

GOVERNING BOARD POLICY MANUAL
Section 600 - Community Relations

NOTE: Regulations associated with specific policies are in italics

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Approved:

November 8, 2007

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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Educational Partnerships

The ARGS Governing Board commits to a community relations program that enables two-way communication, with both internal and external constituents, that leads “citizens of all ages to trust in, invest in, and benefit from public education” (Vision adopted by the Chesterfield County Governing Board on July 8, 2003).

The Governing Board encourages educational partnerships at both the individual Governing and division levels. An educational partnership is a mutually beneficial, cooperative relationship in which the partners share values, objectives, and human or financial resources to enhance student learning. Partners may include students, parents/guardians and families, businesses, community organizations, the faith community, and other citizens.

A. Students

The Governing Board desires that all students develop a strong sense of personal and social responsibility and that students be perceived as a resource to the community. The Governing Board, therefore, encourages students, with family support, to engage in volunteerism on weekends and after Governing. The Governing Board supports student engagement in Governing-sponsored community service activities. The Governing Board also supports student engagement in Governing-sponsored service learning, whereby students gain real-life perspectives to their classroom studies through participation in related community service. The Governing Board encourages the recognition of students engaged in Governing-sponsored community service and co-curricular service learning.

B. Parents/guardians and families

The Governing Board recognizes that the involvement of parents/guardians and families is critical to student achievement. Parents and families are the first and primary teachers of their children. To support this involvement by parents/guardians and families, the Governing Board will recognize the contributions made by families to the Governing community and ensure that parent representatives be included in policy review, budget review, and the development of major initiatives. The Governing Board further encourages

- That schools provide a welcoming and supportive climate that facilitates parent/guardian involvement as volunteers, audiences, joint problem solvers and supporters of their students’ learning;
- That ARGS provide information to parents/guardians about school programs, rules, and student progress;
- That the school administrative staff and teachers participate in and support parent teacher associations and organizations whose purpose is to support the school’s educational program; and
- That the school provide opportunities for parents/guardians to support learning at home and at school.

C. Faith Community

The Governing Board recognizes faith-based organizations are actively serving in our school because they bring together, in an organized manner, individuals who share a common interest in the welfare of our students and families. The Governing Board endorses the voluntary involvement of the faith community in education-related activities such as mentoring, tutoring, crisis counseling, student and staff recognition, and communicating school priorities to the community. The Executive Director is encouraged to establish and foster relationships with the faith community. Members of the faith community who work with students in school shall do so in accordance with established volunteer guidelines. They must limit their activities to those that are religiously neutral and that support the mission of the school.

D. Business and Other Community Groups

The Governing Board desires and encourages the involvement of businesses and other community groups in our school. Such involvement enriches educational experiences for students, provides professional development for staff, and builds greater understanding between the school and the broader community. The Governing Board supports the school-business partnership program whose purpose is to develop collaborative efforts that assure the maximum mutual benefits to the Governing division and the community. The Governing Board also supports the Appomattox Education Foundation (AEF) as a means to channel community resources “to promote, aid, and encourage educational, charitable and scientific purposes, activities and endeavors of every kind and description” (Articles of Incorporation for the Governing Board)

E. Citizens

The Governing Board encourages all local citizens to visit and volunteer in our school and to attend Governing events that are open to the public. The Governing Board provides community access to Governing facilities for recreation and learning opportunities consistent with policies governing adult education (see Policy 311) and facility use (see Policy 617). Citizens are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities in school to share their interests and experiences with students. Visitors, for security reasons and to prevent disruption to the learning environment, must go to the Governing office and comply with Governing guidelines for such visits.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Legal Reference: Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-253.13:6
Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-253.13:7
Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-212.2:2

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

601.1

A. Parental Rights and Responsibilities

The Governing Board recognizes that the involvement of parents/guardians and families is critical to student achievement. Parents/guardians and families are the first and primary teachers of their children, regardless of a parent's custodial status. Unless there is a court order to the contrary, both parents have a right to:

1. Have access to the child's school records, in accordance with Policy 410, Student Records;
2. Have access to school progress reports, the school calendar, and notices of major school events;
3. Visit the school in accordance with Policy 6??? School Visitors;
4. Participate in parent-teacher conferences;
5. Receive all notifications in accordance with the individuals with Disabilities Education Act
6. Receive notice of a student's extended absence(s), as defined in and pursuant to School Board Policy 402, Attendance.

Further, unless there is a court order to the contrary, a non-custodial parent shall not – solely on the basis of such non-custodial status – be denied the opportunity to participate in his or her student's school activities where such participation is supported or encouraged by the policies of the School Board. For purposes of this policy, "school activities" include, but shall not be limited to, lunch breaks, special in-school programs, parent-teacher conferences and meetings, and extracurricular activities. However, other may be considered that may warrant the denial of such participation, based on the individual facts and circumstances of a specific situation.

B. Custodial Parent Responsibilities

The Custodial Parents has the responsibility to:

1. Keep the main office informed as to the address of resident and how he or she may be contacted at all times;
2. On the ARGS Demographics Information Form, list the current address and phone number of the non-custodial parent, unless such address is unknown and the parent signs a statement to that effect, or unless a court order restricts the educational or contract rights of the parent; and
3. Provide a copy of any legal document that restricts the educational and/or contact rights of the non-custodial parent; and
4. Arrange appointments in advance with the principal, teachers, etc., absent extenuating circumstances.

C. Non-Custodial Parent Responsibilities

The non-custodial parent has the responsibility to keep the main office apprised of changes in his/her current phone number and address. At the request of a non-custodial parent, such parent will be included as an emergency contact for the student's activities unless a court order has been issued to the contrary. Non-custodial parents are expected to arrange appointments in advance with the Executive Director, teachers, etc., absent extenuating circumstances.

To support this involvement by parents/guardians and families, the Governing Board will recognize the contributions made by families to the Governing community and ensure that parent representatives be included in policy review, budget review, and the development of major initiatives. The Governing Board further encourages

- That schools provide a welcoming and supportive climate that facilitates parent/guardian involvement as volunteers, audiences, joint problem solvers and supporters of their students' learning;
- That ARGS provide information to parents/guardians about school programs, rules, and student progress;
- That the school administrative staff and teachers participate in and support parent-teacher associations and organizations whose purpose is to support the school's educational program; and
- That the school provide opportunities for parents/guardians to support learning at home and at school.

Approved: August 14, 2014

**Legal Ref.: 20 U.S.C. §1232g.
34 C.F.R. Part 99.1 *et seq.*
Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended §§22.1-4.3, 22.1-287 *et seq.***

Communication with the News Media

It is the policy of ARGS to cooperate with all news media representatives. The Governing Board wishes to make extensive use of the electronic and print media available to inform all citizens of the events in their school. Accurate and prompt information and news affecting the school shall be released through the office of the Executive Director.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Board Meetings

The public shall be notified of all regular and special meetings. All approved minutes and public records of the Governing Board shall be available to citizens for review at the office of the Executive Director during normal business hours.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Legal Reference:

Code of Virginia, Sections 2.1-340, et seq.

Publications

Publications which are designed for internal distribution or distribution to the community at large are a means for the school to inform the public and for the public to assess the school. Their contents and distribution are intended to contribute to the enhancement of the goals and objectives defined by the Governing Board.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Requests for Information

Requests for specific information regarding the school shall be directed to the Executive Director for prompt and courteous replies. Responses will be in accordance with the tenets of the Freedom of Information Act, Privacy Protection Act, and procedures developed by the Superintendent.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Legal Reference:

Code of Virginia, Sections 2.1-340, et seq. and 2.1-377, et seq.

Speakers

The appearance of speakers on behalf of any religious, philanthropic, charitable, or political activity shall, prior to the appearance, be approved by the Executive Director or designee.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Public Activities Involving School Personnel

School personnel are encouraged to participate actively in community life to an extent consistent with their professional obligations. They are encouraged to accept invitations to appear at community organizations as observers and as speakers for the purpose of enhancing community understanding of education.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Political Activities

The Governing Board, as a body of elected officials, strongly supports the concepts of representative government and elected office. Employees and patrons are encouraged to exercise their right to vote, and the Governing Board expresses our admiration for those who seek and obtain public office. Further, the Governing Board recognizes that the public schools are tax-supported and should be accessible to the community. The Governing Board, however, does believe that the educational process should be clearly separate from the political activities associated with campaigns for public office.

Therefore, political activities in the school during school hours shall be restricted to those of an educational nature that are beneficial to students as part of their program of study. The Governing Board shall promulgate regulations in conjunction with this policy governing the following:

- access to school information
- display and distribution of political literature
- employee political activities
- participation by student groups
- use of school facilities
- use of other ARGS resources
- conduct of candidates

Approved: November 8, 2007

Legal Reference: Code of Virginia, Section 2.1-342, Section 24.2-604

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POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Purpose

To provide guidelines to candidates, candidate representatives, school board employees and students related to the conduct of political activities as it may involve ARGs and school activities.

Access To School System Information

Any candidate or other Virginia citizen may have access to school division records and information pursuant to the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Code of Virginia, Section 2.1-342).

School Board Policy 605 (Community Relations) requires that requests for information regarding the school be directed to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will forward any requests from candidates or their representatives related to political campaigns and issues to the Office of the Superintendent for review. To ensure impartial cooperation with candidates in elections for the School Board, responses to campaign requests under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act will be shared with all announced candidates. To receive this information, candidates must provide in advance to the Office of Community Relations a contact name and address.

Display And Distribution Of Political Literature

Display and distribution of political materials in the school 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. Existing ARGs procedures permit the distribution in schools of materials related to Parks and Recreation, scouting and other non-profit or service organizations. Consistent with these procedures, political campaign materials or materials that support or oppose political candidates, parties 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, school board employees or others. Campaign-related posters or signs may not be displayed at or within schools. Note there are exceptions for election day activity and for materials used in the educational program.

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Candidates, or their representatives, desiring to distribute campaign or political materials to those attending school-related activities occurring after school hours must do so outside the building, stadium or other school facility. The distribution of political literature at events or meetings that are not school-related may be subject to the conditions governing Use/Rental of School Facilities (see F. below).

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 a building administrator to leave school property. If the candidate or their representative does not comply with this request to leave, the building administrator will warn the individual(s) that they are trespassing and will notify the police.

Schools will not accept political advertisements in co-curricular publications (example: school newspaper as part of journalism class). As with other advertisements, paid political advertisements may be placed in school publications unrelated to the curriculum, subject to the review and approval of the principal (example: programs for athletic events).

During the times that polls are open and schools are serving as polling locations, Virginia election laws will govern any associated political activity, including the distribution of political literature (Code of Virginia, Section 24.2-604).

Employee Political Activities

Employees are encouraged to exercise their constitutional rights as citizens, but they shall not involve their schools in political activities. Employees shall not participate in campaign activities during hours of official employment; however, employees may participate in political activity after hours of official employment.

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.

Participation By Student Groups

School-sponsored student groups shall not participate in partisan political activities.

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Use Of School Facilities For Political Activities

When space is available, candidates may use school facilities during non-school hours subject to Governing Board Policy 617 (Community Relations) governing Use/Rental of School Facilities and the associated regulations contained in 617.1.

Use Of Other ARGS Resources

Any use of the ARGS-NET for political activities is prohibited by Governing Board Policy 723 (Operations and Finance) governing Acceptable Use, the ARGS-NET and the associated regulations contained in 723.1.

Use of any other resources for political activities, including but not limited to copiers, computers or facsimile machines, is governed by Human Resources Policy Number 721. This policy states that division resources and equipment are not to be used for personal purposes without the prior approval of the Executive Director.

Conduct Of Candidates

School board employees who may be candidates for public office are governed by School Board Policy 611 (the Executive Director).

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

Candidates, or their representatives, may not access students 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.

Approved:

November 8, 2007

Public Office

Employees shall be permitted to seek and/or hold any public office, except the office of member of the ARGs Governing Board, so long as such activity is kept wholly separate from his/her employment and such activity does not interfere with the employee's job performance or otherwise conflict with the employee's job responsibilities.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Legal Reference: Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-639.1, et seq.

Gifts to School Personnel

The Governing Board welcomes the writing of letters to staff members expressing gratitude or appreciation. Monetary gifts to school employees for the performance of their contractual duties shall be discouraged.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Legal Reference: Code of Virginia, Section 2.1-639.4.

Citizen Complaints Concerning the School or Employees

All formal complaints by the public concerning school matters shall be in writing and bear the signature of the complainant. The Executive Director shall promulgate a written procedure for receiving and processing such complaints.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Solicitation

No solicitation of staff members or students will be permitted in, on, or about the school premises unless approved by the Executive Director or designee.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Contests, Awards and Prizes

Contests and activities involving participation by students or the granting of awards or prizes to students which are sponsored by outside agencies shall not be announced or permitted in the schools unless approved by the Executive Director or designee. Such activities must be judged to have significant educational value for the participants before permission may be granted.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Naming of Schools or Portions Thereof

Once the ARGS Governing Board owns the 512 West Washington Street facilities, the Governing Board has the prerogative to name all school facilities, i.e., gymnasiums, stadiums, libraries, tracks, fields and other similar school facilities. The Governing Board welcomes and will seek comments from the public and the school community, as appropriate, regarding the naming of school facilities.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Use or Rental of School Facilities

School use of buildings and facilities takes precedence over non-school use. However, local not-for-profit groups and local community organizations may use school or facilities in compliance with Regulation 617.1 Procedures Governing Use or Rental of School Facilities. A group may be required by the Executive Director or designee to document that it is a local not-for-profit group or local community organization. The Governing Board delegates to the Executive Director or designee the approval of the use or rental of facilities.

Approved: November 8, 2007

Legal Reference: Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-131, 132, and 132.1
School Board Policy 610, Community Relations – Political Activities