

Because the County Board of Education won't allow youth organizations to recruit or distribute fliers in schools, Scout leaders say Boy Scout recruitment is hurting.

Saying it's considering policy revisions, the school board says it adopted its policy three years because budget cuts eliminating front office staff forced remaining staff to spend more and more time handling numerous fliers being brought in to distribute.

"We had to get out of the mailroom business," said school board member David Carr. "We are trying to think of a way to rewrite it."

The exchange occurred between Paul Murphy, with Boy Scout and Cub Scout Troops 252 in Davis, and Jessica Hult with Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops 644 in Stella and Peletier, at the Tuesday, March 3 school board meeting in the school board's central office in Beaufort, and reported on Sunday by Cheryl Burke, News-Times staff writer.

Joining Mr. Murphy and Ms. Hult in their plea to distribute literature in the schools was Elizabeth Lewis, board member with Carteret County Partnership for Children, a nonprofit promoting early childhood programs.

Saying the policy has caused a sharp decline in those joining Scouts across the county, Mr. Murphy said, "All the Scouts are struggling a little bit because we can't go to schools to recruit. We have a lot of Eagle Scouts and positive role models who come out of our troop. We have over 70 kids attending six different schools. All we are asking is five or 10 minutes to talk about Scouts."

Ms. Hult, who is also the Croatan Trails District Membership chairman for Boy Scouts of America, said Carteret County was the only school district in the state where Scouts weren't allowed to recruit in schools.

Saying she requested a change in the board's policy last year to allow Scouts in, she said "nothing has come of it," adding, "Scouts produce better, well-rounded youth and leaders."

Offering a draft resolution she and other members of her organization had drafted, she said it suggests schools allow "nonprofit organizations that offer educational or recreational activities or programs for school-aged children, including but not limited to Scouts, summer camps, and organized youth sports leagues" to submit publications to the superintendent's designee for consideration.

The publications or fliers would be submitted at least 10 school days in advance of distribution. If approved, they would be posted on the school system's website. And approved nonprofits would also be allowed to send volunteers to hand out fliers in the schools. Each organization would be responsible for providing its own materials and volunteers to distribute fliers.

"As a parent," said Ms. Lewis, "I know there are parents that move into the county that don't have the information they need about groups like soccer and Scouts. There's not a good way to access that information. As a member of Carteret County Partnership for Children, I want to remind you of the money we raise that will go directly into the school system. I urge you to change this policy."

Agreeing with Mr. Murphy and Ms. Hult, we heartily second Ms. Lewis's recommendation. Send in the volunteers.