
Administrative Procedure 154

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Purpose

To safeguard a learning environment that is non-partisan, safe, inclusive and focused on student learning in alignment with the curriculum/to enhance the curriculum, while facilitating balanced civic education and community access to facilities according to established rules.

Scope

This procedure applies to all staff, students, trustees, contractors, volunteers, Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), visitors, community users, candidates and political parties on or using VSB property, facilities, vehicles, communication systems or digital platforms.

Definitions

Campaigning/Political Activity: Any action intended to promote or oppose a candidate, political party, slate or ballot initiative, including solicitation, speeches, distribution of materials, signs, apparel or digital messaging.

Campaign Materials: Physical or digital items such as posters, flyers, brochures, buttons, signs, social media posts, emails, SMS, websites, videos, QR codes, etc. linking to campaign content.

Digital Campaigning: Campaign activity via email, SMS, social media, livestreams, websites, learning platforms, collaboration tools (e.g., Teams/Zoom, etc.) and emerging or automated technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools.

VSB Digital Channels: District- or school-managed websites, social media accounts, email lists/accounts, newsletters, learning platforms, collaboration tools, Wi-Fi networks, emerging or automated technologies including artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools and any other official communication systems.

All-Candidates Event: A non-partisan forum, assembly, debate or questions and answers organized for educational purposes that invites all eligible candidates and provides equitable access and format.

Guiding Principles

Neutrality: The District maintains a nonpartisan stance and does not endorse candidates or parties.

Student Learning: Schools may use civics content to build critical thinking skills and teach about democratic processes in a balanced manner.

Safety and Respect: All activities must uphold a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment.

Privacy and Data Protection: District channels and personal information must not be used for political purposes.

Accessibility and Equity: Opportunities for participation should be equitable and barrier-free.

Human Rights Compliance for All-Candidate Events: The District will not permit any presentations, statements or materials at all-candidate events that contravene the Human Rights Code of British Columbia. Specifically, presentations are prohibited if they:

- expose or are likely to expose any person, group or class of persons to hatred or contempt, including statements that vilify, denigrate or demean; or
- promote discrimination or express an intention to discriminate against a person, group or class of persons based on any protected characteristic, including: Indigenous identity, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or age.

Procedures

1. Campaigning in Schools, District Facilities and on District Property

- 1.1 Prohibition during school hours and activities: Campaigning by candidates, parties or their representatives is prohibited in schools and on District property during the instructional day and at school/VSB sponsored activities, except as permitted under Section 2 (All-Candidates Events for VSB students) and Section 4 (Use of Facilities by Candidates).
- 1.2 Staff Conduct: While on duty or representing the school district, staff must remain politically neutral, may not use their position to influence others and must not display partisan materials in school district facilities. Staff may not distribute campaign materials nor canvas for candidates during work time or using VSB channels/platforms.
- 1.3 Student Conduct: Student learning and discussion of political issues are supported within curricular or club contexts that are balanced and supervised. Students may not distribute campaign materials or canvas for candidates during school time or using VSB channels/platforms.

2. All-Candidates Events for VSB students (Educational Purpose)

- 2.1 Authorization: School-based all-candidates events require the school principal's review and approval of a detailed event proposal and approval by the director of instruction; District-wide events require approval by the superintendent or designate.
- 2.2 Equitable Access: All eligible candidates must be invited with reasonable notice and afforded equal speaking time, format and visibility.
- 2.3 Voluntary Attendance: Student attendance is voluntary unless the event is part of a curricular activity aligned to learning outcomes.
- 2.4 Non-Solicitation: No campaign fundraising, petitions, handouts- or merchandise. During approved all-candidates events, campaign materials may be displayed inside the event venue only and must be removed immediately after.
- 2.5 Recording and Media: Recording is only permitted with prior approval from the school principal and must comply with privacy obligations. Media attendance should be coordinated in advance with the school principal and communications staff.

3. Campaign Materials (Physical and Digital)

- 3.1 Distribution: Campaign materials may not be distributed through schools, student backpacks, school newsletters, email lists, learning platforms, AI-enabled technologies or VSB/school registered social media accounts. The creation of campaign-related materials using VSB resources, including staff time, equipment, facilities, networks or AI tools, is strictly prohibited.
- 3.2 Posting: Campaign materials may not be posted on District property or digital channels, except inside the room/space rented for a campaign meeting or used for an all-candidates event. Any such materials must be removed immediately after the event.
- 3.3 Signage: Exterior signage is prohibited unless specifically authorized under a facility rental for the event timeframe and removed immediately after.
- 3.4 Instructional Use: Political materials may be used as teaching resources if presented in a balanced, nonpartisan manner and not soliciting support for any candidate or party.

4. Use of Facilities by Candidates/Parties (Outside of School Hours)

- 4.1 Rentals: Candidates/parties may rent facilities outside of instructional hours under the District's *Community and Commercial Use of Facilities and Grounds* administrative procedure at standard rental rates.
- 4.2 Conditions: The renter must comply with all VSB policies, including safety, accessibility, capacity, parking, no disruption to school operations and limit activities to those approved in the rental agreement.
- 4.3 Promotion: Event promotion may reference the facility as a venue only (e.g., "held at X School at x address") and not imply VSB or school endorsement.
- 4.4 Insurance and Security: Proof of insurance is required and security arrangements may be required based on risk assessment as per rental agreements.
- 4.5 Removal: All political materials must be removed immediately after the event.

5. Digital and Social Media

- 5.1 District Channels: District and school websites, email accounts and lists, newsletters, learning platforms, AI-enabled technologies, social media and messaging tools must not be used to host, amplify or link to campaign content, except to publish neutral information about all candidates events organized as learning opportunities and statutory election notices.
- 5.2 Interactions with School Accounts: Candidates and parties may not use VSB accounts (e.g., tagging, @mentions) for campaign-related amplification. School accounts are not permitted to engage with partisan content.

- 5.3 Virtual Events: Virtual all-candidates events may be hosted on VSB's digital platforms if they meet Section 2 requirements, with moderated chat and meeting controls to ensure safety and decorum.
- 5.4 WiFi- and Devices: District networks and devices are not permitted for campaign operations or mass outreach.

6. DPAC or PAC Organized Events

- 6.1 DPAC or PAC Forums: DPAC or PACs may organize parent/guardian focused all-candidates forums outside of school hours, subject to the same neutrality, equitable access, safety and facility rules.
- 6.2 Separation: DPAC or PAC communications about such events must clearly state they are DPAC or PAC organized- and non-partisan.

7. Visitors, Safety and Privacy

- 7.1 Check-In: All visitors to schools must check in at the reception or administration office and follow all visitor procedures.
- 7.2 Filming/Photography: Any filming/photography on VSB premises requires prior approval from the District and prior approval and consent from all individuals being filmed/photographed where applicable.
- 7.3 Data and Contact Lists: Personal information provided to and stored within the District's systems (e.g., emails, contact information, etc.) and distribution lists may not be used for political purposes.

8. Records and Transparency

- 8.1 Log: Schools must maintain a log of political event requests (approved/denied), dates and rationales and provide copies to the office of the superintendent.
- 8.2 Retention: Records are retained under the District's records retention schedule.

9. Compliance and Consequences

- 9.1 Failure to comply with these procedures may result in removal from premises, denial of future access and, for employees, possible disciplinary action.

10. Extraordinary Requests

- 10.1 Decision -Maker: The superintendent (or designate) may rule on extraordinary requests consistent with this procedure.
- 10.2 Reporting: Extraordinary decisions are reported to the Board for information.

Reference: Sections 17, 20, 22, 65, 85 School Act (BC); Local Government Act (BC); Election Act (BC); Canada Elections Act; Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (BC); BC Human Rights Code

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