



Election Guidelines

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Memo To: All Staff
From: Director of Education

ACCESSIBILITY:

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Administrative Procedure is to set in place clear, concise, and easily followed guidelines concerning the role of schools with regard to federal, provincial and municipal election campaigns.

REFERENCES:

- Canada Elections Act
- Election Act, R.S.O. 1990 (Ontario)
- Municipal Elections Act (Ontario)
- O. Reg. 612/00 – School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees
- Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

FORMS:

- N/A

REPORTS:

- N/A

APPENDICES:

- N/A

COMMENTS AND GUIDELINES:

When elections occur, the school system must be seen not only as supporting the democratic process but also as acting in an ethical and impartial manner toward all candidates and political parties seeking office in federal, provincial, municipal and school board elections.

Participation in the election process by students as part of the learning process is part of the curriculum for both elementary and secondary schools and should be encouraged. When a class discusses political party or election issues/candidates, however, information must be presented in an unbiased manner. This ensures transparency, open dialogue and the ability of learners to be exposed to all aspects of political issues, candidates and the ability to discern their support for or against an issue, party or candidate. This is in keeping with the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations' call for students to be "A discerning believer formed in the Catholic Faith community", "A reflective, creative and holistic thinker" and "A responsible citizen".



Outside of approved all candidates' meetings, it is not appropriate for school/classroom settings to be used for political purposes.

The school board does recognize and supports the democratic rights of employees as citizens to participate in election processes as fundamental to our society. Employees do not have the right, however, to support or assist in any capacity candidates for public office or political parties when performing their duties as an employee.

In order to maintain transparency and independence during election campaigns for federal, provincial, municipal or school board offices:

1. Political party meetings, events or appearances by individual election candidates for political purposes on WCDSB property is not permitted at any time.
2. Use of WCDSB physical, material or staff resources for political purposes is not permitted at any time.
3. Campaign literature may not be displayed on school board property except as a curriculum support, where no one candidate or political party is given preference.
4. Employee groups may continue to communicate with their members in the same manner as they do when there is not an election in progress. When an election is called, political communication between employee groups through media such as email or distributing materials in staff mailboxes is not permitted. However, use of designated employee group bulletin boards may continue.
5. Schools are encouraged to host all candidates' meetings as part of the curriculum. If a school hosts an all candidates meeting, the school will maintain a copy of the communication inviting all candidates to participate and the response from the candidates verifying that they will or will not attend. Political materials may be distributed at duly constituted all candidates' meetings and may be used in post-meeting class discussions.
6. For school board elections, Catholic school councils (or a group of Catholic school councils acting together) may host all candidates' meetings. The format should follow the format used for meetings hosted by schools as part of the curriculum. It is re-emphasized that when staff engage learners in political party and/or election issues, staff do so in an unbiased manner.