



Political Activities in Schools During Elections

Date Approved: 2018

Projected Review Date: 2022

Page 1 of 3

PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to the principles of fairness and non-partisanship during election campaigns.

HWDSB supports student and community engagement in the political process. However, it is also essential that the learning environment in schools remains impartial when discussing political topics.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Students learn about the role local, provincial, national and global politics play in everyday life.
- Students have opportunities to gain experience in political affairs through study, discussion debate, curriculum and co-curricular activities in an open, informed and reasoned manner.
- At no time shall political activity interfere with the normal operation of the school.
- At no time shall board or human resources be used for campaign or election-related purposes.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

Ensure that schools remain impartial and encourage real-life learning about politics during the campaigning of an election.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education
Members of Executive Council

TERMINOLOGY:

Bias: An opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination that limits an individual's or a group's ability to make fair, objective or accurate judgments.

Board Resources: Any board-issued item and/or any other information technology device provided to employees or trustees for their work for HWDSB.

Non-partisanship: Not biased towards any particular political group or individual.



Political Activities in Schools During Elections

Date Approved: 2018

Projected Review Date: 2022

Page 2 of 3

Safe Welcome Program: A Ministry funded program that puts in place access device systems such as locking outside doors, security cameras and buzzers at schools.

ACTION REQUIRED:

Candidates

Once an election begins, candidates are not permitted to make individual presentations to students, school councils or staff members. Candidates, unless they are the current official and acting in that role, may not take part as official platform guests at any school or work function.

Staff

During election campaigns, it is important that all Board staff members be mindful of their responsibility as public employees and refrain from activities or actions that might appear to favour one candidate or party over another on behalf of the Board.

Students

Student debates and discussion aimed at increasing political awareness are encouraged. At the discretion of the Principal, non-partisan information, such as polling dates and locations, may be posted within the school.

Schools used as polling stations

The *Canada Elections Act*, *Ontario Elections Act* and *Municipal Elections Act* stipulate that it is the Returning Officer/City Clerk who will choose suitable locations for polling stations, which may include schools. Polling stations are usually selected because they are located centrally in ridings/wards and are easy to access for the voting public.

If schools are identified as polling stations for an election, Facility Services will work with the Returning Officer/City Clerk to address the safety of students, staff and the community. This work will also include ensuring the Safe Welcome Program, where applicable, is followed and to find appropriate accessible locations within the school for the polling station.

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Ensure that schools remain impartial and encourage real-life learning about politics during the campaigning of an election.	This will be measured through a sample of schools to capture what activities took place during the election period.



Political Activities in Schools During Elections

Date Approved: 2018

Projected Review Date: 2022

Page 3 of 3

REFERENCES:

Government Documents

Municipal Elections Modernization Act, Bill 181
Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, Bill 68
Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA)

HWDSB Policies

Student Engagement