

Topic:	Election Campaigns
Effective:	September 2008
Cross-Reference:	Administrative Procedure -- Publicity in Schools
Revision Date:	April 2018
Review Date:	February 2022
Responsibility:	Director of Education

INTENDED PURPOSE:

The Halton District School Board believes senior students should understand the electoral process. However, the Board is committed to the principles of fairness and non-partisanship. Schools must not be used, during the school day, for political campaigning.

The Halton District School Board supports the democratic right in our society to participate in debates when there is a pending election; however it is also essential that any action by a majority or minority group of staff or parents not impact the teaching/learning process in our schools.

The object of this administrative procedure is not to curtail students' understanding of the electoral process nor the issues involved, but to preserve the school from being charged with political favouritism. It is important to support an environment where legitimate political expression and a sound teaching/learning context are protected.

PROCEDURES:

Requests for information from a trustee candidate should be treated in the same manner as any public request -- with the same level of the Halton District School Board's commitment to public accountability and service. Generally, all information about schools and the Halton District School Board is public, except for confidential student or personnel records, and therefore should be provided in a prompt manner when responding to a public request. Principals should avoid answering questions that require an opinion, (ie: "*What are the barriers to student success at your school?*"). Should you have any questions about privacy or confidential information, please contact the Director's Office.

No materials, letters, memorandum or other documents from candidates for political office should be distributed or used in a school with the intent or appearance of affecting the prospects of that candidate without the consent of the Principal and the Director of Education. Students are not to be used to distribute any material related to the election.

Political signs are not to be displayed in the school or on school property. Staff are also reminded that the wearing of apparel endorsing a political party is inappropriate.

School events are not intended for political campaigning. Requests by candidates to visit a school are not considered appropriate during an election campaign. This restriction includes informal visits to classrooms and meetings with school council or school administrators. Open houses and other school related events such as Education Week events or graduations/commencements are intended for parents and families of students at the school, and are not venues for candidates to use to campaign.

Principals should remember current members of the Board of Trustees are serving out the end of their term of office and continue to fulfill their usual roles. It is appropriate for schools to involve their local trustee in events and activities at the school in a way they would have prior to the beginning of the municipal election campaigns.

Current trustees must refrain from using school newsletters six months prior to municipal elections. This also includes use of school websites. Current trustees are also prohibited from using the Board's corporate website for campaigning/electioneering.

Principals are urged to limit campaigning within the schools by candidates for political office, to a brief planned event where student attendance is voluntary, and all candidates are invited and extended equal opportunity to interact with the electorate. Such "all candidates" meetings are more appropriate at the secondary than the elementary level, and are held at the option of the school. If such an event is planned, all candidates must be informed and invited at the same time, and well in advance of the date. Any advertising or signage promoting such an event must be without editorial comment.

School Councils are agents of the school and of the Halton District School Board. While school council meetings are open to the public and candidates may attend, this must be in an observer role only, and not as a participant.

It is not appropriate for the School Council as a group to endorse a specific trustee candidate, or to campaign on behalf of a specific candidate. The School Council may, however, host an all-candidates meeting to assist parents in learning more about the candidates.

A School Council member who is a candidate for election may not use their role to promote their campaign while they are serving in the role of School Council member. They are not allowed to distribute campaign material on school property or discuss their campaign during council meetings.

Teachers, parents, stakeholders or school councils wishing to hold forums or information sessions must schedule these as independent events outside instructional times, and coordinate any event through the usual process for facilities rentals.

While Board or school staff may use social media to communicate with trustee candidates, campaigning on behalf of a trustee candidate is not advised. School administrators and senior staff may wish to limit retweets, likes and favourites from their personal social media accounts as these can often be perceived as endorsements. School social media accounts should not be used to endorse or further the efforts of any candidate.