

Division: Board

Policy #: GOV-109

Policy Name:

Political Activity

Policy Statement

The Board of Trustees (“the Board”) for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (“The District”) supports student engagement in the democratic process, so they can learn to become active, engaged, responsible citizens. While it is recognized that the participation of political candidates may enhance such learning experiences, parameters must be established to ensure candidate involvement is not used for partisan political purposes or gain. It is essential that the learning and working environment in schools remain impartial and free of political bias; instructional time is not negatively impacted due to election or other political activities, and District resources are not utilized for political purposes.

Background

The Board acknowledges that election processes can provide a rich experience for students to learn about the democratic process. Schools shall use these opportunities to enhance curriculum delivery wherever appropriate. The Board also recognizes its responsibility to restrict candidate access to students and schools during political campaigns, and to provide direction for the use of District resources during elections. However, there may be exceptions as per the **Newfoundland and Labrador School Board Election Regulations, 1998** where facilities are utilized and employees required to be involved. The involvement of District employees in political activity is also subject to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador’s Human Resource policy, **Political Activity**.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all District students, staff and facilities.

Definitions

In this policy:

- **Bias** means an opinion, prejudice or inclination that limits an individual’s or a group’s ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgements.

- **Election** refers to any school board, employee trade union, municipal, provincial, or federal election or by-election.
 - **Incumbent** refers to any person who has been elected or appointed and currently holds any school board, trade union, municipal, provincial, or federal office.
 - **Political activity** – includes participation in any activity that supports or opposes a political candidate and/or political party.
 - **Political candidate** refers to a person who seeks nomination or election to public or party office, or has filed as a candidate for an election.
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Policy Directives

General

1. Student participation in curriculum-based activities pertaining to democracy; how government works, and official government-based election education programs is encouraged.
2. Government announcements that are not directly related to education should be held at locations other than a school during the instructional day, unless no other facility exists.
3. It is expected that elected officials, in the course of their duties or otherwise, will not interfere with instructional time. Pictures, video recordings, and audio recordings of students are not permitted without appropriate consent.

During Elections

4. Staff shall not endorse a candidate or political party while undertaking their duties as an employee of the District. Any District employee engaging in political activity outside the school and workday should consult the [Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Human Resource Policy on Political Activity](#) and their respective collective agreement, if applicable.
5. Once an election is announced, or nominations close in the case of school board elections, or the writ dropped in the case of provincial or federal elections, political candidates, or their representatives, are not permitted to campaign for elected office in a school during school hours (including the recess and lunch periods), or at school-sponsored events.

- a) An exemption to this directive can be made, by the principal, if the political process is included in the curriculum outcomes for a particular grade/course, and the principal agrees the activity is grade appropriate. In such cases, all candidates must be given an equal opportunity to present to students. If a panel discussion/debate is planned, all candidates must be given at least two weeks' notice of the event.
6. School councils that invite political candidates to attend a meeting must provide fair and equitable access to all candidates and the meeting must take place outside of school hours.
7. Personal information regarding students, parents, and employees will not be provided to candidates, their staff, or volunteers. Any information that is in the public domain will be provided by means of regular requests for information.
8. Access to District facilities beyond the times that would be ordinarily managed by the school shall be subject to the Community Use of Schools Policy and associated administrative regulations (See OPER-602). All political materials must be removed from school facilities at the end of the contracted period.
9. Campaign signage is not permitted within the property boundaries of a school. The only exception is the use of signage during an event in accordance with the Community Use of Schools Policy (See OPER-602). In this case, such signage must be removed from school facilities at the end of the contracted period.
10. District materials, equipment, and property shall not be used for political purposes, unless required by the *Newfoundland and Labrador School Board Election Regulations, 1998*.
11. The use of students or District delivery services to distribute materials associated with an election campaign is not permitted, unless subject to Policy Directive #10 above.
12. District property used for communication, including phone, fax, photocopier, and email shall not be used for political purposes.
13. Campaign materials are not permitted in schools/facilities with the exception of employee union materials, which should be restricted to a designated workspace such as a staff room or lunch room.
14. During a school board election, information such as polling dates and locations may be posted in schools and disseminated to parents and the public through District communication mechanisms.

15. A school will not be utilized as a polling station unless there are extenuating circumstances where no other publicly accessible facility exists.
- a) In the rare circumstance that a school is to be used as a polling station, a plan must be implemented to ensure the safety of students and the protection of instructional time.
 - b) The school administration is responsible for ensuring that the safety plan for a polling station during the instructional day includes:
 - security of the building;
 - restricted access to the building and a restricted space for voters within the building to ensure there is no interaction with students and staff, and
 - a traffic plan for school opening and closing times.
 - c) A polling station is subject to the relevant sections of the Community Use of Schools Policy (See PROG - 603).
 - d) Other than the requirements outlined in the *Newfoundland and Labrador School Board Election Regulations, 1998*.

APPROVED: February, 2018

EFFECTIVE: February, 2018

AMENDED: _____