

## **POLITICIANS AND SCHOOLS**

### **Background**

Politicians are important to the effective running of society. CCSD appreciates all politicians and the work that they do. CCSD has a responsibility to teach the Alberta curriculum without interruptions. Principals are responsible for all visitors to their buildings.

When linked to the curriculum, meetings with politicians and elections provide an ideal opportunity for students to observe, discuss and engage in the democratic process. Pursuant to the Alberta Education Program of Studies, classroom efforts are to focus on incorporating issues and electoral procedures into learning experiences that help students 'make sense' of elections.

Although the District recognizes the desirability of students having a knowledge of, and interest in the election process, it is important that CCSD staff not be seen by students, parents and others, to be promoting a particular candidate or political party in an election. For greater certainty, CCSD remains neutral and does not support one political candidate or political party.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this Administrative Procedure:

"politicians" includes city counsellors (including Mayor), school board trustees (including the Board Chair), municipal counsellors (including County Reave), Member of Legislative Assembly (including the Premier) and Member of Parliament (including the Prime Minister).

### **Procedures**

1. Schools may invite a politician(s) to attend special events, such as a liturgy, Mass, graduation or celebration to name a few.
  - 1.1. When inviting any politician the local trustee should be included on the invitation.
  - 1.2. In the event that the local trustee cannot attend the event as planned, then the event may continue without the local trustee present.
2. Politicians are governors, and as such should be discussing governing issues with CCSD governors (School Board Trustees).
  - 2.1. Politicians are encouraged to contact and meet with School Board Trustees. Contact information is available at the district's website.
  - 2.2. Schools should redirect politicians (other than trustees) with governing questions to their local School Board Trustee.

3. School Board Trustees should be invited to School Council meetings and special events such as liturgies or Masses.
  - 3.1. Schools should have their local trustee attend at least one school council meeting and at least one liturgy/Mass per year.
4. Student participation in a political campaign may provide them with a direct experience of the process; however, the provincially mandated Program of Studies does not support electioneering as part of the learning process.
  - 4.1. With this in mind, teachers must refrain from planning this type of activity.
  - 4.2. Specifically, the District prohibits schools from involving students directly in any campaigning during a civic, provincial or federal election- such as the distribution of election materials.
5. This Administrative Procedure does not prevent schools from inviting candidates running for city or municipal councillor, mayor, School Trustee, Member of Legislative Assembly or Member of Parliament to a school-based, all candidates forum.
  - 5.1. It is critical and an important part of the democratic process that all candidates receive an invitation and that the forum occurs only if all candidates have been given the opportunity to participate.
  - 5.2. In planning the forum, clear procedures must be in place to ensure that the event is conducted appropriately, and that it does not become a stage for political opportunism.
  - 5.3. Candidates must be made aware of the expectations governing the forum, and these expectations must be enforced to ensure fairness to all.
  - 5.4. School Councils planning political forums must work closely with the school's principal and the District's Learning Services staff well in advance of the date planned for the forum to establish and communicate appropriate forum protocols and procedures.
6. Schools are also permitted to participate in programs such as those sponsored by Elections Canada (Student Vote) that provide schools with resources to conduct a school-based vote during an election.
7. This Administrative Procedure forbids the use of District's funds, facilities, or other assets, in a politically partisan way, in support of, or in opposition to, any candidate or party running for elected office.
8. Election campaigning, of any kind, including the distribution of campaign materials, can have a disruptive effect on the organizational and educational operation of a school.

- 8.1. All campaigning by candidates for trustee, city or municipal counsellor, mayor, Member of Legislative Assembly or Member of Parliament in District schools is prohibited except for forums outlined in section 5.
- 8.2. The only exception that would be permitted is the case of a school building being used during after-hours to accommodate a forum for candidates.

Approval Date: October 11, 2023

Reference: *Education Act*, SA 2012, c E-0.3  
Calgary Catholic School District: School Council Handbook