the school's educational program;
 - d. Licensed day care providers on the campus of the school; and
 - e. Community colleges, universities, and other non-profit institutions of higher education.

All publications and materials that one of the permitted agencies or organizations would like to distribute or display must be submitted to the principal for approval prior to the distribution or display. Approval for distribution or display will be granted pursuant to the standards in Section D below and the standards for review of decisions in Section E below. If approved, the publications and materials will be distributed or displayed at reasonable times and places as designated by the principal.

4. The principal shall not discriminate on the basis of viewpoint in granting or denying permitted agencies and organizations permission to distribute or display non-school materials.
5. The superintendent is authorized to adopt regulations regarding approval forms, how many times a year groups may distribute or display publications or materials, delivery and bundling requirements, etc.
6. Nothing in this policy will be construed to create a public forum that would allow non-students unrestricted access to school property for the purpose of distributing publications or materials.

D. DISTRIBUTION AND DISPLAY STANDARDS FOR NON-SCHOOL MATERIALS

School officials shall apply the following standards to approve the distribution or display of all non-school material by individuals or groups authorized by this policy on school property:

1. While materials will not be screened for viewpoint, the reviewer shall prohibit the distribution or display of any publication or material that (a) is vulgar, indecent, or obscene; (b) contains libelous statements, personal attacks, or abusive language such as language defaming a person's character, race, religion, ethnic origin, sex, family status, or disability; (c) causes or clearly threatens to cause a material and substantial disruption of a school activity; (d) encourages the commission of unlawful acts or the violation of lawful school regulations; (e) is inappropriate considering the age of the students in the school; (f) contains information that is inaccurate, misleading, or false; or (g) advertises any product or service not permitted to minors by law.

The principal shall notify the superintendent before approving or prohibiting distribution or display of any publications or materials that raise a question as to whether a specific action by school officials might violate the Establishment of Religion Clause, the Free Exercise of Religion Clause, or the free speech rights guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The superintendent shall consult with the board attorney to determine the legally appropriate course of action.

2. The distribution of non-school material must not interfere with instructional time.
3. Non-school publications and materials distributed or displayed to students must be clearly identified, through the method of distribution or otherwise, as non-school materials that are neither endorsed nor necessarily reflective of the views of the school board or the school system.

4. In order to minimize disruption to the learning environment, political campaign materials may not be distributed to students or employees (including through employee mailboxes and e-mail) or made available on school grounds during school time or at school events. However, on election days, posters and printed materials are permitted for viewing and distribution to the public at school buildings used as polling places in accordance with state law and board of elections requirements.

This provision does not prohibit a teacher from using political literature or campaign material for instructional purposes. However, any teacher using these materials for instructional purposes shall not use his or her position to promote a particular candidate, party, or position on a specific issue. The teacher also shall attempt to use a variety of materials that represent balanced and diverse viewpoints on the political spectrum.

E. PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING DISTRIBUTION OR DISPLAY OF NON-SCHOOL MATERIALS

1. Any individual or organization wishing to distribute or display non-school-sponsored publications or materials must first submit for approval a copy of the publication or material to the principal at least five school days in advance of the distribution or display time, along with the following information: (a) the name and phone number of the individual submitting the request; (b) the date(s) and time(s) of day of intended distribution or display; (c) the desired location for distribution or display of material; and (d) if the distribution or display is intended for students, the grade(s) of students for whom the distribution or display is intended.
2. Within five school days, the principal shall review the request and render a decision. In the event permission to distribute or display the material is denied or restricted, the individual submitting the request will be informed in writing of the reasons for the denial or restriction.
3. Any request denied or restricted by the principal may be appealed in writing to the superintendent. If the principal made the initial decision, the superintendent shall review the decision and respond within 10 school days. Any request denied by the superintendent may be appealed to the board of education. The board will review the request at its next regularly scheduled meeting. As appropriate, the superintendent or the board will consult with the board attorney concerning a request to distribute or display non-school literature.
4. Permission or denial of permission to distribute or display material does not imply approval or disapproval of its contents by school system administrators, the school board or the individual reviewing the material submitted.

5. Materials must be bundled or bound in groups of thirty (30) to ensure easy distribution to classes.
6. In high schools and middle schools, principals may choose to either distribute the informational material directly to students or to display the material in a centralized location for student review.
7. Principals may place reasonable limits on the frequency and timing of distribution. Principals may decline to approve activities planned at the last minute with distribution to come on short notice. Activities that involve fund-raising by students will not be approved, unless such activities are school-sponsored. Distribution of registration forms that require the forms be returned to the schools will not be approved.

F. DEFINITIONS

The following terms used in this policy are defined as follows:

1. Obscene

“Obscene” describes any speech or work that the average person, applying contemporary community standards (as opposed to “national standards”), would find, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interest; or that depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by applicable law; and that, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

2. Libelous Statement

Libelous statements are false and unprivileged statements about a specific person that injure that person’s reputation in the community.

3. Non-School Material

Non-school material includes any publication or other written information that is not a school-sponsored or curriculum-related publication or material.

4. Material and Substantial Disruption

A material and substantial disruption is any conduct that for any reason, including inappropriateness of time, place or type of behavior, significantly interferes with school functions, classroom instruction, or the rights of other students or school employees. Examples of material and substantial disruption include, but are not limited to, demonstrations, destruction of property, injury to students or other persons, shouting or boisterous conduct, and anything that significantly distracts students from instruction or prevents school personnel from performing their educational responsibilities.

5. School-Sponsored or Curriculum-Related Publications and Materials

School-related materials or publications are: (a) materials published by the school system for distribution (i.e. school calendars, menus, school newsletters, etc.); (b) materials that are approved by school officials and related to activities or events that are officially sponsored by the school (i.e. announcements for sports teams, clubs, field trips, school plays, and concerts); or (c) materials that are directly related to instruction.

6. School-Related Group

School-related groups are organizations formed to support the school in an area of recognized need, such as the PTA, the PTO, teachers' and principals' organizations, and booster clubs.

7. Distribution

Distribution is sending the material home with students or displaying the material at school for students to view or take a copy.

G. VIOLATION OF POLICY

Any individual/organization/agency that violates this policy may be prohibited by the school principal or the superintendent from distributing materials for the remainder of the school year.

The Superintendent may develop further procedures, in accordance with this policy, that allow the limited distribution of materials and information to students. These procedures shall ensure that class interruptions and administrative burdens are kept to a minimum.

Legal References: U.S. Const. amend. I; *Peck v. Upshur*, 155 F.3d 274 (1998); G.S. 115C-36, -47; 136-32; 163-129, -166.

Cross References: Community Use of Facilities (policy 5030), Collections and Solicitations (policy 5220), Advertising in the Schools (policy 5240)

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