

GCS: Student voting complaint called misunderstanding

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GUILFORD COUNTY — Guilford County Schools says an incident between a student and GCS employee last month during early voting that's been reported to the local elections board was a misunderstanding.

The incident at Leonard Recreation Center in Greensboro took place during the school system's campaign to get students to the polls for primary elections.

"The Board of Elections shared a concern from a poll worker about a student who was in conversation with a teacher. The situation was misinterpreted as interference with the voting process, but was a case of a teacher trying to console a visibly upset student whose parent had completed their registration form and determined the student's party affiliation. At no time did the teacher act in a partisan or inappropriate manner," said Whitney Oakley, school system chief academic officer.

The allegation is that a GCS employee wanted the student to use a different party ballot than the student was issued by elections staff, said county elections Director Charlie Collicutt.

"The elections staff did not make an error in the original issuance of the ballot," he said.

The incident was brought to Collicutt's attention by an elections board staff member working at the Leonard Recreation Center early voting location, Collicutt told The High Point Enterprise.

Guilford County Commissioner Justin Conrad of Greensboro discussed the incident in a Facebook post this week.

The dispute involved an educator who argued with a student in an incident observed by "multiple witnesses," according to Conrad.

The incident took place against the backdrop of a first-time campaign by the school system last month to bus high school senior-age students to early voting locations across Guilford County to promote youth voting and voter registration.

The N.C. State Board of Elections and Guilford County Schools have been informed about the incident, Collicutt said.

"I'm not going to make any further comment on it," he told The Enterprise.

The N.C. State Board of Elections, by law, can't comment on whether the agency is investigating a voting or election complaint.