

	POLICY NO: 6.7
Adopted	2015
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POLICY: USE OF SCHOOL BOARD RESOURCES DURING ELECTIONS

PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) supports civic learning and engagement while ensuring non-partisanship and compliance with applicable legislation.

HWDSB is committed to fairness, neutrality and the integrity of the learning environment during municipal, provincial and federal election periods, including by-elections.

The intent of this policy is to provide clear direction regarding the use of school board resources and applies to trustees, staff, students, candidates for any elected office, registered third-party advertisers, volunteers, school councils, committees, and community users of facilities during all municipal, provincial and federal elections and by-elections.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- HWDSB supports student engagement in curriculum-aligned civic learning that reflects Ministry expectations for fostering engaged, informed and active citizens.
- 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.
- Trustees receive support in fulfilling their responsibilities as members of the Board of Trustees.
- School Board resources shall not be used for campaign-related purposes by trustees, candidates, registered third-party advertisers, staff members, committees, school councils or community users during all municipal, provincial and federal elections and by-elections.
- HWDSB maintains strict non-partisanship during all election periods.
- Political activity shall not interfere with normal school operations or safety.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

Ensure that schools remain impartial and encourage real-life learning and experiences related to politics during any election period.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Chief Executive Officer

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.

Campaign Period:

- For municipal elections, the campaign period is defined as May 1 until Voting Day in a regular municipal election year.
- For provincial/federal elections, the campaign period begins the day of issuance of the writ or dissolution of Parliament to Voting Day.
- For any by-election, the campaign period is determined by the appropriate legislation, including the [Municipal Elections Act](#), [Election Act](#) and/or the [Canada Elections Act](#).

Candidate: Any person who has filed a Nomination Form as a candidate in the municipal or school board trustee election or by-election, or a person who is a candidate or who is seeking nomination in a provincial or federal election or by-election.

Non-partisanship: Refers to not being biased towards any particular political group or individual.

Registered Third-Party Advertiser: As defined in the Municipal Elections Act; an individual, corporation or trade union registered to incur expenses for advertisements or other election-related messaging.

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.

School Board Resources: Any HWDSB-issued item, staff time, or Board-owned property and infrastructure, including computers, laptops, phones, tablets, websites, newsletters, email systems, Wi-Fi, Board or school social media accounts, logos/branding, phone numbers and contact lists.

ACTION REQUIRED:

Campaign Involvement

Students

HWDSB encourages student engagement aimed at increasing political awareness through civics-related learning, debate and Student Voice-style activities during any election period, provided that the delivery of activities are non-partisan and curriculum-related.

Students who choose to be part of an election campaign must ensure that their campaign work is outside of HWDSB school hours and must not use any HWDSB-issued resources.

Staff

During campaign periods, it is important that all Board staff are mindful of their responsibilities as representatives of the Board, and refrain from activities or actions that may appear to be in favour of one candidate or party over another.

Staff who choose to be part of an election campaign must ensure that their campaign work is outside of HWDSB work hours and must not use any HWDSB-issued resources.

As part of curriculum-aligned civic learning, teachers, in collaboration with the school Principal, may use selected partisan campaign materials from *all* levels of government for curriculum-aligned learning that supports critical thinking, political awareness, and understanding of civic processes, and is presented in a balanced, non-advocacy manner.

School Visits and Events

Candidates

Individual candidates who are running for an elected position are not permitted to make presentations to students, school councils or staff, or take part in any school or Board function as an official guest.

Current Elected Trustees

Current elected Trustees may continue to participate in school-related visits and events in their official (non-campaign) capacity as part of their regular duties. Trustees shall not campaign or conduct themselves in any way which may be perceived as campaigning for themselves or another individual running for an elected position.

Campaigning or engaging in partisan activities on school or Board property at any time, by any individual, is not permitted.

The only exception to campaigning on school or Board property is at an all-candidates' meeting.

All-Candidates' Meeting

An all-candidates' meeting may be organized by students during the school day (with support from the school Principal) or by school councils/community organizations after school hours. These meetings may take place at schools or other Board facilities.

Community Use of Schools rentals during campaign periods must comply with this policy.

Campaign-related materials are not permitted on board property, except within designated areas noted by school staff or election officials (e.g., polling stations).

Use of School Board Resources

Trustees and candidates shall not use school board resources for any campaign-related purpose. This includes, but is not limited to, Board email, voicemail, websites, newsletters, mass communication tools, social media accounts, logos/branding, imagery, phone numbers or contact lists.

Schools used as polling stations

The *Canada Elections Act*, *Ontario Elections Act* and *Municipal Elections Act* stipulate that Returning Officers/City Clerks may designate schools as polling stations. Schools as polling stations are usually selected because they are located centrally in ridings/wards and are easy to access for the voting public.

Distribution of Political Information

Political Information, such as but not limited to, newsletters, flyers, speeches/greetings, brochures, bulletin boards, and information tables, shall not be distributed through schools, workplaces, committees, or school councils.

Non-partisan information from Elections Canada, Elections Ontario and municipalities about the election process may be shared but will be limited to the HWDSB website (not individual school sites).

Compliance and Monitoring

Outside election periods, HWDSB welcomes elected officials and government representatives who are engaging in authentic, official government business that supports student learning, school improvement, and community partnership. These visits may take place in schools or board facilities when they align with their formal duties and contribute positively to our learning environments.

To maintain fairness and neutrality for all members of our community, any partisan political activities on board property, including events, announcements, visits, or photo opportunities conducted on behalf of a political party, leader, or candidate are not permitted.

Any concerns or potential breaches should be reported to the Director and Trustee Services for review and corrective action.

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

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

REFERENCES:**Government Documents**

Education Act

Elections Act (Canada)

Elections Act (Ontario)

Municipal Elections Act (Ontario)

City of Hamilton By-Law No. 22-031, *Hamilton Sign By-Law Respecting Election Signs*

Revisions:

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