

GBI – Political Activity Policy

The Mason School Board recognizes the right of its employees, as citizens, to engage in political activity. Employees of the Mason School District are encouraged to exercise all of their rights as citizens, including involvement in political activities, and to engage in citizenship activities, to set examples by registering to vote, and to participate in elections and carrying out duties of responsible citizenship. However, the Mason School Board also recognizes that school property and school time, paid for by the citizens of Mason, should not be used for partisan political purposes except as provided for in policies pertaining to the use of school buildings by civic and political organizations. Therefore, no employee of the Mason School District shall use his/her position within the school district to further a political cause, nor shall any employees of the school district attempt to indoctrinate students or to use the classroom as a forum to promote, to secure support for, or opposition of any candidate, political cause, or issue.

Employee political activities will not:

- Misrepresent the Mason School District, but will take adequate precautions to distinguish between his/her personal and institutional views.
- Explain or inform students of personal plans on how one will vote or had voted. Voting is a personal choice and students have not the need to know.
- Interfere with a colleague's exercise of political and citizenship rights and responsibilities.
- Use institutional privileges, District resources, or working time to promote political candidates or partisan political activities.
- Attempt, either directly or indirectly, to coerce political activity or political support from any other employee of the school district
- Solicit or attempt to solicit funds from an employee of the school district on behalf of any candidate, party or issue while on duty
- Partisan political activities shall not be conducted while on duty, including passive political expressions such as wearing a lapel pin or campaign button or political advertising on items of clothing

For purposes of this regulation, prohibited "political activities" is narrowly defined to mean "partisan political activities" which would include the posting of political circulars or petitions, collection and/or solicitation of campaign funds, solicitations for campaign workers, the use of pupils in writing or addressing campaign materials, or the distribution of campaign materials to pupils on school property or during school time in any manner which would indicate that a school employee is using a position in the school to further personal partisan views on candidates for public office or on questions of public policy. The exception is the circulation of literature pertaining to bond referenda for school purposes.

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. Consistent with these procedures, political campaign materials or materials that support or oppose political candidates, parties,

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causes, 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, District employees, or others. Campaign-related posters or signs may not be displayed at, on or within schools. Note there are exceptions for Election Day activities and for materials used in the educational program.

Candidates, or their representatives, desiring to distribute campaign or political materials to those attending school-related activities occurring after hours must do so outside the building or other school facility as directed by appropriate administrator. 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. 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 an administrator to leave school property. If the candidate or their representative does not comply with this request to leave, the administrator will warn the individual that he/she is trespassing and the administrator will notify the police.

The Mason School District will not accept political advertisement in co-curricular publications (i.e. school newspaper that is part of journalism class). As with other advertisement, paid political advertisements may be placed in school publications unrelated to the curriculum, subject to the review and approval of the principal (i.e. programs for athletic events). During the times that polls are open and schools are serving as polling locations, New Hampshire election laws will govern any associated political activity, including the distribution of political literature.

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.

Use of any other resources for political activities, including but not limited to copiers, computers, or facsimile machines, is prohibited.

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

Candidates, or their representatives, may not access student 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.

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Political advertisements including badges, buttons, and printed materials may not be distributed by or to employees of the School District or students on school property during the school day, nor shall school mail or facilities be used to promote a candidate or to produce or to distribute any partisan political materials. The classroom shall not be used as a forum to promote any candidate or issue. If a school is used for voting, political signs may be erected on the property the day of election or primary in accordance with New Hampshire and federal law.

Students of the Mason School District are not required to convey or deliver any materials that

- (i) advocate the election or defeat of any candidate for elective office
- (ii) advocate the passage or defeat of any referendum question, or
- (iii) advocate the passage or defeat of any matter pending before a local school board, local governing body or the New Hampshire General Assembly or the Congress of the United States of America.

This policy shall not be construed to prohibit the discussion or use of political or issue-oriented materials as part of classroom discussions or projects or to prohibit the delivery of informational materials. Nothing in this regulation shall be interpreted as prohibiting teachers from conducting appropriate activities which encourage students to become involved in the political processes of the party of the students' choice or as independents; nor does it prohibit the fair use of political figures as resource persons in the classrooms.

In view of the voting rights of eighteen year olds, school facilities may be used as meeting sites for student partisan political groups before or after the regular instructional day. A teacher or a community person approved by the principal must be in attendance at such meetings.

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