

NLSchools refers to all public K-12 English schools and school related facilities under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education, Education Operations Branch and all employees working therein, and all employees providing services and supports to such schools, including those who work in the areas of school facilities, student transportation, program implementation, student services, and procurement.

Policy Name

Political Activity in Schools

Policy Statement

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 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 NLSchools resources are not utilized for political purposes.

Background

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 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. Government also recognizes its responsibility to restrict candidate access to students and schools during political campaigns, and to provide direction for the use of school-related resources during elections. The involvement of 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 schools within NLSchools.

Definitions - In this policy:

Bias

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

Election refers to employee trade union, municipal, provincial, or federal election or by- election.

Incumbent

Incumbent refers to any person who has been elected or appointed and currently holds any trade union, municipal, provincial, or federal office.

Political activity

Political activity includes participation in any activity that supports or opposes a political candidate and/or political party.

Political candidate

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.

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

1. Staff shall not endorse a candidate or political party while undertaking their duties as

an employee of government. Any 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.

2. Once an election is announced 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Access to schools and school-related facilities beyond the times that would be ordinarily managed by the school shall be subject to the [Community Use of Schools](#) Policy. All political materials must be removed from school facilities at the end of the contracted period.
6. 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. In this case, such signage must be removed from school facilities at the end of the contracted period.
7. Materials, equipment, and property, used or operated by NLSchools shall not be used for political purposes.
8. The use of students or school delivery services to distribute materials associated with an election campaign is not permitted.
9. Property used by NLSchools for communication, including phone, fax, photocopier,

and email shall not be used for political purposes.

10. 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.
11. 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 NLSchools Community Use of Schools Policy.