

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

No. 320

Section: Employees

Title: Freedom of Speech and
Political Activities

Adopted: April 27, 1981

Revised: June 27, 2019

320 FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Purpose

The Board of Education (the “Board”) of The School District of Philadelphia (the “District”) acknowledges the right of its professional employees as citizens in a democratic society to speak out on issues of public concern and to engage in political activity. When those issues are related to the school system and its programs, however, the employee's freedom of expression must be balanced against the interest of the District.

Delegation of Authority

The Board authorizes the Superintendent and their designee to adopt and enforce reasonable rules and regulations governing employees’ freedom of expression and participation in political activities.

Guidelines

Employees are protected by the First Amendment when speaking on a matter of public concern that is not part of their job duties. The following guidelines are intended to help clarify and therefore avoid situations in which the employee's expression could conflict with the School District of Philadelphia’s interests. In situations in which the employee is not engaged in the performance of professional duties s/he should:

- 1) state clearly that his/her expression represents personal views and not necessarily those of the school district;
- 2) not direct his/her expression toward any individual(s) with whom s/he would normally be in contact in the performance of duties in order to avoid the disruption of cooperative staff relationships;
- 3) refrain from expressions that would interfere with the maintenance of discipline by school officials;
- 4) refrain from making public expressions which s/he knows to be false or made without regard for truth or accuracy; and
- 5) not make threats against co-workers, supervisors or district officials.

School property and school time may not be used for political purposes. Employees must follow the following guidelines when engaging in political activities:

- 1) The collection of campaign funds and/or the solicitation for campaign workers is prohibited on school property.
- 2) The use of pupils for writing or addressing political material or the distribution of such material to or by pupils is forbidden.
- 3) District employees who hold elective or appointive office 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.

The discussion and study of politics and political issues only when such discussion and study are appropriate to classroom studies, such as history, current events and political science, and voter registration efforts are exempt from the provisions of this policy.

Violations

Any represented employee who violates this policy is subject to employee discipline in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement. If the employee is not represented, then an investigation will be conducted by the individual's direct supervisor who will determine the appropriate consequences.

Legal References

1. Pa. Public School Code, 24 P.S. § 5-510
2. Related Information:
3. [Employee Code of Conduct](#)