

**Election Action**  
**2010:**  
**A School Board**  
**Election Handbook**



**The Alberta Teachers' Association**

The first edition of this handbook was prepared for the Alberta Teachers' Association by Lawrence Martin (1980) and was updated by Randy Hatfield (1983), David Flower (1986), Shelley Russell (1992, 1995), Janet Harvey and Shelley Svidal (2001) and Shelley Svidal (2004, 2007). This edition has been prepared by Shelley Svidal.

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**The Legal  
Elements:  
Strictly  
Speaking**



# Election Deadlines: A Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
19 SEPTEMBER	20 <b>NOMINATION DAY</b> Nominations filed between 1000 and 1200. Acclamations announced.	21 Last chance to withdraw nominations by 1200. Nominations continue if slates not filled.	22 Nominations continue if slates not filled.	23 Nominations continue if slates not filled.	24 Nominations continue if slates not filled.	25
26	27 Nominations continue if slates not filled.	28 Incomplete slates referred to appropriate minister.	29	30	1 OCTOBER	2
3	4 Notice of election to be provided over the next two weeks.	5	6	7	58	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 <b>ELECTION DAY</b> Voting from 1000 to 2000.	19	20 Last chance to request recount by returning officer.	21	22 Election results declared at 1200.	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1 NOVEMBER	2	3	4	5	6 Last chance to request judicial recount.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
7 NOVEMBER	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 Last chance to hold organizational meeting.	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29 Election materials destroyed.	30	1 DECEMBER	2	3	4

The following are provisions of the *Local Authorities Election Act* and *School Act* with which you should be familiar. The acts are available from the Queen's Printer Bookstore, Main Floor, 10611 98 Avenue NW, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2P7, tel: 780-427-4952 in Edmonton or 310-0000 (enter 780-427-4952 at the prompt) from elsewhere in Alberta, fax: 780-452-0668, e-mail: qp@gov.ab.ca, website: www.qp.alberta.ca.

# Election Mechanics

## **Appointment of returning officers (Local Authorities Election Act)**

13(1) An elected authority may, by resolution, appoint a returning officer for the purposes of conducting elections under this Act.

(2) If the elected authority does not appoint a returning officer, the secretary is deemed to have been appointed as the returning officer.

(3) The returning officer for a local jurisdiction may not be a candidate for the elected authority for that local jurisdiction.

## **Nomination day (Local Authorities Election Act)**

25 Nomination day shall be 4 weeks before election day.

## **Election day (Local Authorities Election Act)**

11(1) Election day for a local jurisdiction

- (a) in the case of a general election, if required, is to be the 3rd Monday in October, or
- (b) in the case of a by-election or vote on a bylaw or question, shall be the day fixed by a resolution of the elected authority.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1)(a), an elected authority may, by a bylaw passed prior to June 30 of a year in which a general election is to be held, provide that the election day in the local jurisdiction is to be the Saturday immediately preceding the 3rd Monday in October.

## **Advance vote (Local Authorities Election Act)**

73(1) An elected authority may by resolution provide for holding an advance vote on any vote to be held in an election.

(2) No advance vote shall be held within 24 hours of election day.

(3) If a resolution is enacted under subsection (1), the returning officer must determine the days and hours when the advance vote is to be held.

## **Voting hours (Local Authorities Election Act)**

46(1) Every voting station shall be kept open continuously on election day from 10 a.m. until 8 p.m.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), an elected authority may, by a bylaw passed prior to June 30 of a year in which an election is to be held, provide that the voting station is to be open before 10 a.m.

(2.1) Despite subsection (1), an elected authority that is responsible for the conduct of an election under an agreement referred to in section 2(2) or 3(1) may, by a bylaw passed before June 30 of a year in which an election is to be held, provide that voting stations in an area that is subject to the agreement are to be open before 10 a.m.

(3) Promptly at 8 p.m. on election day, the deputy shall declare the voting station closed.

(4) If, when the voting station is declared closed, there is an elector in the voting station who wishes to vote, the elector shall be permitted to do so, but no other person shall be allowed to enter the voting station for that purpose.

## **Voting time for employees (Local Authorities Election Act)**

58(1) An employee who is an elector shall, while the voting stations are open on election day, have 3 consecutive hours for the purpose of casting the employee's vote.

(2) If the hours of the employee's employment do not allow for 3 consecutive hours, the employee's employer shall allow the employee any additional time for voting that is necessary to provide the employee the 3 consecutive hours, but the additional time for voting is to be granted at the convenience of the employer.

(3) No employer shall make any deduction from the pay of an employee nor impose on the employee or exact from the employee any penalty by reason of the employee's absence from the employee's work during the 3 consecutive hours or part of it.

(4) Subsections (1), (2) and (3) do not apply if the employer provides for the attendance of an employee who is an elector at a voting station while it is open during the hours of the employee's employment with no deduction from the employee's pay and without exacting any penalty.

### **Declaration of election result (Local Authorities Election Act)**

97(1) The returning officer may publish unofficial results of the counting of ballots after an election as the results are received from voting stations.

(2) The returning officer shall, at 12 noon on the 4th day after election day, at the office of each local jurisdiction for which an election was held,

- (a) announce or cause to be announced, or
- (b) post or cause to be posted

a statement of the results of the voting for candidates, including a declaration that the candidate receiving the highest number of votes for each office to be filled is elected.

(3) The returning officer shall, if the result was announced, post in some conspicuous place a statement signed by the returning officer showing the number of votes for each candidate.

(4) On complying with subsection (2), the returning officer shall forward a signed statement showing the number of votes for each candidate and indicate each candidate declared to be elected to the secretary and the relevant Minister's Deputy Minister.

### **Delivery of election material (Local Authorities Election Act)**

100(1) As soon as practicable after the election, the returning officer shall deliver to the secretary the sealed ballot boxes, the ballot account and the nomination papers, and the secretary is subsequently responsible for their delivery when required.

(1.1) The secretary must retain the ballot account and the nomination papers until the term of office to which they relate has expired.

(2) The nomination papers and ballot account may be inspected by an elector during regular business hours in the presence of the secretary.

### **Disposition of election material (Local Authorities Election Act)**

101 The secretary, unless otherwise ordered by a judge, shall retain copies of voter registers, if any, made under section 90 and the ballot boxes with their seals unbroken for 6 weeks from the date of voting and then shall cause the ballot boxes to be opened and their contents destroyed, and cause copies of voter registers, if any, to be destroyed, in the presence of 2 witnesses and each of the 2 witnesses shall take an affidavit that the witness has witnessed the destruction of the contents of the ballot boxes.

# Who Can Vote?

## Eligibility to vote (Local Authorities Election Act)

47(1) A person is eligible to vote in an election held pursuant to this Act if the person

- (a) is at least 18 years old,
- (b) is a Canadian citizen, and
- (c) has resided in Alberta for the 6 consecutive months immediately preceding election day and the person's place of residence is located in the area on election day.

(2) Subject to subsection (3) and sections 75, 77.1, 79, 81 and 83, an elector is eligible to vote only at the voting station for the voting subdivision in which the elector's place of residence is located on election day.

(3) If a local authority establishes a voting station at a work site, the local authority may direct that those workers who are electors who wish to vote and who are required to work at the site during the hours for which the voting station is open shall vote at that voting station, notwithstanding that those workers do not reside in the voting subdivision in which that voting station is located.

(4) In the case of the performance of any function or the exercise of any right under this Act, a person shall be a resident on the day on which that function is performed or that right is exercised in the area, ward or voting subdivision in respect of which that function is performed or that right is exercised and shall have been a resident of Alberta for the 6 consecutive months immediately preceding the day on which that function is performed or that right is exercised, unless otherwise required by this Act.

## Electors for region (School Act)

256(1) For the purposes of this Act and the *Local Authorities Election Act*, an individual is eligible to vote in an election of members of a Regional authority if

- (a) the individual
  - (i) is a Francophone,
  - (ii) has a child who is enrolled in a school operated by the Regional authority,
  - (iii) is 18 years of age or older,
  - (iv) is a Canadian citizen, and
  - (v) has been a resident of Alberta for the 6 consecutive months immediately preceding election day,

or

- (b) the individual is a member of a class of individuals prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council as being eligible to vote.

(1.1) In addition to the requirements of subsection (1),

- (a) an individual who is a separate school elector may only vote for a candidate who is standing for election as a separate school member, and
- (b) an individual who is a public school elector may only vote for a candidate who is standing for election as a public school member.

(4) A person who is eligible to vote in an election for a board other than a Regional authority and in an election for a Regional authority may exercise the right to vote in both elections.

## Rules of residence (Local Authorities Election Act)

48(1) For the purposes of this Act, the place of residence is governed by the following rules:

- (a) a person may be a resident of only one place at a time for the purposes of voting under this Act;
  - (a.1) if a person has more than one residence in Alberta, that person shall, in accordance with subsection (1.1), designate one place of residence as the person's place of residence for the purposes of this Act;
- (b) the residence of a person is the place where the person lives and sleeps and to which, when the person is absent, the person intends to return;

- (c) a person does not lose the person's residence by leaving the person's home for a temporary purpose;
- (d) subject to clause (e), a student who
  - (i) attends an educational institution within or outside Alberta,
  - (ii) temporarily rents accommodation for the purpose of attending an educational institution, and
  - (iii) has family members who are resident in Alberta and with whom the student ordinarily resides when not attending an educational institution is deemed to reside with those family members;
- (e) if a person leaves the area with the intention of making the person's residence elsewhere, the person loses the person's residence within the area.

(1.1) For the purposes of subsection (1)(a.1), a person shall designate the person's place of residence in accordance with the following factors in the following order of priority:

- (a) the address shown on the person's driver's licence or motor vehicle operator's licence issued by or on behalf of the Government of Alberta or an identification card issued by or on behalf of the Government of Alberta;
- (b) the address to which the person's income tax correspondence is addressed and delivered;
- (c) the address to which the person's mail is addressed and delivered.

(2) A person who is a resident of a public school district, school division or regional division or of a separate school district, school division or regional division under the *School Act* is deemed to be a resident of the public school district, school division or regional division or the separate school district, school division or regional division, as the case may be, under this Act.

(3) Notwithstanding subsection (2), a person who owns and lives in the person's residence and whose residence is assessable for public school purposes or for separate school purposes under the *School Act* is deemed to be a resident of the public school district, school division or regional division or the separate school district, school division or regional division, as the case may be, under this Act.

## **Summer villages (Local Authorities Election Act)**

12 The provisions of this Act that apply to municipalities apply to summer villages except that in respect of a summer village

- (b) a person is entitled to vote at an election if
  - (i) the person is eligible to vote under section 47,
  - (ii) the person is 18, a Canadian citizen and is named on a certificate of title as the person who owns property within the summer village, or
  - (iii) the person is 18, a Canadian citizen and is the spouse or adult interdependent partner of a person referred to in subclause (ii).

# The Voting List

## List of electors (Local Authorities Election Act)

50 The elected authority if it so desires may, by bylaw,

- (a) direct the secretary or returning officer to prepare a list of electors who are entitled to vote in an election, and
- (b) prescribe procedures and forms governing the enumeration of electors and provide for the use of information from a permanent electors register, if any.

## Proof of elector eligibility (Local Authorities Election Act)

53(1) Every person who attends at a voting station for the purpose of voting must be permitted to vote

- (a) if the person's name appears on the list of electors, if any, or
- (b) if the person makes a statement in the presence of an officer at the voting station, in the prescribed form, that the person is eligible to vote as an elector.

(2) Despite subsection (1), if a bylaw has been passed by the elected authority under subsection (3), a person who attends at a voting station for the purpose of voting must be permitted to vote if the requirements of subsection (1) are met and the person produces for inspection the number and types of identification required by the bylaw.

(3) An elected authority may, by a bylaw passed no later than 6 months prior to nomination day of a year in which an election is to be held, provide for the number and types of identification that are required to be produced by a person to verify the person's identity and age for the purpose of determining whether the person is eligible to vote.

(4) An elected authority may, by a bylaw passed no later than 6 months prior to nomination day of a year in which an election is to be held, provide for the number and types of identification that are required to be produced by a person who wishes to vote by a special ballot to verify the person's identity and age for the purpose of determining whether the person is eligible to vote.

(5) When an elected authority intends to pass a bylaw under subsection (3) or (4) it must

- (a) advertise the proposed bylaw in accordance with section 53.1, and
- (b) include in the notice of election day under section 35 the proposed number and types of identification to be required.

(6) A person who attends a voting station for the purpose of voting may not vote

- (a) if the requirements of subsection (1) are not met, and
- (b) if the elected authority has passed a bylaw under subsection (3) and the requirements of subsection (2) are not met.

## Person objected to (Local Authorities Election Act)

54(1) If a candidate or the candidate's official agent or scrutineer objects to a person who makes a statement, a deputy shall note in the voting register the reason for the objection and the name of the candidate or official agent or scrutineer making the objection and shall initial the objection.

(2) If a returning officer on reasonable and probable grounds believes that a person is not eligible to be an elector, the returning officer must note in the voting register the reason for the belief and initial it.

# Who Can Run for Trustee?

## Qualification of candidates (*Local Authorities Election Act*)

21(1) A person may be nominated as a candidate in any election under this Act if on nomination day the person

- (a) is eligible to vote in that election,
  - (b) has been a resident of the local jurisdiction and the ward, if any, for the 6 consecutive months immediately preceding nomination day, and
  - (c) is not otherwise ineligible or disqualified.
- (3) Notwithstanding subsection (1), a candidate for trustee of a board of a school district that is wholly or partly within the boundaries of a city is not required to be a resident of the ward in either a general election or a by-election, but must be a resident of the school district.
- (4) If the boundaries of a local jurisdiction are altered by the addition of land, a person who has been a resident of the added land for at least the 6 months immediately preceding nomination day is deemed, for the purposes of this Act, to have been a resident, during that time, of the local jurisdiction to which the land was added.

## Electors for region (*School Act*)

256(3) For the purposes of this Act and the *Local Authorities Election Act*, an individual is eligible to be elected as a member of a Regional authority if the individual

- (a) is 18 years of age or older,
  - (b) is a Canadian citizen,
  - (c) has been a resident of Alberta for the 6 consecutive months immediately preceding nomination day, and
  - (d) is not otherwise ineligible under the *Local Authorities Election Act*.
- (3.1) In addition to the requirements of subsection (3), an individual standing as a candidate for election
- (a) as a separate school member must be of the same faith, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, as the minority of all individuals living within the boundaries of the Region as determined by the Minister under section 253.1, and
  - (b) as a public school member may not be of the same faith, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, as the minority of all individuals living within the boundaries of the Region as determined by the Minister under section 253.1.

# Who Can't Run for Trustee?

## Ineligibility

### **(Local Authorities Election Act)**

22(1) A person is not eligible to be nominated as a candidate in any election under this Act if on nomination day

- (a) the person is the auditor of the local jurisdiction for which the election is to be held;
- (d.1) the person has, within the previous 10 years, been convicted of an offence under this Act, the *Election Act* or the *Canada Elections Act* (Canada).

(1.1) A person is not eligible to be nominated as a candidate for election as a trustee of a school board if on nomination day the person is employed by

- (a) a school district or division,
- (b) a charter school, or
- (c) a private school,

in Alberta unless the person is on a leave of absence granted under this section.

(5.1) An employee referred to in subsection (1.1) who wishes to be nominated as a candidate for election as a trustee of a school board may apply to his or her employer for a leave of absence without pay on or after July 1 in the year of an election but before the employee's last working day prior to nomination day.

(6.1) A school district or division, a charter school or a private school shall grant every application it receives under subsection (5.1).

## Ineligibility for nomination

### **(Local Authorities Election Act)**

23(1) A person is not eligible to be nominated for more than one office of the same elected authority.

(2) A member who holds office on an elected authority is not eligible to be nominated for or elected to the same or any other office on the elected authority

- (a) unless the member's term of office is expiring,  
or

- (b) if the member's term of office is not expiring, unless the member has resigned that office effective 18 days or more before nomination day.

## Electors for region

### **(School Act)**

256(5) A person may be a member of only one of a Regional authority or a board at any particular time.

## Re-election

### **(Local Authorities Election Act)**

24(1) A person who held office on a board of trustees under the *School Act* and

- (a) who resigned that office to avoid making restitution for money the person received that disqualified the person from holding that office pursuant to this or any other Act and has been ordered by a judge to make restitution, or
- (b) who was declared by a judge to be disqualified to hold that office pursuant to this or any other Act,

is not eligible to become a member of that board of trustees until after 2 general elections have occurred after the date on which the person was ordered to make restitution or was declared to be disqualified.

(2) Notwithstanding that a by-election or general election has been held between the time when the disqualification of the member or former member arose and the time when the order or declaration has been made by the judge, subsection (1) applies and, if the person was re-elected, the person is not eligible to remain a member of the board of trustees.

(3) Notwithstanding subsections (1) and (2), a judge

- (a) who has made an order described in subsection (1)(a), or
- (b) who has declared a person to be disqualified may reduce the period of disqualification.
- (4) An appeal against the decision of a judge under this section lies to the Court of Appeal.

# Nominations, Acclamations and Election Notices

## Notice of nomination day (Local Authorities Election Act)

26(1) The returning officer shall give notice of nomination day in the prescribed form by publishing a notice at least once a week in each of the 2 weeks before nomination day in a newspaper or other publication circulating in the area, or by mailing or delivering a notice to every residence in the local jurisdiction at least one week before nomination day.

(2) On complying with subsection (1), the returning officer may publish, mail and deliver additional notices and give notice by any other method as many times as the returning officer considers appropriate.

## Form of nomination (Local Authorities Election Act)

27(1) Every nomination of a candidate shall be in the prescribed form and signed by at least 5 electors eligible to vote in that election and resident in the local jurisdiction on the date of signing the nomination, and shall be accompanied with a written acceptance signed in the prescribed form by the person nominated, stating

- (a) that the person is eligible to be elected to the office,
- (a.1) the name, address and telephone number of the person's official agent, and
- (b) that the person will accept the office if elected, and if required by bylaw, it must be accompanied with a deposit in the required amount.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), a city that is a local jurisdiction with a population of at least 10 000 or a board of trustees under the *School Act* of a local jurisdiction with a population of at least 10 000 may, by a bylaw passed prior to June 30 of a year in which a general election is to be held, specify the minimum number of electors required to sign the nomination of a candidate for an office, but that number must be at least 5 and not more than 100.

(3) Notwithstanding subsection (1), if a system of wards is in effect, only an elector who is a resident of the ward for which a candidate for election is

being nominated may sign the nomination of the candidate.

(4) If a bylaw has been passed providing for a deposit, a nomination paper is not valid nor shall it be acted on by the returning officer unless it is accompanied with the deposit.

## Electors for region (School Act)

256(2) For the purposes of this Act and the *Local Authorities Election Act*, and notwithstanding section 21 of the *Local Authorities Election Act*, an individual who may vote in an election of members of a Regional authority may

- (a) in the case of a separate school elector, nominate an individual as a candidate to stand for election as a separate school member, and
- (b) in the case of a public school elector, nominate an individual as a candidate to stand for election as a public school member.

## Nominations (Local Authorities Election Act)

28(1) The returning officer shall receive nominations at the local jurisdiction office between 10 a.m. and 12 noon on nomination day.

(1.1) The person who is nominated as a candidate is responsible for ensuring that the nomination filed under subsection (1) meets the requirements of section 27.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), an elected authority may, by a bylaw passed prior to June 30 of a year in which an election is to be held, provide that the returning officer

- (a) may receive nominations earlier than 10 a.m., and
- (b) may establish locations, in addition to the local jurisdiction office, where a deputy may receive nominations.

(3) Any person may file a nomination described in section 27 with the returning officer or deputy.

(4) At any time after 12 noon on nomination day until the term of office to which the filed nomination papers relate has expired, a person may request to examine the filed nomination papers during regular business hours and in the presence of the returning officer, deputy or secretary.

(5) The returning officer or secretary must retain all the filed nomination papers until the term of office to which the papers relate has expired.

(6) Twenty-four hours after the close of nominations on nomination day, the returning officer shall, as soon as practicable, forward a signed statement showing the name of each nominated candidate and any information about the candidate that the candidate has consented to being disclosed to the relevant Minister's Deputy Minister.

## **Deposit**

### ***(Local Authorities Election Act)***

29(1) An elected authority may, by bylaw passed not fewer than 30 days before nomination day, require that every nomination be accompanied with a deposit in the amount fixed in the bylaw.

(2) An amount fixed in a bylaw under subsection (1) may not exceed

- (a) \$1000, in the case of a local jurisdiction with a population of more than 10 000, or
- (b) \$100, in any other case.

## **Disposition of deposit**

### ***(Local Authorities Election Act)***

30(1) When a bylaw has been passed to provide for a deposit, the returning officer shall require the deposit to be provided in cash, by certified cheque or by money order.

(2) The candidate's deposit shall be returned to the candidate

- (a) if the candidate is declared elected,
- (b) if the candidate obtains a number of votes at least equal to 1/2 of the total number of votes cast for the candidate elected to the office with the least number of votes, or
- (c) if the candidate withdraws as a candidate in accordance with section 32.

(3) If a candidate dies before the closing of the voting stations on election day, the sum deposited by the candidate shall be returned to the candidate's estate.

(4) If a candidate does not obtain the number of votes described in subsection (2)(b), the deposit shall be paid into the general revenue of the local jurisdiction for which the deposit requirement has been established.

## **Insufficient nominations**

### ***(Local Authorities Election Act)***

31(1) If the number of persons nominated for any office is less than the number required to be elected, the time for receipt of nominations

- (a) shall stand adjourned to the next day at the same place at the hour of 10 a.m. and shall remain open until 12 noon for the purpose of receiving further nominations for the office, and
- (b) shall continue to remain open and be adjourned in the same manner from day to day until 12 noon of the day that the required number of nominations has been received or a period of 6 days, including nomination day but not including Saturday, Sunday and holidays, as defined in the *Interpretation Act*, has elapsed.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), if a bylaw under section 28(2)(a) is in force in the local jurisdiction, the time for receipt of nominations must comply with the bylaw.

(3) Notwithstanding subsection (1)(b), in the case of a summer village the period of 6 days includes Saturday and Sunday.

(4) If sufficient nominations to fill all vacancies are not received, the secretary shall immediately notify the relevant Minister, who may recommend a change in the status of the local jurisdiction or any other action the relevant Minister considers necessary.

## **Withdrawal of nomination**

### ***(Local Authorities Election Act)***

32(1) Subject to subsection (2), if more than the required number of candidates for any particular office are nominated, any person so nominated may, at any time within 24 hours after the close of the nomination period, withdraw as a candidate for the office for which the candidate was nominated

by filing with the returning officer a withdrawal in writing.

(2) If, after one or more candidates have withdrawn, the number of remaining candidates does not exceed the number of vacancies to be filled, the returning officer shall refuse to accept further withdrawals.

### **Death of candidate (Local Authorities Election Act)**

33(1) An elected authority may, by a bylaw passed prior to nomination day, provide that if prior to the opening of the voting stations on election day a candidate for an elected authority dies after being nominated,

- (a) the election for the position for which the deceased candidate was nominated shall be discontinued, and
- (b) the elected authority shall as soon as practicable provide for the holding of a new election for that office.

(2) If a candidate dies after being nominated and a bylaw has not been passed under subsection (1), the returning officer shall cause a notice of the death to be posted at a conspicuous location in all the relevant voting stations.

### **Election by acclamation (Local Authorities Election Act)**

34(1) When at the close of nominations the number of persons nominated for any office is the same as the number required to be elected, the returning officer shall declare the persons nominated to be elected to the offices for which they were nominated.

(2) Forthwith after having declared a person elected, the returning officer shall give to the secretary and the relevant Minister's Deputy Minister written notification signed by the returning officer of the names of the persons so elected and of the offices to which they were elected and the returning officer shall deliver the nomination papers and other material relating to the receipt of nominations to the secretary.

(3) At any time after 12 noon on nomination day until the term of office to which the filed nomination papers relate has expired, a person may request to examine the filed nomination papers during regular business hours and in the presence of the returning officer, deputy or secretary.

(4) The returning officer or secretary must retain all the filed nomination papers until the term of office to which the nomination papers relate has expired.

### **Notice of election (Local Authorities Election Act)**

35(1) If more than the required number of persons for any office remain nominated 24 hours after the close of nominations, the returning officer shall declare that an election shall be held for filling that office.

(2) If an election is required, the returning officer shall give notice of it in the prescribed form by publishing a notice at least once a week in each of the 2 weeks before election day in a newspaper or other publication circulating in the area, or by mailing or delivering a notice to every residence in the local jurisdiction at least one week before election day.

(3) The notice of a vote on a bylaw or question shall set out the text or a reasonably complete summary of the bylaw or question.

(4) On complying with subsection (2), the returning officer may publish, mail and deliver additional notices and give notice by any other method as many times as the returning officer considers appropriate.

# Plebiscites

## **Plebiscite (School Act)**

190(1) A board, by resolution passed at a public meeting of the board at least 60 days before election day in a year in which a general election will be held under the *Local Authorities Election Act*, may authorize the holding of a plebiscite to obtain the approval of the electors of the district or division respecting a special school tax levy under this Part.

(2) A board, not less than 60 days before the board intends to consider a resolution referred to in subsection (1), shall give public notice of its intention to consider the resolution.

(3) The question that the plebiscite shall determine must be

- (a) in accordance with the regulations, and
- (b) included in the resolution.

(4) A board, by resolution, may withdraw a plebiscite authorized under subsection (1) at any time up to the date on which the plebiscite is to be held.

(5) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

- (a) respecting the information to be given to the public by a board before a plebiscite is held under this Part;
- (b) respecting the question, any information or any other matter to be included in a ballot in a plebiscite under this Part;
- (c) respecting the holding and conduct of a plebiscite generally under this Part.

## **Special School Tax Levy (School Act)**

191(1) No special school tax levy shall be authorized by plebiscite if the amount to be raised by the special school tax levy in each year is more than 3% of the budget of the board for the year in which the resolution is passed.

(2) A special school tax levy may be approved by a plebiscite for a period of not more than the 3-year

period ending on December 31 of the year of the next general election under the *Local Authorities Election Act* after the plebiscite.

(3) Money raised by a board by a special school tax levy must be used for the purpose referred to in the resolution.

## **Assessment and requisition (School Act)**

192(1) If a majority of the ballots cast at a plebiscite under this Part vote in favour of a special school tax levy, the board may requisition municipalities in accordance with Division 3.

(2) Subject to subsections (3) and (4), Divisions 2 and 3 apply to a special school tax levy.

(3) Only the property of an individual that is assessable for public school purposes under section 154 or of a corporation, cooperative or co-operative association that has given notice under section 156 that all or a portion of its property is assessable for public school purposes is assessable for a special school tax levy by a board of a public school district or division.

(4) Only the property of an individual that is assessable for separate school purposes under a notice under section 156 or of a corporation, cooperative or co-operative association that has given notice under section 156 that all or a portion of its property is assessable for separate school purposes is assessable for a special school tax levy by a board of a separate school district or division.

## **Plebiscite (School Act)**

193(1) A plebiscite under this Part shall be conducted in conjunction with the next general election under the *Local Authorities Election Act* after the resolution is passed under section 190.

(2) The *Local Authorities Election Act* and the regulations under it apply to the plebiscite except as otherwise provided by this Act or the regulations under this Act.

(3) The persons eligible to vote in a plebiscite are the persons eligible to vote at the general election for members of the board that passed the resolution.

(4) The secretary of the school board shall report the results of the plebiscite to the board as soon after they are known as practicable.

## **Hamlet (School Act)**

194(1) For the purpose of an additional requisition only, the Minister, on the petition of the residents of an area, may by order declare that area to be a hamlet.

(2) The Minister may

- (a) establish an additional requisition under this section,
- (b) determine the amount of the additional requisition to be made, and
- (c) designate the hamlet within which the assessment will be made.

(3) The Minister shall require the public school board of the district or division in which the hamlet is located to requisition the municipality under this Act in accordance with the order of the Minister and the regulations.

(4) A municipality shall assess the residents of the hamlet in accordance with the requisition, the order of the Minister and section 161.

(5) The board shall expend the amount raised under this section in accordance with the order of the Minister and the regulations.

(6) When an additional requisition has been approved by the Minister under this section it shall continue in effect from year to year until changed in accordance with this section.

(7) An additional requisition established under this section may be increased or decreased by order of the Minister.

(8) The Minister may make regulations respecting additional requisitions under this section.

# Illegal Partisan Activities

## Prohibitions

### ***(Local Authorities Election Act)***

148(5) No person shall print or distribute or cause to be printed or distributed in any advertisement, handbill, placard, poster, circular, pamphlet, newspaper or other paper a form of ballot printed by the returning officer, indicating or showing it to be marked for any candidate or candidates.

(7) A person who contravenes subsection . . . (5) . . . is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$10 000 or to imprisonment for not more than 6 months or to both fine and imprisonment.

## Offence

### ***(Local Authorities Election Act)***

150(1) Every returning officer, deputy, candidate, constable, official agent and scrutineer in attendance at a voting station shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of the voting at the voting station.

(2) No person shall interfere with or attempt to interfere with an elector when the elector is marking the elector's ballot, or shall otherwise attempt to obtain at the voting station information as to which candidate or candidates any elector at that voting station is about to vote or has voted for.

(3) No person shall

- (a) during the hours when a voting station is open, canvass or solicit votes in a building where the voting station is located, or
- (b) make any communication to an elector in a voting station respecting the election otherwise than through the deputy.

(4) When a voting station is located in a building containing a complex of interlocking offices, stores or other facilities, the prohibition in subsection (3) applies only to the store, office or facility comprising the area used as a voting station.

(5) No person shall display at the voting station or distribute or post in it a specimen ballot paper marked for a candidate or any other material purporting to explain to the electors how to vote or

leave or post a ballot or other material in a voting compartment other than the material that is required to be posted in accordance with this Act.

(6) No person shall communicate at any time to any person any information obtained at a voting station as to which candidate any elector at that voting station is about to vote or has voted for.

(7) No returning officer, deputy, official agent or scrutineer in attendance at the counting of the votes shall communicate or attempt to communicate any information obtained at that counting as to which candidate or candidates any vote is given for.

(8) No person shall directly or indirectly induce an elector to display the elector's ballot, after the elector has marked it, so as to make known to any person the name of any candidate for whom the elector has or has not marked the elector's ballot.

(9) A person who contravenes this section is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$5000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or to both fine and imprisonment.

## Advertisement distribution

### ***(Local Authorities Election Act)***

152(1) Subject to subsection (2), a person who, on election day,

- (a) displays inside or on the outside of a building used for a voting station, or
- (b) distributes within a building used for a voting station,

an advertisement, handbill, placard, poster, circular, pamphlet, newspaper or other paper except those posted by the deputy in accordance with this Act is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$500.

(2) When a voting station is located in a building containing a complex of interlocking offices, stores or other facilities, the prohibition in subsection (1) applies only to the store, office or facility comprising the area used as a voting station.

(3) The distribution by or on behalf of a candidate or the candidate's official agent or scrutineer of

newspapers, pamphlets or other literature containing articles or reports on matters of public interest is not a contravention of this section.

(4) Where a person displays an advertisement, handbill, placard, poster, circular, pamphlet, newspaper or other paper contrary to subsection (1), the deputy may cause it to be removed, and neither the deputy nor any person acting under the deputy's instructions is liable for trespass or damages resulting from or caused by the removal.

### **Interference with posted documents (Local Authorities Election Act)**

153 A person who, without authorization, takes down, covers up, mutilates, defaces or alters any notice or other document required to be posted under this Act is guilty of an offence and liable

- (a) if the person is an officer, to a fine of not more than \$1000, and
- (b) in any other case, to a fine of not more than \$200.

### **Offence (Local Authorities Election Act)**

156 A person who obstructs or interferes with the free access of

- (a) an enumerator,
- (b) a candidate, or
- (c) a campaign worker on behalf of a candidate

to a residence in a building containing 2 or more residences or to a residence in a mobile home park is, if the enumerator, candidate or campaign worker produces identification of that person's status as an enumerator, candidate or campaign worker, guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$1000.

### **Penalty (Local Authorities Election Act)**

157 A person who is guilty of an offence under this Act for which a penalty is not otherwise provided is liable to a fine of not more than \$500.



# **The Nuts and Bolts of Evaluation**



The first step in determining the extent of your group's involvement in the election and your approach to that election is to take a long, hard look at your current trustees both individually and collectively. Go over the questions that follow, and evaluate your board and trustees.

For each criterion, plus those you add, rate your board and trustees from a low of one to a high of five. If scores for the board are low in any area, try to identify which trustee or group of trustees is responsible for those scores.

While there is no pass or fail score, you should gain an idea of your trustees' relative abilities. If you are unfamiliar with their individual characteristics, review the board's minutes, sit in on a few meetings, scan newspaper coverage (your local newspaper may have a file) and talk to those who have worked closely with trustees or watched them in action.

# Campaigning Using Evaluations

If certain trustees are creating dysfunction, you may want to run a campaign that emphasizes the importance of the qualities those trustees lack. If certain trustees have done excellent work that has not been publicized, you may want to stress the value of that kind of work.

If the board as a whole has been failing in its responsibilities, you may want to draw attention to the board's inaction.

You may also want to draw attention to the qualities that any candidate should possess. Additional ideas on promoting evaluation of candidates can be found in Chapter 3.

In any campaign based on evaluation, you should take care not to accuse specific individuals of misbehaviour. Such accusations may spawn counteraccusations or libel suits. Bear in mind the political adage "For every enemy you make, you need to make 10 friends."

# Evaluating the Board

CRITERION	RATING	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
Sticks to policy decisions; leaves administrative decisions to administrators		
Plans ahead instead of reacting to crises; uses professional staff to identify potential crises		
Requests options from professional staff for policy decisions rather than acting simply as a rubber stamp		
Has a policy manual or summary		
Has reviewed policies instead of letting them accumulate		
Addresses issues positively rather than defensively; seeks unity through cooperation rather than through scapegoating		
Presents budget to the public in an understandable manner		
Has definite goals toward which it is working		
Considers public sentiment before acting in new policy areas; does not depend on public apathy for its existence		
Explains education issues to the public in ordinary language; avoids jargon		
Is accessible to the media		
Allows time for public response rather than suddenly introducing decisions from on high; avoids surprises		
Makes major decisions in public, not at closed meetings		
Publicizes meeting times		
Makes minutes available to the public		
Is willing to admit that problems exist in the system		
Uses questionnaires, surveys and telephone feedback to gauge public concerns		
Conducts meetings in an orderly and efficient manner		
Works to achieve consensus; makes decisions on a collegial rather than on a top-down basis		
Thinks about problems rather than appealing to traditions or preconceptions		
Will reconsider requests or issues		

CRITERION	RATING	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
Has reviewed wards and/or electoral subdivisions to ensure that public is well represented on board		
Is open to new ideas and change		
Attempts to work with support staff; is not openly hostile		
Works to create public confidence in the system		
Is willing to authorize a plebiscite for a special school tax levy to improve schools		
Prepares realistic budgets; is not building up massive surplus		
Has sought to lower class sizes		
Has a coherent policy on education of students with special needs		
Visits schools		
Defends and supports teachers publicly		
Uses and respects teachers' consultative committees		
Listens to and acts on teachers' concerns; balances teachers' concerns with superintendent's concerns rather than simply rubber-stamping superintendent's position		
Negotiates fairly		
Seeks cooperation rather than confrontation with teachers		
Recognizes teachers with outstanding or long-term service		
Encourages professional development of teachers; provides adequate inservice opportunities		
Does not use transfers as punishment		
Keeps school materials up to date; has provided adequate funds for resource room materials		
Encourages variety in school programming		

TOTAL POSSIBLE—200

# Evaluating Trustees

CRITERION	RATING
Is knowledgeable about budget restrictions and procedures	
Leaves administrative decisions to administrators	
Has clear goals for the school system	
Anticipates crises before they erupt	
Studies carefully and questions recommendations from other trustees and professional staff	
Seeks consensus among trustees rather than seeking unity by creating enemies	
Has demonstrated fairness in resolving board disputes; is willing to compromise	
Makes public appearances to explain education views	
Speaks clearly, not in jargon	
Is accessible to the media but is not a publicity hound	
Visits schools	
Talks freely with teachers	
Contributes to smooth decision making rather than creating turmoil and confusion at meetings	
Thinks; considers new approaches to old problems	
Takes public stands on controversial issues; does not hide behind platitudes	
Is a model for schoolchildren	
Is able to distinguish important issues from harmless nonsense	
Has a sense of humour	
Is able to support positions with solid arguments	
Initiates proposals	
Recognizes that education is not just another business	
Works well with support staff	
Does not leak confidential information	
Does not shift blame; accepts responsibility	

CRITERION	RATING
Is available to members of the public	
Is familiar with board policies	
Demonstrates knowledge of education issues in other jurisdictions	
Defends teachers publicly	
Serves public	
Is concerned with more than one policy area; is not a single-issue trustee	
Does not distort events, facts or statistics for individual or collective gain	
Is impartial; does not belong to any one interest group	
Has made an effort to keep in touch with constituents	
Attends all or most board meetings; assumes an active role in discussions	
Treats teachers as equals	

TOTAL POSSIBLE—175

# Evaluating Candidates

CRITERION	RATING
Has clear and realistic goals for system	
Is knowledgeable about current board policies and practices	
Has demonstrated ability to work constructively with others and to achieve consensus	
Has demonstrated willingness to assume responsibility	
Has played an active role in the community	
Has been fair and honest in business dealings and/or work activities	
Has been available to the public during campaign	
Speaks clearly, not in jargon	
Is familiar with local schools	
Has discussed issues privately with teachers	
Has discussed issues privately with parents	
Has demonstrated imaginative approach to problem solving	
Is able to delegate responsibility effectively	
Has proposed constructive solutions to problems rather than simply criticizing	
Has clear policies on a variety of specific issues	
Is a model for schoolchildren	
Is able to distinguish important issues from trivial and faddish controversies	
Has identified specific priorities	
Has a sense of humour	
Does not shift blame	
Is able to support positions with solid arguments	
Keeps confidential conversations confidential	
Is impartial; is owned by no one	
Is concerned with more than one issue	
Does not distort facts for personal gain	

TOTAL POSSIBLE—125



# **Action Plans**



Teachers' and parents' involvement in school board elections has traditionally been limited to circulating questionnaires and conducting forums. Although both action plans have been employed effectively, groups should consider a broader range of involvement. Whether new plans replace or reinforce the traditional ones, they can be used constructively to improve the quality of boards elected October 18.

The following action plans fall into three broad categories. The first category focuses on improvements to the quality of candidates for trusteeship and to the quality of debate during the campaign. The second promotes thorough evaluation of candidates. And the third concentrates on the articulation and promotion of education issues during the campaign.

Regardless of their category, the plans are neither prescriptive nor mutually exclusive. They are designed only to stimulate new approaches to electioneering and provide ideas that can be modified to suit local needs. The plans should be perceived as starting points, not as neat and distinct packages. Ideas from one plan should be mixed with those from another in order to create an effective strategy for your group.

# Nominating Candidates: Filling the Ballot

In 2007, 62 per cent of trustees were acclaimed.<sup>1</sup> Those trustees who have not fulfilled their responsibilities or who have demonstrated poor understanding of education should face stiff challenges from well-qualified candidates. Groups can help identify such candidates and play a major role in convincing them to run.

## Purposes

1. To reduce the percentage of trustees elected by acclamation.
2. To select the strongest possible challengers for incumbents who should be replaced.
3. To improve the calibre of candidates.

## Resources

### People

A small, discrete committee should be established to evaluate trustees and survey the community for potential candidates. Impartial, level-headed people should be appointed to the committee.

### Time

Evaluating trustees should take 5 to 10 hours, with an additional 5 hours required to prepare a short list of potential candidates. Approaching those candidates will consume varying amounts of time. The campaigning should begin early since you will need to give potential candidates time to consider running.

### Money

No money is required.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select a coordinator and a small, discrete committee to evaluate trustees and identify potential candidates.

2. Evaluate trustees both collectively and individually (see Chapter 2). Prepare a list of trustees who should be replaced.

3. Review your jurisdiction's 2007 election results and, if applicable, the results of subsequent by-elections. Where trustees won contested elections, evaluate the defeated candidates and determine whether they should be encouraged to run again. Consider the following questions in making that determination. Were the candidates soundly defeated? Did their defeat result from a poorly organized campaign, unpopular policies or personal style? Would they make better trustees than the incumbents?

4. If the defeated candidates have positive qualities but lost because of poorly organized campaigns, consider encouraging them to run again. Although it is generally better to seek new candidates, there are exceptions to that rule.

5. If none of the 2007 challengers is a good choice for 2010 or if the incumbents were acclaimed in 2007, then prepare a list of potential candidates. You should select reasonably prominent citizens who have demonstrated concern about their community. Include individuals who have proven themselves in other elected offices; they may want to assume a new role.

6. Eliminate individuals who are ineligible for trusteeship under the *Local Authorities Election Act* or *School Act*, as well as those who have strong marks against them.

7. Draw up a short list of the remaining individuals, ordered according to desirability.

8. Prepare a summary of education issues in your jurisdiction, including issues that may arise over the next three years. The summary will prove useful when you approach potential candidates.

9. List the reasons why each of the individuals on your short list should run for office. Bear in mind

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<sup>1</sup> Alberta School Boards Association, 2008, *Fair Bargaining for a Better Future: Report on the 2007–2008 Collective Bargaining Process* (Edmonton, Alta: Alberta School Boards Association, 2008): 10. Also available at [www.asba.ab.ca/files/pdf/fair\\_bargaining\\_report.pdf](http://www.asba.ab.ca/files/pdf/fair_bargaining_report.pdf) (accessed April 29, 2010).

that most candidates run simply because they are strongly committed to their community and believe they have something to offer that community. Include among your reasons what each individual can offer the community by becoming a trustee.

10. Try to determine who is planning to run for office by keeping your eyes peeled and your ears to the ground and by asking questions. You may not have to approach anyone to run but simply encourage someone who is already thinking of running.

11. Follow the above steps for each ward or electoral subdivision within your jurisdiction. In undivided jurisdictions, you will need to prepare only one short list.

### **Doing It**

1. Approach the individuals on your short list, beginning with your first choice. How you approach them is up to you, but the contact should be informal. You are not offering to help them with their campaign but simply asking them to run for office because you believe they would make good trustees. (In jurisdictions with wards or electoral subdivisions, you can approach your first choice for each unit simultaneously. In undivided jurisdictions, you may decide to approach several potential candidates simultaneously.)

2. Talk privately, one on one, with the potential candidates. Review with them the state of education. Explain why you believe they are well suited to the job.

3. A little flattery doesn't hurt. In many cases, you will not so much be flattering the potential candidates as simply bringing to their attention their qualifications for the job.

4. Don't promise the potential candidates that your group will support them in their campaign. You are speaking only for yourself or for a few concerned citizens. You are not speaking for your group or for everyone in your group.

5. Ask the potential candidates to mull over what you have said. Give them a few weeks to think about your request.

6. Talk informally with friends of the potential candidates. Ask them to think about encouraging the potential candidates to run for office. Discuss

with those friends the reasons why the potential candidates would make good trustees.

7. Ask a few of your own friends to encourage the potential candidates.

8. Check back with the potential candidates after a few weeks have elapsed. Try to secure a firm commitment. If one of them seems unlikely to run or turns down your request, approach the next individual on your short list. The process takes time; begin early.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

1. Keep a copy of your short list for use in by-elections or in 2013.

2. Thank those who agree to run, regardless of whether they win or lose.

### **Problems**

1. Unless your group is very discreet, it may be accused of trying to secure a trustee who will serve its interests. Such an accusation would be very difficult for a candidate to overcome, so you should make every effort to maintain a low profile. You are not trying to put a mouthpiece on the board; you are simply trying to encourage a well-qualified individual to run for office.

2. Because the nomination period lasts only two hours, you will not know definitively in advance who is going to run. You may end up convincing someone to run who is less qualified than someone who is already planning to file nomination papers. Don't encourage too many potential candidates, or you will split the vote and reduce significantly their chances of success.

3. It is tempting to assume that former teachers would make good trustees. Such is often not the case. Look for individuals who are impartial, fair and thoughtful rather than for those who simply have experience in education.

### **Alternatives**

1. Complete the research and evaluation, and approach potential candidates through a third party. Start a Citizens Concerned About Education committee, composed of teachers and parents. It will not necessarily adhere to your group's policy, but it can promise support to potential candidates.

## **Key Points**

1. Be discreet.
2. Discuss with potential candidates their qualifications for the job. They may not be aware of those qualifications.
3. Don't promise potential candidates that your group will endorse or assist them. You are speaking only for yourself or for a few concerned citizens.
4. Ask your friends, as well as friends of the potential candidates, to encourage them to run. Reinforce your personal request.
5. Don't flood the field with well-qualified candidates. Don't split the vote.

# Organizing a Candidates' Workshop

Because incumbents are familiar with the school system, they have a decided advantage over their challengers. A candidates' workshop provides a forum for those who may direct education over the next three years and ensures that they have a strong foundation on which to build their campaigns. A separate workshop should be conducted in each jurisdiction.

## Purposes

1. To give all candidates a common base of facts about the school system.
2. To reduce distortions that emerge when candidates act on misconceptions and misinformation about education.
3. To allow teachers and parents to present their views of current education issues and their role in the system.
4. To expose candidates to new ideas and expand the focus of single-issue candidates.
5. To establish a sense of cooperation among teachers, parents and potential trustees.

## Resources

### *People*

The best way to acquire the necessary facts and meeting space is to work with school board staff in organizing the workshop. One or two people should coordinate the function with one or two board administrators. A committee should be assigned the responsibility of researching and preparing materials for the candidates.

### *Time*

The meeting should be held on the first Saturday following nomination day and should last no more than a morning or part of an afternoon. Research and material preparation will take about a month and should begin before summer vacation since school opening in September will consume teacher, parent and board time, thereby precluding research.

### *Money*

Costs are minimal. Meeting space should be free; speakers will be free. A small amount of money will be required to photocopy materials and buy refreshments for the workshop. Costs will rise if your group decides to purchase release time for teachers assigned to research.

### *Facility*

The board should provide space free of charge. If the board does not cooperate, space should be available in a home or through local, nonprofit organizations. Space requirements will be minimal as the number of candidates is unlikely to exceed 30. In most cases, there will be 10 to 15 candidates.

## Action Checklist

### *Preliminaries*

1. Select a coordinator and committee to undertake research and prepare materials.
2. Determine which aspects of the school system should be covered. Possibilities include the budgetary process, class size and configuration, integration of students with special needs, assessment practices, school safety, dropouts, administrative structure, enrolment, school closures, school transportation, community relations programs, negotiations and staffing. Emphasize the issues that you are promoting in the election.
3. Approach the board secretary about conducting a joint workshop. Establish a mutual agenda and areas of responsibility. Ask that most of the information be kept factual and unbiased.
4. Select a date. The first Saturday following nomination day is best.
5. Select a site for the workshop. While neutral territory may be appealing, the board will have the best meeting facilities and equipment. Don't select an immense room—there will probably be no more than 15 candidates.

6. Assign research responsibilities and deadlines. Allow time for proofreading and photocopying materials.
7. Prepare background materials that provide candidates with an overview of the workshop topics. Keep those materials brief but thought provoking.
8. Invite the candidates to the workshop by telephoning them or visiting their homes. Letters may not reach them in time. Explain to them the purpose of the workshop.
9. If you want to invite the media, issue an advisory about a week in advance and follow up with telephone calls a few days before the workshop. If you want the workshop to be closed (an option that enables frank communication and precludes grandstanding), issue an advisory informing the media that the workshop is being held and that candidates may be interviewed following the workshop. The advisory will generate good publicity. You may want to summarize the workshop in a news release.
10. Select a moderator, and assign speaking responsibilities. In most cases, the person who has prepared the research should present it. Try to have the workshop conclude with a teacher's or parent's viewpoint.
11. Schedule time for discussion. Candidates will probably have questions about what they hear.

### **Doing It**

1. Ensure that your materials are ready at least a day in advance. If your group or the board is concerned about bias, you may want to review each other's materials beforehand.
2. Check any audiovisual equipment beforehand to ensure that it is in good working order.
3. Have on hand a list of the candidates expected to attend the workshop.
4. Greet candidates as they arrive and provide them with name tags and materials. This function should be performed by those who invited the respective candidates.
5. Begin the workshop by asking candidates to introduce themselves.

6. If the workshop is closed to the media, ensure that no journalists are present. If the workshop is open to the media, ask journalists to identify themselves. You may wish to set up a table for them near the front of the room.
7. Schedule a refreshment break that includes nutritious snacks.
8. If the workshop is closed, allow journalists to interview candidates afterwards, perhaps in a separate room.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

1. Issue a news release that summarizes the main topics of discussion. Draft it so that it can be printed as is; weekly newspapers rarely edit such releases.
2. Thank all participants—speakers and candidates—with a letter. Personalize each letter by commenting on a specific aspect of the individual's contribution to the workshop.
3. Evaluate the workshop's effectiveness in educating the candidates.
4. Use research materials as the basis for subsequent news releases or ads.
5. Let teachers and parents know what happened at the workshop.

### **Problems**

1. The board may refuse to cooperate and may block your research efforts. If the board won't cooperate, organize the workshop alone; most of the material you will require is available to the public.
2. Incumbents may challenge your facts and figures or condemn your views. A moderator should have the ability to curtail highly opinionated or inflammatory comments. The purpose of the workshop is education, not persuasion or debate.

### **Key Points**

1. Start organizing the workshop before summer vacation begins. You won't have time afterwards.
2. Emphasize the workshop's educational purpose.
3. Schedule the workshop as early as possible in the campaign.

# Conducting a Candidates' Tour of Schools

A tour of schools will provide candidates with a first-hand view of the system in action as they ride school buses, examine facilities and attend classes. Too often, voters elect candidates who are ignorant of local schools. Such candidates gain popularity by repeating widely accepted myths about education.

## Purposes

1. To expose candidates to the environment in which teachers and students work.
2. To provide candidates with an opportunity to meet teachers and students and discuss education issues.
3. To stimulate new interests in single-issue candidates.
4. To dispel myths about budgetary frills.
5. To demonstrate teachers' interest in the election.

## Resources

### People

Board cooperation will be essential as the tour will take place on its property. A tour coordinator and committee will be needed to organize the itinerary and work with the board. Teachers from each school on the itinerary should sit on the committee.

### Time

Depending on the size of the jurisdiction, the tour may be as short as two hours or as long as the school day. Preparation will require no more than a month but should begin before September.

### Money

Money may be required to cover the costs of chartering a school bus (where numbers warrant) and providing meals to participants. Costs can be reduced if candidates are asked to bring bag lunches and eat with students. The tour coordinator may require release time.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select a tour coordinator, and establish a small committee.

2. Decide what candidates should see. Select a cross-section of schools—well equipped and poorly equipped, large and small, urban and rural.
3. Approach the board with a preliminary itinerary. If possible, approach the board through its secretary rather than through the trustees themselves. The board must approve the participants' access to schools and school buses, as well as any necessary release time.
4. Select a date for the tour. The tour should follow close on the heels of nomination day.
5. Set the itinerary. Scheduled stops should allow time for discussion among candidates, teachers and students and should each focus on a single issue relevant to the local school system. Promote teachers' concerns throughout the tour, but don't preach. Show. Ensure beforehand that each school is willing to take part in the tour and is committed to the project.
6. Research the local school system, and prepare fact sheets for distribution at each school. One issue per school is sufficient.
7. Schedule minor events at each school. Special events should not be scheduled; don't treat candidates to school basketball games or speeches. The purpose of the tour is to show candidates what each school is like on an ordinary day.
8. Extend personal invitations to the candidates immediately following the close of nominations. Get firm commitments, and let your hosts know how many people to expect.
9. Keep the group fairly small. If the group becomes too large, not everyone will be able to see or hear. You may want to conduct two successive tours or two simultaneous ones with discrete itineraries.
10. Invite the media. They'll get good stories, and you'll get positive coverage.
11. Arrange photo opportunities for the media. Scout ahead for interesting settings, and encourage the media to use them.

12. Inform teachers well in advance that you are coming. Remind them a day or two before the tour. Explain why you are conducting the tour.

13. Conduct a trial run to ensure that the logistics work. Allow time for bathroom stops, refreshments and lunch.

### **Doing It**

1. Ask candidates to meet at a prearranged spot, or have the school bus stop at each of their homes early in the morning. Distribute a name tag to each participant.

2. Have someone scout out the route ahead of time to ensure readiness, avoid last-minute problems and double-check details.

3. Let candidates know something about each school before you visit it. Note problems, achievements and issues specific to that school.

4. Inform candidates of the length of each stop.

5. Stick to your schedule. Eliminate activities if necessary.

6. Review what was seen at each stop and how it relates to teaching and learning.

7. Take photos to accompany news releases and include in the group newsletter.

8. Thank your hosts as you go.

9. End the tour at the offices of the board. Discuss the day with candidates, schedule a news conference or organize a reception for all participants. If candidates have been picked up at their homes, they should be dropped off there.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

1. Write thank-you letters to all school hosts.

2. Issue a news release, with photos, that summarizes the tour and candidates' reactions to what they saw.

### **Problems**

1. The board may choose not to cooperate, arguing that a tour would disrupt classes. You may want to try to provide an abbreviated tour on a Saturday. If the board does not cooperate, you may wish to publicize that lack of cooperation. Whether you do so will depend on your relationship with the board and its reasons for not cooperating.

### **Key Points**

1. Seek the board's cooperation before you undertake extensive planning.

2. Work out the logistics well in advance. Begin before September.

3. Make a point about a specific education issue at each stop.

4. Invite the media on the tour.

# Establishing a Straight-Facts Committee for Candidates

Incumbents have a decided advantage over challengers in an election because the former are known and have access to a lot of hard data on the local school system. A straight-facts committee minimizes that advantage by compiling basic facts about the school system, making them available to candidates and/or the public and researching specific questions.

## Purposes

1. To help ensure that all candidates are on a level playing field by giving them equal access to factual information.
2. To illustrate teachers' and parents' concern that elections be run and decided on the basis of nonemotional issues.
3. To promote cooperation among teachers, parents and potential trustees.
4. To draw together those interested in education.

## Resources

### People

Basic research can be undertaken by a core group of three to five people. Assistance may be sought from board administrators, subject to the board's approval, or from other groups or individuals who have demonstrated an interest in education and have research experience.

### Time

Basic research should take about 20 hours, with additional time required to fill candidates' requests for information.

### Money

Costs are minimal. One or two days' release time may be required, depending on the board's willingness to cooperate.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select a research coordinator, and establish a research committee. Supplement group members with outside assistants, if desirable. A research committee is required for several forms of election action; one size may fit all.
2. Identify key areas of research. The budgetary process, class size and configuration, integration of students with special needs, assessment practices and school closures should all be considered. Make your priority concerns your priority areas of research.
3. Predetermine the depth of your research. Don't overextend yourself. Try to limit yourself to one or two pages per topic. Arrange your material in point form.
4. Approach the board secretary for assistance in compiling facts. Explain the purpose of your research; indicate that your role is a nonpartisan one.
5. Arrange your material so that it can be readily absorbed. Don't provide more detail than candidates will need or the public will understand. Use visual devices such as charts and graphs wherever possible.
6. Prepare a short letter for distribution to candidates. The letter should outline the areas in which you have prepared basic research and explain that more detailed research is available as time permits. Don't promise candidates more than you can deliver.

### Doing It

1. Hand-deliver the letter to all candidates.
2. When candidates request information, ask them to specify the degree of detail they seek. Set realistic deadlines.
3. If you anticipate that the deadlines will not be met, inform the candidates immediately. Don't let them down at the last minute.
4. Always identify the source of your information.

5. Stick to the facts. Don't editorialize or write speeches.

### ***Follow-Up Activities***

1. Store completed research with the group. You may need it later.
2. Send thank-you letters to those who assisted the committee in securing information.

### **Problems**

1. Candidates may overload you with impossible or trivial requests. Inform them that your time is limited and that you will deal only with serious issues.

2. The board may refuse to provide you with information. If information is refused, you may want to publicize that refusal. Consider carefully the potential consequences of such publicity.

### **Key Points**

1. Prepare basic research before the campaign gets under way. Stick to the facts.
2. Check with the board secretary to determine the board's willingness to cooperate.
3. Let candidates know early in their campaigns that your services are available.
4. Don't accept assignments that you cannot complete on time.

# Publicizing the Board's Record

Most trustees will run for re-election. Usually, they will be re-elected due to name recognition alone. Publicizing the board's budgets, priorities and major decisions is a nonpartisan way of providing teachers, parents and other voters with a basis for determining who should be re-elected.

## Purposes

1. To refresh teachers', parents' and other voters' memories of the board's actions.
2. To counter campaigns based on hysteria, fads or myths.
3. To identify trustees who have demonstrated initiative or who have obstructed change.
4. To stimulate public discussion of education issues.
5. To make new trustees aware that teachers and parents are monitoring them and holding them accountable for their actions.

## Resources

### People

A handful of people will suffice to research, summarize and publicize the board's actions. Someone with communications experience should be included.

### Time

Research will take about 40 hours, depending on the size of the board, the detail of its minutes and the availability of news clippings. Research should be completed before summer break and be available by September 1. Final ad copy must be ready by September 20 for inclusion in weekly newspapers.

### Money

Costs will involve advertising, as well as possible release time for researchers. Advertising rates vary widely. If research is not distributed externally, then the only costs will be those associated with printing fact sheets for insertion in your group's newsletter.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select a research coordinator, assistant researchers and graphic artists.
2. Draw up a list of individuals to whom final results will be distributed. If distribution is confined to teachers, then focus on teacher-related decisions (eg, settlements, staff relations and transfers). If distribution encompasses parents and/or the public, then focus on more general issues (eg, board-community relations, budgetary allocations, class size and configuration, school transportation, school closures and staff cuts).
3. Identify the issues and decisions you want to highlight. Controversial ones may be less important than others. For example, if trustees vote against positions they have endorsed publicly, you might want to highlight those inconsistencies. If the system is cutting staff while accumulating a surplus, you might want to highlight that.
4. Research board publications, local newsletters, minutes, newspapers and provincial statistics.
5. Double-check your research. Don't assume anything. And don't print anything you simply suspect.
6. Present your material objectively. Don't make inflammatory statements or attack particular trustees. Print the facts, but print only those that make your point.
7. Organize your material according to issue. You can run several ads on several issues over a two-month period; you don't have to spill all your beans at once.
8. Assess the impact of the ad or fact sheet before you print it. If candidates running against incumbents are worse than the incumbents themselves, you won't want to hurt the incumbents' chances of re-election.
9. If you fear reprisals, try establishing a Citizens Concerned About Education committee to help with the research and put its name on the ads.

10. Complete your research by the end of May so that it is ready for distribution in September.

### **Doing It**

1. Organize your material according to issue. Try to present your material as concisely as possible. Use point form, charts or graphs wherever possible.
2. Circulate copies of your fact sheets to everyone in your group.
3. Prepare copies of the fact sheets for local media. Determine whether newspapers and radio stations are interested in running major reviews based on your material. If not, try to circulate the material through news releases from your group or condense the material for ads.
4. Run a sequence of ads (eg, *Public Education, 2007–2010*) in newspapers or on radio stations.
5. Start early. If you live in a rural area, there may be only three newspapers between September 1 and October 18.
6. Make researchers available in the event that journalists want to follow up on any of the fact sheets.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

1. Keep an ongoing record of the board's actions for the 2013 elections. Monitor board meetings; record trustees' votes.

### **Problems**

1. If your material is not presented objectively, incumbents may become hostile. In some cases, their hostility may be aroused even if the material is objective since those who have been absent from meetings, have contradicted themselves or have behaved inappropriately will not want their records publicized.

### **Key Points**

1. Ensure that your research is scrupulously accurate. Double-check your facts.
2. Present your information as fact. Don't attack particular trustees. Let the record speak for itself.
3. Maintain an ongoing record of the board's actions once the election is over.

# Promoting Evaluation of Candidates

Both incumbents and challengers are applying for jobs when they run for office. Unfortunately, the public often evaluates candidates on the basis of crude or inappropriate criteria. Publicizing the qualifications expected of trustees provides the public with a solid basis for evaluating candidates. Evaluation forms can also be distributed at forums or among teachers and parents.

## Purposes

1. To increase public awareness of the demands of trusteeship.
2. To improve voters' decision-making abilities.
3. To get teachers and parents thinking critically about candidates.
4. To counter campaigns based on image.
5. To demonstrate teachers' and parents' concern that well-qualified candidates be elected.

## Resources

### People

A coordinator and a small committee are required. People with communications or advertising experience should sit on the committee.

### Time

Preparing the ads and brochures will consume about 20 hours. Ads should run more than once during the campaign, and internal distribution of material should occur within 10 days of nomination day.

### Money

Costs will vary depending on advertising and printing expenses.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Strike a committee to identify qualities desirable in trustees, and prepare ads and brochures. Members should have calm, even judgment, as well as an imaginative approach to publicity.

2. Evaluate the current board to determine whether it includes a group of trustees whose behaviour, attitude or lack of knowledge has proven particularly damaging to board–community relations over the past three years (see Chapter 2). You may want to emphasize those qualities found lacking as essential to good trusteeship.

3. Evaluate individual trustees and candidates as you have evaluated the board.

4. Prepare internal and external ads that focus on the qualities you have identified as desirable in trustees. Prepare separate copy for each group.

You could construct a simple chart that cross-indexes candidates and qualities and is introduced by a catchy phrase that grabs readers' attention. Let your readers fill out the chart. Even if they don't take the time to complete it, they will have considered the qualities listed.

5. Check with local newspaper editors. They may be willing to run some of the evaluation questions or statements as editorials or provide free advertising space as a public service.

6. Approach local radio stations to determine whether they will run your questions or statements as public service announcements.

7. Check local publication deadlines. Ads should run several times before election day in order to reinforce the theme of accountability and evaluation.

8. Don't overload the public with ideas. It is better to run 4 short ads that each contain 3 criteria than to run one ad that contains 12 criteria.

9. Arrange for the printing of your brochure. Printers need advance warning in order to schedule your run.

### Doing It

1. Prepare ads and brochures for maximum visual impact. Don't confuse your reader with long sentences. State the desirable qualities, and then wrap up with a catchy phrase. Don't belabour your point.

2. Proofread your copy before delivering it to the newspaper or printer. Keep it clean and professional.

3. Identify your group as the sponsor of the ad or brochure.
4. Try to secure a prominent location in the newspaper for your ad. There is no point in preparing the ad if no one sees it.
5. If necessary, arrange for a special brochure drop. Teachers and parents will need ideas for evaluating candidates as early in the campaign as possible.

### ***Follow-Up Activities***

1. Evaluate the new board. Compare that evaluation with your evaluation of the former board, and determine whether you have gained anything.
2. Keep copies of your ads. You may want to use them again in 2013 or adapt them for by-elections.

### **Problems**

1. Avoid the temptation to employ vague and general criteria.
2. Avoid the temptation to become wordy.
3. Keep your deadlines in mind. If you wait until the last minute to lay out your ad or brochure, it will appear slipshod. Leave yourself time to reconsider and redesign your copy.
4. Teachers and parents may complain that they have no basis for judging candidates' qualifications.

You may wish to supplement your evaluation with a bulletin board, questionnaire, special election newsletter or candidates' forum.

### **Alternatives**

1. Prepare evaluation forms for forum participants. Distribute them at the door.
2. Have a research committee complete the evaluation forms, and distribute the results to teachers and parents. Extreme care and scrupulous impartiality will be required if you adopt such an approach.
3. Prepare a large evaluation chart. Distribute it to each school in your jurisdiction, and encourage teachers and parents to complete it for candidates, incumbents and the board.

### **Key Points**

1. Double-check advertising deadlines and printing schedules.
2. Run several short ads rather than one long one.
3. Keep your copy clean and professional.
4. Identify your group as the sponsor of the ad or brochure.

# Promoting Individual Partisan Involvement: Election Bulletin Boards

Teachers and parents are often forced to cast ballots without any real knowledge of either the candidates or their platforms. Using a portion of the school bulletin board to post election information can help create a more informed teacher and parent electorate.

## Purposes

1. To increase teachers' and parents' awareness of the election during the four-week campaign period.
2. To provide teachers and parents with information on candidates and their platforms.
3. To promote discussion of election issues, thereby helping unify the teacher and parent vote.

## Resources

### People

A coordinator will be required to encourage school administrators to set aside space on their bulletin boards. A few assistants should also be selected to contact candidates and prepare local notices about the election.

### Time

Between 15 minutes and 1 hour will be required, depending on the size of your jurisdiction and the number of candidates.

### Money

No money is necessary unless campaign literature is mailed to schools through your group.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select a coordinator and one or two assistants to contact candidates and distribute to them the school lists.
2. Contact the board to determine whether its regulations allow you to post campaign literature on school property.

3. Decide whether you will allow candidates to distribute their campaign literature directly to schools or whether you will follow one of the alternatives outlined below.

4. Prepare a list of the schools in your jurisdiction, including their addresses and the names of their school administrators. Prepare sufficient copies for all candidates.

5. Prepare a short speech or brochure, for subsequent presentation or distribution to school administrators, outlining the importance of the election and explaining the purpose of an election bulletin board.

6. Prepare materials for the election bulletin board. They could include a candidate evaluation chart (see "Promoting Evaluation of Candidates") or a notice of voter registration procedures.

### Doing It

1. Contact school administrators to highlight the importance of an election bulletin board and to arrange to send them your brochure. Design the brochure so that it grabs their attention.

2. Obtain the names and addresses of all candidates as soon as nominations close. Telephone them to let them know that they are welcome to distribute their brochures to schools. Arrange to supply them with copies of the school list.

3. Invite candidates to prepare special materials that urge teachers and parents to become involved in their campaigns and that explain why teachers and parents should vote for them.

### Follow-Up Activities

1. Ask school administrators to deposit their bulletin board materials with the coordinator. Keep the materials on file to assist you in organizing future campaigns.

2. Forward copies of the materials to the Alberta Teachers' Association for inclusion in a central file of sample campaign literature for future use.

## Problems

1. Space is always limited on school bulletin boards, particularly in September. Special effort will be required to convince school administrators of the importance of stimulating discussion of candidates. If no space is available, you might set up an election corner where brochures can be piled. The important thing is to place the brochures where teachers and parents will see them.
2. The board's regulations may bar campaign literature from school property.

## Alternatives

1. Have the coordinator and assistants collect and distribute the campaign literature themselves, thereby speeding up its arrival in the schools and allowing more time for teachers and parents to get involved in candidates' campaigns.
2. Rather than distributing campaign literature through candidates or the committee, establish an

election corner in each school, and invite teachers and parents to drop off literature as they see or receive it.

3. Invite candidates to distribute letters to teachers and parents, soliciting assistance or funds or simply outlining their platforms. No space will be required, but the letters will promote discussion of election issues.

## Key Points

1. Determine whether the board will allow you to post campaign literature in the schools. (You may want to post the literature as Alberta Teachers' Association information.)
2. Ensure that the literature arrives in the schools as early in the campaign as possible.
3. Collect bulletin board materials at the end of the election and forward copies to the Alberta Teachers' Association.

# Preparing a Special Election Newsletter

Special election newsletters are an effective way of increasing teachers' and parents' interest in the election and making them aware of candidates' platforms. By promoting discussion of election issues, such newsletters can help unify the teacher and parent vote.

## Purposes

1. To stimulate teachers' and parents' interest in the election.
2. To promote discussion of candidates and issues.
3. To provide information on poll locations and voting hours.
4. To present candidates' views on education issues.
5. To relay information about local government structure.
6. To increase teachers' and parents' awareness of the election's relevance to teaching and learning conditions.

## Resources

### People

A coordinator with communications experience should be assisted by a small committee of researchers and writers.

### Time

The research will consume between 10 and 40 hours, depending on the newsletter's length and the depth of its election coverage. Most of the newsletter can be prepared before the end of June. If the newsletter contains a questionnaire, it should be distributed to teachers and parents no more than 10 days after nomination day. Otherwise, it should be distributed approximately 10 days before election day.

### Money

Costs are minimal, equalling or slightly exceeding those normally associated with newsletters.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Strike a small committee of researchers and writers to assist the coordinator. Choose people knowledgeable about education issues, local government and local history.
2. Determine whether the newsletter will include a questionnaire (see "Using Questionnaires Effectively").
3. Determine the desired length of the newsletter, and assign research and writing responsibilities. The newsletter could include coverage of candidates' forums, interviews with candidates, a review of the board's activities since 2007, maps of poll locations, voting hours, an explanation of local government structure, stories on your group's election activities, notices encouraging teachers and parents to vote, an evaluation of their potential impact on local elections, a trustee qualifications chart, and results of the 2007 elections and subsequent by-elections.
4. Establish deadlines for submissions. Allow sufficient time for editing.
5. Remain objective. Editorial comment should be confined to editorial columns.
6. Keep the articles short and fairly light. Long, detailed treatises will be ignored. Maintain a local focus; the newsletter is for teachers and parents.
7. Lay out as much of the copy as possible before the summer break. Your time will be limited in September.
8. Leave a lot of white space, and incorporate maps, charts and photographs, if possible.
9. Give bylines to writers, researchers and photographers.
10. Make arrangements for the newsletter to be printed if your group can afford professional printing services. The newsletter is a special one; a professional printing job will help ensure that it is widely read.

### ***Doing It***

1. Nominations close on September 20. If your newsletter contains a questionnaire, it should be distributed by the end of the following week.
2. You may want to establish a special distribution network to ensure that your newsletter reaches teachers and parents as soon as possible. If it arrives too late, your efforts will be wasted.

### ***Follow-Up Activities***

1. Keep research on file for future use.
2. Send thank-you letters to those who provided information for the newsletter. Include a copy of the newsletter.
3. Talk with teachers and parents. Make a list of their comments and recommendations for changes, and attach it to the copy of the newsletter you store with your group.

### **Problems**

1. Printers may not be willing to take on rush jobs. Make arrangements well in advance.
2. Missed deadlines will leave gaps in the newsletter. Check with your writers to ensure that their assignments will be completed on time.

### **Key Points**

1. Start the research and writing as early as possible. Try to have the bulk of the assignments completed by the end of June.
2. Stick to the facts. Don't endorse candidates. Let them speak for themselves.
3. Keep the copy clean and professional.

# Using Questionnaires Effectively

Candidates' campaigns are generally designed to persuade voters through emotional appeals on one or two issues rather than through clear stands on a variety of issues. Questionnaires enable voters to determine candidates' views in several policy areas. As one of the most common forms of election action, questionnaires are often prepared and published by local newspapers. Unfortunately, such questionnaires are often so vague that the electorate is unable to distinguish clearly among candidates on the basis of their responses. The following action plan focuses on questionnaires that deal with issues of particular interest to teachers and parents, with responses distributed only to teachers and parents.

## Purposes

1. To determine candidates' general attitudes toward teachers, parents and schools.
2. To determine candidates' specific views and intentions.
3. To provide teachers and parents with a basis for deciding how to vote.
4. To provide teachers and parents with a basis for deciding whether they will work for particular candidates during the campaign.

## Resources

### People

A coordinator and two or three assistants will be required to draft questions and distribute responses. A researcher will also be required if the questions are based on details of the board's actions over the last three years.

### Time

Four or 5 evenings should be set aside for developing the questionnaire and compiling responses. The questionnaire should be distributed immediately following the close of nominations. Candidates should be asked to return the questionnaire within 5 days so that it can be distributed to teachers and parents within 10 days of nomination day.

### Money

Costs are minimal, with funds required only for printing candidates' responses for distribution to teachers and parents.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select a coordinator and assistants. Be sure to include someone with communications experience.
2. Identify teachers' and parents' priorities over the next three years. Prepare a lengthy list of questions based on those priorities and then pare the list to no more than 10 questions. If you ask too many questions, no one will bother to read the answers.
3. Ensure that most of your questions are specific. General questions will invite platitudinous answers, making it difficult to distinguish among candidates on the basis of their views.
4. Test your questions on teachers and parents. Ask them to pretend they are candidates. Do your questions provide too much scope for platitudes? Do they provide too little scope for clear answers?
5. Prepare an editorial on the responses for inclusion in your special election newsletter or brochure. Design and lay out the copy well in advance. The sooner teachers and parents read the responses, the sooner they can start working for the candidates of their choice. Incorporate candidates' photographs in the newsletter, if possible.
6. Prepare the questions and instructions before nomination day. Specify a word limit for answers, the day by which the questionnaire should be returned (or picked up) and the consequences of not responding to the questionnaire—white space with the candidate's failure to respond noted. Don't threaten candidates; simply inform them of the rules.

### Doing It

1. Hand-deliver the questions and instructions to candidates once nominations have closed. Alternatively, ask teachers and parents to go to the nomination office and distribute questionnaires as

candidates file their nomination papers. Nominations are filed between 1000 and 1200 on September 20.

2. Discuss the questionnaire with candidates and explain its purpose. Offer to pick up completed questionnaires if the response period is short. Ask each candidate to supply a brief autobiography and photograph.

3. Telephone all candidates a day or two before the questionnaire is due to remind them of the deadline.

4. Edit candidates' responses for spelling and grammar, but don't alter the content.

5. Print the responses and distribute them immediately to all teachers and parents. Include a letter with the responses that encourages teachers and parents to participate in candidates' campaigns. The sooner the responses are distributed to teachers and parents, the more time they will have to discuss the candidates.

### ***Follow-Up Activities***

1. Send thank-you letters to candidates who responded to the questionnaire. Include a copy of your special election newsletter or brochure.

2. Forward a copy of your newsletter or brochure to the Alberta Teachers' Association so that other groups can adapt it to future elections.

### **Problems**

1. Some candidates may refuse to complete the questionnaire on the basis that the questions are too specific or biased or that the responses will be distributed only to teachers and parents. Don't argue with those candidates; simply record their objections in the allotted space.

### **Alternatives**

1. Prepare questions that deal with issues of interest to teachers, parents and the public, and distribute the responses to teachers, parents and local newspapers. If the newspapers decide not to run the responses, you may want to consider buying advertising space. The deadline for responses can be extended if the responses are publicized through the media.

2. Distribute the responses without encouraging teachers and parents to become involved in candidates' campaigns.

3. Conduct one-on-one interviews with the candidates, and report their views in your special election newsletter. This approach requires scrupulous objectivity and a great deal more time than a traditional questionnaire.

### **Key Points**

1. Ensure that your questions are reasonably specific.

2. Have the questions ready for distribution on nomination day.

3. Distribute the responses to teachers and parents within 10 days of nomination day.

### **A Few Pointers**

#### ***Types of Questions***

##### *1. Open-Ended, General Questions*

These kinds of questions tend to elicit warm platitudes and vacuous statements that offend no one.

Examples: Do you think teachers are doing a good job?

Why are you running for trustee?

##### *2. Open-Ended, Specific Questions*

These kinds of questions allow candidates some room to manoeuvre but also demand a relatively specific response.

Examples: What are your top three priorities for change in the jurisdiction next year?

How can we educate all children well?

##### *3. Yes/No Questions*

These kinds of questions force candidates to take a stand. Nonetheless, some candidates will still attempt to sit on the fence.

Examples: Should teachers have the right to strike?

Should class sizes be reduced?

As posed, the above questions leave room for candidates to waver. That room can be eliminated by printing yes/no blanks after the questions.

##### *4. Forced-Choice Questions*

These kinds of questions generally preclude wavering by limiting the options for response.

Additional space can be provided for qualifications and comments.

Examples: Teachers need more preparation time:  
(a) strongly agree, (b) agree, (c) neither agree nor disagree, (d) disagree or (e) strongly disagree.

Busing distances within the jurisdiction are (a) too long, (b) about right or (c) too short.

### **Structure of Questionnaires**

1. You may want to include different kinds of questions in your questionnaire, for example, several yes/no and forced-choice questions and one or two open-ended questions. When preparing the questionnaire, envision its layout. If there is too much to read, nothing will be read.
2. If you intend to encourage teachers and parents to work on candidates' campaigns, you should ask candidates why teachers and parents should work (or vote) for them.
3. If you want to help teachers and parents evaluate candidates, you might base your questions on issues on which your group has clear policy and include with the responses a chart indicating whether they are consistent or inconsistent with that policy.

### **Sample Questions**

The following open-ended questions can be rewritten as yes/no or forced-choice questions.

1. Which three areas of education require immediate action in this jurisdiction? (What are your priorities in the coming year?)
2. Should principals be removed from teachers' bargaining unit? (Do you see principals as teachers or managers?)
3. Should teachers have the right to strike?
4. Would you vote so as to force a strike rather than include a clause on class size or preparation time in teachers' collective agreement?
5. Do you favour a limit on class size? Would you include such a limit in teachers' collective agreement?
6. Do you think that the average class size in the jurisdiction should be reduced?
7. Do you favour a subsidized school lunch program (if one does not already exist)?

8. Do you support the sale of junk food in schools?
9. Should students and teachers have a dress code?
10. Do schools have adequate facilities? If not, what improvements need to be made?
11. Should the board make a strong effort to publicize its decisions?
12. Should all students with special needs be integrated into regular classrooms?
13. Does the board provide adequate inservice training to teachers?
14. Should the electoral system be revamped? (Should a ward system be introduced? Should the boundaries of electoral subdivisions be redrawn?)
15. Do school libraries receive an adequate portion of the local education budget? Are they adequately stocked?
16. Are local program options adequate? Should the number of junior high school options be increased, maintained or decreased? What about high school options?
17. Are schools' physical education programs adequate?
18. Should schools cut back on sex education, counselling and other values-related programs and services?
19. Do you think the local school system has too many frills? What are those frills?
20. Do you favour the establishment of alternative schools within the school system for students who consistently fail to apply themselves in regular classes?
21. Do you favour the incorporation of private schools within public school authorities?
22. Which learning and working conditions do you deem negotiable? Which do you deem nonnegotiable?
23. Which issues do you believe should not be discussed in committee of the whole?
24. Should negotiations with local teachers occur at the local or the regional level?
25. Do you think teachers should be hired on five-year contracts?

26. Do teachers in the school system have adequate preparation time? Would you negotiate improvements to their preparation time?

27. Does the school system provide adequately for teachers' professional development? If not, what improvements should be made?

28. Are student achievement levels adequate in the school system?

29. Should student achievement test results be used to evaluate teachers?

30. Should the business community be more involved in the school system?

# Conducting Forums

Forums draw together citizens interested in hearing candidates' views. In urban areas, forums are poorly attended, generally attracting only those already committed to specific candidates. In rural areas, the turnout is higher, enabling electors to acquire a better understanding of candidates' positions. If teachers and parents wish to question candidates closely, you might consider organizing an invitation-only forum rather than a public one.

## Purposes

1. To give teachers, parents and other citizens a first-hand view of candidates.
2. To facilitate the exchange of opposing points of view.
3. To provide teachers, parents and other citizens with an opportunity to question candidates.
4. To promote media coverage of education issues.
5. To encourage citizens to vote.

## Resources

### People

A coordinator and committee will be required to develop the agenda, select the facility and publicize the forum. The size of the jurisdiction will determine the size of the committee. Coordination with other committees may be possible.

### Time

One month should provide sufficient time to organize the forum. The two- to three-hour forum should be scheduled on a weekday evening long enough before election day to allow for media coverage.

### Money

Costs will vary, depending on whether the space is provided at no charge, reduced charge or full charge and whether another group is willing to cosponsor the forum. Other expenses will include publicity, refreshments and decorations.

## Facility

Try to determine in advance how many people can be expected to attend the forum, based on attendance at previous forums. It's better to secure a facility that is a little on the small side than one that is too large. Determine whether election placards will be allowed in the facility. Ensure that the facility is accessible to persons with disabilities.

## Action Checklist

1. Select a coordinator and committee.
2. Review the number of candidates in previous elections. If the number of candidates is large, a forum will prove unmanageable.
3. Prepare a short list of organizations that may be interested in cosponsoring the forum (eg, chambers of commerce, farmers' associations, school council associations and taxpayers' associations). Will such sponsorship impede your ability to ask the questions to which you want answers? If so, don't seek a cosponsor. If not, then approach the organizations on your short list.
4. Select a date and time, estimate attendance figures and check the availability of potential facilities. Ensure that no other major community events are scheduled for that evening.
5. Prepare publicity materials. Radio stations will generally publicize the forum as a public service announcement. Newspaper editors may donate space. Posters should be placed in busy locations, such as shopping malls, and distributed to all schools. Connect the forum to the public's immediate interests. Avoid abstractions. Use the forum as an opportunity to raise your education issues.
6. Prepare banners or signs featuring pro-education slogans. Position those banners or signs around the perimeter of the room. They will provide an interesting background for camera crews and help generate excitement.

7. Determine the format of the forum. How much time will each candidate be allotted for introductory remarks? Will questions from the floor be directed to one candidate or be answered by all candidates wishing to reply? How much time will be allotted for responses? Try to keep candidates' responses brief and to the point.

8. Research several issues of interest to teachers, parents and the public. Arrange for teachers and parents to ask questions on those issues in order to keep the forum moving, but don't ask your questions to the exclusion of the public's questions.

9. Don't prepare questions that are of interest only to teachers and parents. Such questions may generate hostility among the public members of the audience. Questions of interest only to teachers and parents are best handled through questionnaires.

10. Test the facility's audiovisual equipment and acoustics well before the forum gets under way. Don't wait until the forum begins to detect weak amplifiers. Remember, most audiences can absorb a lot of sound. It's better to have too much than too little power.

11. Try to set out fewer chairs than your audience will require, with extra ones readily available. Doing so will force audience members to sit close together, thereby generating excitement. If the facility is half empty, the media may choose to focus on the poor attendance rather than on the forum itself.

12. Extend invitations to the candidates on nomination day. Obtain firm commitments, if possible, and ensure that candidates know the rules of the forum. Don't invite those who have been acclaimed.

13. Ask someone with communications experience to cover the forum for teachers and parents unable to attend.

14. Issue an advisory to the media about a week in advance. Follow up with telephone calls a day or two before the forum.

15. Send notice of the forum to interest groups (eg, chambers of commerce, school councils associations and organizations for persons with disabilities).

### **Doing It**

1. Telephone candidates the evening before the forum, reminding them of the time and place.

2. Arrive at the hall early in order to double-check the seating, sound system and refreshments. If you are short of seats, ensure that extra seats are readily available. Is there water for the candidates? Is a stopwatch available for the moderator?

3. Greet candidates as they arrive, and provide them with name tags.

4. Open the forum with some brief introductory remarks. Introduce the candidates, set out the ground rules and tell the audience how long the forum can be expected to last.

5. Ensure that candidates stick to their time limits for introductory remarks. Give candidates a 30-second or 1-minute warning before their time elapses.

6. Don't allow speeches from the floor. If audience members begin to ramble, ask them politely to state their questions. Vary the order in which candidates reply to questions.

7. Conclude the forum by allowing each candidate a short closing statement. Reverse the order in which candidates delivered their introductory remarks.

8. Start on time, and end on time. Thank the candidates and audience for participating in the forum. Thank the organizers later.

9. Allow the audience to socialize with candidates once the forum has concluded. Some audience members may have additional questions, and journalists may want to conduct one-on-one interviews with candidates.

10. Leave the hall in the condition in which you found it. Don't leave a mess for the caretaker to clean up.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

1. Write thank-you letters to the candidates who attended the forum.

2. If the media did not attend the forum, issue a news release highlighting significant questions and answers.

3. Distribute a record of the forum to all teachers and parents as soon as possible.

### **Problems**

1. Candidates, particularly incumbents, may claim previous engagements. Such claims should pass

without comment both at the forum itself and in subsequent news releases.

2. Certain candidates may stack the forum with supporters. If those supporters attempt to monopolize the microphones, ask teachers and parents with prepared questions to move to the microphones as quickly and as quietly as possible. The forum must not turn into a witch hunt.

3. A poor turnout is the biggest potential problem. Good publicity will generally ensure a good turnout. You may even want to telephone teachers and parents in advance to encourage them to attend the forum.

## Alternatives

1. If your group is large or the number of candidates is small, then hold an all-candidates forum for group members only. Such an alternative simplifies publicity, requires a smaller facility and encourages frankness. An invitation-only forum should be held as soon as possible after nomination day, and candidates should be told that they can solicit campaign workers. Prepared questions should reflect teachers' and parents' concerns so that they obtain a clear understanding of which candidates to support. The media should be excluded from such a forum.

An invitation-only forum requires a concerted effort to ensure high attendance. Publicity connecting the forum with your group's concerns should be

distributed to all teachers and parents, with follow-up letters and a telephone fan-out a day or two before the event. In some areas, school councils alone may constitute a sizable audience.

2. If you don't want to conduct your own forum, ensure that teachers and parents raise questions at other scheduled forums. Distribute reports on those forums to all teachers and parents. You may wish to contact the organizers of other forums to determine whether teachers and parents can set up displays and make themselves available to the public to discuss education issues following the forum.

## Key Points

1. Select an evening when no other major community events are scheduled.
2. Pick a facility that will not end up half empty.
3. Publicize the forum. Connect your issues to the public's immediate concerns.
4. Be sure the media covers the forum.
5. Double-check the sound system and temperature controls before the candidates and audience arrive.
6. Lay out the ground rules, and stick to them.
7. Pack the hall with teachers, parents and other education supporters.
8. Ensure that questions are asked.

# Promoting Issues

Elections tend to be decided on the basis of name recognition, good looks, strong personalities, strong stands on single issues and a host of other questionable grounds. An issues campaign helps focus attention on existing and potential education issues on which candidates should have clear positions.

## Purpose

1. To redirect public attention from names and personalities to issues.
2. To educate the public about the school system.
3. To mobilize the sympathetic vote.
4. To increase public awareness of and interest in the election.

## Resources

### People

An issues campaign requires a publicity coordinator, researchers and a graphic artist or individual familiar with layout techniques. Imagination is an asset.

### Time

The amount of time depends on the amount and nature of publicity and the number of issues involved in the campaign. Preparation should begin well before September if long-term publicity is desired. A short campaign would limit publicity to the campaign period. Materials should be ready by early September.

### Money

Expenses will vary according to the nature of the publicity.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select the coordinator, researchers and graphic artist who will make up the core committee.
2. Decide how much money you are willing to spend. That decision will determine how many issues you promote and which vehicles you employ for publicity.

3. Review the board's activities, and identify issues of critical importance to teachers, parents and the public over the next three years. Prepare a short list of issues on which you think all candidates should take a public stand. Bear in mind the following questions when selecting those issues:

- Will the issue permit the public to distinguish readily among candidates? Will it swing votes? If it will do neither, then it is not an important issue.
- Are some issues already on the public's mind? Talk to people in order to discover their concerns about the local school system. Review the last election by talking to people and reading newspaper accounts of that election. If the key issues of the last election have not yet been resolved, they could very well be revived in this election.
- Are you a credible speaker on the issues you have selected? Do you have the authority to make statements that will count? Will the public find your position palatable?
- Will taking the issue before the public generate support for the candidates who agree with your views? For example, a strong position on teaching and learning conditions may well generate much more support for pro-management rights candidates than for pro-union ones. Just because you support a position does not mean everyone does. You may oppose censorship of library materials, but will bringing the censorship issue into the election do you more harm than good?
- Will the issue put you on the defensive? If so, forget it. You can't win a race in reverse gear.
- Is the issue too complex to be explained easily?
- Does the issue lie within the board's authority? You may not think much of the funding framework, but if it's within the jurisdiction of the provincial government, there's not much any of the trustees can do about it.

4. Prepare a list of local media outlets and a list of publicity techniques (see Chapter 4) that could

be employed realistically in your jurisdiction. Possibilities include letters to the editor, special newspaper features, talk shows, newspaper or radio ads, brochures, posters, buttons, bumper stickers, media releases, selected mailings, billboards, speeches to community groups, T-shirts, balloons and news conferences.

5. Research the issues on your short list. Gather basic facts and supplement them with teachers' and parents' personal experiences. Drop issues that are excessively abstract or that cannot be supported through fact or widespread experience.

6. Choose the issues you wish to promote. Limit yourself to five or fewer issues. If you have too many issues, you will only confuse the public.

7. Prepare a short list of publicity techniques that are feasible in terms of your location and the amount of money you wish to spend.

8. Obtain estimates for the publicity techniques on your short list.

9. Choose the publicity techniques you wish to use. You may want to focus on one technique and supplement it with two others. Reinforce your message by reiterating it in a variety of forms.

10. Develop advertising angles by brainstorming. Ask committee members to suggest a few ideas, toss those ideas around and determine which idea prompts the strongest and most positive response.

Advertising slogans should be short, catchy and concrete. Use wit to make your point, but don't employ cleverness at the public's expense. Your slogans should show citizens that teachers and parents are on their side. Advertising should always be brief and punchy and express views the public can endorse.

Always relate your ads and issues to the public's immediate concerns. Provide a few facts, but don't overwhelm your audience with complex evidence. You will convince the public by repeating your points, not by developing philosophical arguments.

11. Prepare rough drafts of ads, posters and the like. Test them on a few teachers and parents. An idea you thought terrific at midnight may seem pretty weak 12 hours later.

12. Prepare a final list of strategies and an implementation schedule. Establish realistic deadlines.

13. Prepare final copy, artwork, speakers' notes and other materials by the end of June for a long-term issues campaign or by early September for a short-term one. Bear in mind that nomination day is September 20 and that publication and distribution will take at least two weeks.

### **Doing It**

1. If you are planning a long-range, maximum-impact campaign, you should begin planting the seeds of publicity about your issues long before June. Speeches to service clubs can be made at any time. Talk shows on your issues should be scheduled for the end of the school year or very early in September when interest in education is high. Letters to the editor can be written and mailed during the months preceding the election.

2. Organize your campaign to build to a climax. Start with low-key techniques and build to those that employ gimmicks. However, don't centre your campaign on gimmicks; they should be used only to reinforce points already made.

3. Ensure that articles on your campaign are included in your group's newsletter; each aspect of the campaign should be reported as it is introduced. Keep teachers and parents informed.

4. Double-check that your materials will be ready on time. If you fall behind schedule, the public may become bored with your issues instead of being swept up by them.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

1. Keep examples of your materials, including the original artwork. They may come in handy during by-elections.

2. Talk to teachers and parents. Ask them to evaluate the effectiveness of your campaign. Did they notice it? Were they convinced? Did it influence their vote?

3. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your campaign. The evaluation will prove useful when the next election rolls around.

4. Send copies of your materials to the Alberta Teachers' Association to store for use in future elections and by-elections.

## Problems

1. It's easy to become gimmicky. However, gimmicks carried to extremes serve no useful purpose. Bear in mind the needs of your community. Flashy approaches and slick appeals won't go over well in small towns. Keep your feet planted firmly on the ground.
2. It's equally easy to become pedantic or self-righteous. Always ask yourself the following questions. Would I pay attention to this issue if it were raised by someone else? Would I read this ad? Would I be convinced?
3. Don't overextend yourself. The gap between conception and reality is time.

## Key Points

1. Begin your planning well in advance.
2. Set your budget, and stick to it.
3. Choose issues that concern the public and that will permit ready distinctions among candidates.
4. Don't try to tackle more than five issues.
5. Vary the forms in which you deliver your message, if possible.
6. Repeat your message several times.
7. Orchestrate your campaign so that it peaks on election day.

# Organizing a Letters-to-the-Editor Blitz

Because letters to the editor are read widely, they help shape public opinion. Such letters allow individuals to express opinions that are not normally reported through the media.

## Purposes

1. To draw public attention to a variety of issues.
2. To reinforce election themes through repetition.
3. To increase public awareness of and appreciation for teachers' and parents' role in education.
4. To introduce new issues into the campaign.

## Resources

### People

A coordinator and a few assistants should be able to organize the write-in campaign. The number of teachers and parents required for letter-writing responsibilities will vary according to the duration of the write-in, the number of issues addressed and the number of local newspapers.

### Time

Two to three weeks will be required to organize the letter-writing campaign and research the issues on which the letters will focus. The letters themselves can be written in one or two evenings. Ideally, they should be written before the summer holidays begin.

### Money

Costs are minimal. They include stationery, stamps and refreshments for the letter-writing evening. You may wish to use a computer, but legible, handwritten letters are fine.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select a coordinator and assistants.
2. Choose the issues on which the letters will focus. Prioritize those issues.
3. Determine the length of your letter-writing campaign. You may want to start slowly, many

months before the election gets under way, and increase the volume of letters as election day nears. Or you may want to limit your letters to the four-week campaign period.

4. Draw up a list of teachers and parents who may be interested in writing letters. Contact them to see if they are willing to set aside an hour or two for the task. Choose teachers and parents who have knowledge of and experience with your high-priority issues.

5. Research your key issues. A few basic facts on each issue will suffice; letters to the editor should be brief and pointed.

6. Prepare a tip sheet for your writers.

7. Prepare a list of newspapers that traditionally cover the board's activities. (*The ATA News Media Directory* is available from the Alberta Teachers' Association.) Check those newspapers' publication deadlines.

8. Avoid form letters. Each letter should convey its writer's opinions and style.

9. Secure a meeting place. Set a date for the letter-writing evening.

10. Purchase your stationery (in a variety of styles and sizes) and stamps.

11. Prepare a mailing schedule according to issue, newspaper and date of publication. The letters should appear to arrive randomly.

### Doing It

1. Explain to your writers the purpose of the campaign. Note that coordination is necessary to ensure that the letters don't arrive simultaneously at the editor's door, resulting in the publication of only one or two. Ensure that your writers are relaxed. They are not being asked to pen Pulitzer Prize-winning entries; the point of the letters is the issues themselves.

2. Describe the key issues, and ask for volunteers for each of those issues. Even though the issues are limited, try to ensure that your high-priority issues receive the most attention.

3. Assign a mailing date for each letter on the basis of the schedule you have prepared. Teachers and parents should date their letters in accordance with that schedule.
4. Each teacher and parent can write several letters on the same issue for various newspapers.
5. Each letter should connect the issue with the writer's experience. Experience counts as much as fact in the reader's mind. Avoid inflammatory rhetoric.
6. Collect the letters at the end of the evening, and arrange them according to newspaper and mailing date. Check the groupings for gaps or bunching.
7. Record the letters' dates and writers so that you can determine whether and when those letters are published. Follow-up letters should be mailed only when their predecessors have been published.
8. Reinforce the importance of adhering to the mailing schedule.
9. Thank everyone involved.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

1. Monitor the newspapers for published letters. Telephone the individual who wrote the next letter to ensure that it is mailed.
2. Send thank-you letters to teachers and parents who were involved in the campaign.

### **Problems**

1. Teachers and parents may perceive as manipulative your efforts to coordinate the write-in.
2. Newspapers may catch on to the campaign and refuse to publish the letters. Such a scenario is unlikely, however, if writers make good, issue-related points.

### **Alternatives**

1. Include youth in your letter-writing campaign.

2. Forgo the letter-writing evening and contact your writers individually, asking them to write on a specific issue and to mail the letter on a specific date. Ensure that they meet their deadlines.

### **Key Points**

1. Schedule the mailings to avoid gaps and bunching.
2. Ensure that priority issues are addressed from more than one angle.
3. Mail follow-up letters once the initial letters have been published.
4. Keep the letters individual and spontaneous. Don't use form letters.

### **Points on Letter-Writing**

1. Get to the point as quickly as possible; don't beat around the bush. Letters to the editor may be condensed. If you write too much, you will lose control over the content of your letter.
2. Focus on only one issue. Support your views with clear, simple arguments.
3. Keep your letter to one page (approximately 250 words).
4. Include examples from your experience. Show the reader how the issue affects you and your students or children.
5. State briefly the connection between the issue and the election.
6. Commend as well as criticize.
7. Be plain and factual. Avoid flamboyant rhetoric; you'll only alienate the reader.
8. Keep a copy of the letter. Editing may alter the intended meaning. If it does, write another letter to clarify your thoughts.
9. Include your name and address on the letter; the editor may want to verify its authorship.

# Arranging a Targeted Leaflet Drop

A targeted leaflet drop involves all teachers and parents. Each teacher and parent is asked to distribute an election leaflet to five friends or acquaintances. Not only is a targeted drop an inexpensive form of publicity, but it also stimulates discussion of the election and provides teachers and parents with an opportunity to recommend candidates. The personal contact means that the leaflet is likely to be read carefully by its recipients, thereby helping to mobilize the sympathetic vote.

## Purpose

1. To increase the profile of the election.
2. To involve teachers and parents in the election by motivating them to decide reasonably early in the campaign how they will vote.
3. To convey teachers' and parents' issues and views to a large number of potentially sympathetic voters.
4. To increase the turnout of sympathetic voters on election day.

## Resources

### People

A coordinator and small committee will be needed to undertake research, prepare the leaflet and distribute it.

### Time

The amount of time required will vary according to the leaflet's size. Check the time required for other action plans (eg, questionnaires and candidate evaluations) in order to estimate the time required to prepare the leaflet.

### Money

Some release time may be necessary. The major expense will involve printing the required number of leaflets (five times the number of participants).

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select the coordinator and committee. People with research and communications experience should be included.

2. Determine how many copies of the leaflet will be required and obtain printing estimates. Multiply the number of participants by five to obtain the number of leaflets required.

3. Determine on the basis of the above how many leaflets each teacher and parent will be asked to distribute. Some teachers and parents may be reluctant to distribute more than one leaflet.

4. Determine the content and form of the leaflet (eg, a description of issues of concern to teachers and parents, a candidate evaluation chart and questionnaire responses).

5. See Chapter 4 for tips on preparing leaflets.

6. Prepare a letter to all teachers and parents, explaining why they are being asked to distribute the leaflet to five friends. Point out the credibility that will be associated with the views contained in the leaflet when it is distributed personally. Indicate the limited time required for distribution and benefits that may accrue to the local school system. The drop provides each teacher and parent with an opportunity to influence strongly the way five other electors cast their ballots.

7. Determine the number of participants, and arrange for the bundling and distribution of the finished leaflets and covering letters. The material must reach participants at least 10 days before election day.

### Doing It

1. Stuff envelopes with leaflets and covering letters and distribute them to participants.

2. Distribute the materials so that participants receive them on or before October 8. Teachers and parents must have sufficient time to distribute the leaflets, and those receiving the leaflets must have sufficient time to consider the contents.

3. Try to develop leaflets that complement ads you may be running in newspapers or on radio stations.

4. Establish a hotline for teachers and parents who desire more information about or extra copies of the leaflet.

## ***Follow-Up Activities***

1. Forward a copy of the leaflet to the Alberta Teachers' Association so that other groups can employ its ideas in future elections.

## **Problems**

1. Many teachers and parents will discard their leaflets, particularly if you have not conveyed the importance of the drop. Ask teachers and parents to forward leaflets they don't want to their school representative or school council chair in case others want extra copies. Try to reinforce the importance of the drop to school representatives and school council chairs as their encouragement will be key to the drop's success or failure.

2. The leaflet must be specific and meaningful. Abstractions are useless.

## **Alternatives**

1. The drop's impact can be maximized through an election day mobilize-the-vote campaign. Such a campaign would involve teachers and parents telephoning the individuals to whom they have distributed the leaflet, reminding them that it is election day and asking them to vote. Such a plan would require an extra letter to all participants, a poster or an internal advertising campaign to educate teachers and parents about their potential power and the importance of widespread participation. Such last-minute telephone contact on the day of the election would provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to recommend certain candidates,

resulting in a significant increase in the number of sympathetic ballots cast.

2. You could ask teachers and parents to forward to a central committee the names of sympathetic voters. The committee, in turn, would organize an election day telephone blitz in an attempt to mobilize that vote. Such an initiative would have to be handled very carefully to avoid upsetting individual teachers and parents and to avoid violations of privacy or confidentiality. A telephone call from a third party rather than from a friend is also likely to be less effective in getting out the sympathetic vote as there will be no opportunity to recommend candidates.

3. Determine whether local interest groups are willing to include leaflets in their regular mailings to members or let you use their mailing lists for distributing those leaflets. You may wish to prepare leaflets related to the interests of those groups. For example, local organizations for persons with disabilities may be willing to allow a mailing to their members. Bear in mind that you might be expected to return the favour.

## **Key Points**

1. Carefully and persuasively explain to teachers and parents the purpose of the drop. Make it clear that the contact they make with their friends is key to the campaign. Also make it clear that participants are not being used as couriers.

2. Coordinate the drop to coincide with ads you may be running. Your action plans should complement and reinforce one another.

# Registering the Sympathetic Vote

Mobilizing the vote is the key to winning the election. The first stage of mobilization is voter registration. A voter registration drive alerts education supporters to the need to vote by reminding them of the election and the issues supported by teachers and parents. The drive involves checking those supporters against the voters' list and encouraging those not on the list to register. Alternatives would involve checking only teachers and parents against the voters' list.

## Purpose

1. To ensure that education supporters are eligible to vote.
2. To publicize education issues promoted by teachers and parents.
3. To increase the pro-education voter turnout.

## Resources

### People

Organizing the drive will require a coordinator and committee to review the voters' list. The campaign will require the support of as many teachers and parents as possible.

### Time

Preparing a list of supporters will take two to three weeks. Checking that list against the voters' list, if available, should take no more than one or two evenings. It may be necessary to complete the checks in one evening.

### Money

Costs are minimal. Possible expenses involve registration reminder cards, postage and long-distance telephone charges.

### Facility

If there is not enough time to mail reminder cards, telephone calls may be necessary to advise supporters that they are not on the voters' list. If your jurisdiction is large, you may need access to a large number of telephones.

## Action Checklist

### Preliminaries

1. Select a coordinator and committee to prepare materials and collect lists.
2. Determine whether an enumeration has been or will be conducted. In some areas, voters register at the polls themselves.
3. Determine whether you will be able to secure copies of the enumeration lists. In small jurisdictions, enumeration lists can be checked against posted voters' lists.
4. Ask the board's secretary when the enumeration will be completed. You have from that date until election day to check for missing names and alert those not registered.
5. If there is enough time for a mailing, prepare a brief brochure or postcard that contains a slogan, informs the recipient that he or she is not registered to vote, explains the registration procedures and indicates the registration deadline. You may also wish to promote candidates by summarizing their platforms. (You may want to include the candidates' own brochures in your mailing.)
6. Ask school representatives and school council chairs to request from each teacher and parent the names of 5 to 10 individuals whom they believe are pro-education and whose names should be checked against the voters' list. Back up the request with an article in your group's newsletter on the drive and letters to teachers and parents explaining its purpose.
7. Assure teachers and parents that the names they submit will remain confidential. (You might promise them that the names will be destroyed following the registration drive.)
8. The submitted names must be accompanied by addresses and telephone numbers.
9. Ask teachers and parents to indicate whether their names may be used if time constraints necessitate telephone calls.
10. Ask for lists to be returned to the coordinator before the official enumeration has been completed.

11. Have a contact person and telephone number for teachers and parents seeking more information about the campaign.

12. Get large poll maps to identify poll numbers by address.

### **Doing It**

1. Have several copies of the enumeration lists available.

2. Identify the poll number and hence, the proper enumeration list for each name.

3. Assign each teacher and parent to a specific poll. Circulate the lists, checking off the names of registered voters.

4. Double-check names not appearing on the voters' list.

5. Send registration notices to unregistered voters. If time is short, telephone the unregistered voters. Identify yourself and the reason for your call and tell the unregistered voters where and when to register. Encourage them to study the candidates, and thank them for listening to you. Don't endorse particular candidates.

6. Have refreshments and nutritious snacks on hand. The evening may be long; keep your spirits up.

7. Take photographs for your group newsletter and the *ATA News*.

### **Follow-Up Activities**

1. Circulate a letter or notice to all teachers and parents, letting them know how many unregistered voters were contacted and thanking them for their help.

2. Encourage teachers and parents to contact the people on their list on election day to remind them that it is election day and that their vote is important.

### **Problems**

1. The returning officer may refuse to allow you to copy the voters' list. If your jurisdiction is small,

check your list against those posted in public places. In large jurisdictions, there is little you can do except publicize the returning officer's refusal.

2. Teachers and parents may feel they are violating their friends' confidence by submitting their names. Emphasize that their participation is voluntary, and explain carefully the drive's purpose. Respect requests for confidentiality.

3. If you telephone unregistered voters, they may want you to recommend candidates. Refer them to newspaper articles or offer to send them a leaflet that summarizes candidates' platforms.

### **Alternatives**

1. Instead of centralizing operations, ask each school representative or school council chair to gather names and check them against the voters' list. The names of those not registered can then be forwarded to a central committee to send out reminder cards or telephone the unregistered individuals.

2. Teachers and parents can be asked to draw up a list of 5 to 10 friends whom they think will support pro-education candidates. Instead of being asked to submit the names, they can be asked to call those friends to inquire whether they are registered.

3. Teachers and parents can be asked to call their friends on election day to ensure they have voted. Calls must be made before 1930 to allow time for voting.

### **Key Points**

1. Determine whether an enumeration list will be prepared, when it will be available and whether you will be able to secure a copy.

2. Explain carefully to teachers and parents the reason why they are being asked to submit friends' names.

3. Respect requests for confidentiality.

# Encouraging Nonpartisan Electoral Assistance

Campaigns designed to smooth the electoral process may gain some positive publicity for your group but have little or no effect on the outcome of the election. Such campaigns may be run in conjunction with more productive actions in order to allow teachers and parents who feel uneasy about taking any other form of action an opportunity to participate in the election.

Examples of such participation include organizing babysitting services and offering senior citizens rides to the polls.

A very common form of such campaigns is one that simply urges people to vote. While laudable in intention, such campaigns have never been shown to increase the number of voters. The reality of politics is that it is not how many people vote but how people vote that is important. There is little point in spending a lot of time or money on a campaign that has no clear goal. However, if you simply want to generate good publicity for your group, you might consider such a campaign.



# **Publicity Pointers**



Publicity gives you the chance to make your point. Before planning your publicity, ensure that you know exactly what you are trying to achieve and what points will enable you to reach your goal. When you prepare publicity, try to convey your point as precisely as possible, and then stop. Leave your readers or listeners with a clear directive. If you have made your case, they will be waiting to be told what to do. Tell them.

# Newspaper Ads

1. Write copy that connects with the immediate, concrete concerns of citizens. Don't focus on issues of interest only to teachers and parents unless you can show the public that it will benefit from your gain. Ask hard questions. State facts boldly without pulling your punch. Use humour to make your point if the subject is appropriate.
2. Keep your message short and punchy. Use an eye-catching slogan or statement; present one or two facts and an editorial comment relevant to those facts; and conclude with another short, punchy statement.
3. Run a common phrase or theme through all your ads in order to give them the strength of repetition.
4. Before you prepare your ads, find out whether the newspaper can reduce or enlarge your camera-ready copy. If you can prepare copy larger than the final printed ad, the reduced version will be neater and have sharper lines.
5. Use fonts if you want your main message to stand out, but don't use ornate fonts or a wide variety of fonts; you'll only clutter up your space and make your message hard to read.
6. Use graphics to attract attention to your ad, but don't become gimmicky. A few, well-placed lines are all you need. Use photographs only if they are sharp and convey your point.
7. See the ad. Will your attention be drawn to it in the corner of a crowded newspaper? Remember that white space is as important as the printed message. Don't overload your space. Make your message easy to read.
8. Sequence your ads so that they appear in several consecutive issues or on more than one page of a single issue of the newspaper.
9. Identify your group as the ad's sponsor. Such identification will generate good publicity.
10. Proofread the ad. Then proofread it again before you take it to the newspaper.
11. Ask the editor where your ad will appear in the newspaper. Push for a prominent spot.
12. Avoid full-page ads. They tend to leave the impression that your group has a lot of money.

# Brochures, Flyers, Leaflets

1. Brochures can be distributed to teachers, parents or interest groups. They can also be handed out at forums.
2. Costs are quite low although distributing brochures through the mail can prove expensive.
3. Before you prepare or print the material, decide what you want to achieve with it and who should see it. If you can reduce the size of your target group to those who will be affected by your message, you can cut costs and increase efficiency.
4. Limit yourself to one or two issues per brochure.
5. Keep your message short and punchy. Avoid all jargon. Also avoid ambiguities and generalities.
6. Relate the issue to your readers. Deal with facts that are relevant to their lives. Use examples to illustrate your point, based on their everyday experiences.
7. Show how the election will affect your readers now and over the next three years. Relate your issues to the election.
8. Use simple graphics to energize the brochure, but don't leave a cheap, flashy impression. Keep the brochure simple.
9. Use photographs only if they convey your message. Crop to the area of impact. Never use a fuzzy or low-contrast photograph.
10. Ensure that your copy is sufficiently large and clean to be read easily. Leave a lot of white space.
11. Test a mock-up of the material on a few people who were not involved in its preparation. Trust their response. If they don't like it, start over.
12. Double-check printing schedules. Ensure that the brochure will be ready when you need it. Work out your distribution plans well in advance.
13. Identify the brochure's sponsor and printer. Such identification will generate good publicity.
14. Proofread your copy before you send it to the printer. Then proofread it again. Then ask someone else to proofread it. The first thing that people look for in a publication is a spelling or grammatical error.
15. Use coloured paper for short brochures, but avoid bright or dark tones. Subtle, soothing colours make reading easier. Use black ink for the print.

# Posters

1. The same general guidelines that apply to newspaper ads and brochures also apply to posters. Keep your message simple and relevant to the concerns of the audience you are addressing.
2. Use strong, visual appeal: bold graphics or an eye-catching photograph. If you use nothing but print, you will have a very difficult time catching people's attention long enough to convey your message. If print is your only resource, use a slogan or single word that is sufficiently bold to attract attention.
3. Ensure that your stock is sufficiently heavy. You don't want a poster that will blow away on a windy day.
4. Organize an evening blitz to put up the posters throughout the community. They will attract more attention if they appear suddenly than if they appear sporadically.
5. Record the location of your posters or the route followed in putting them up. Check back after a few days in case some of them have been covered by other materials or need fresh staples.

# Buttons

1. Keep your message brief, or people won't be able to read it. A symbol alone may suffice; you will have a chance to pitch your issue when people ask what the symbol means.
2. Use colour sparingly.
3. Try developing two or three different buttons. Introduce them sequentially.
4. Introduce each button suddenly. It will provoke a reaction for a few days and then will become of little or no interest. Time the buttons' introduction into the campaign.
5. Charge for your button only if it is irresistible and you desperately need the money.

# T-Shirts

1. T-shirt messages must be brief and should involve humour, if possible. Work for a slogan that will apply once the election is over; people don't like to buy clothes that they can wear publicly for only one month.

2. Use a line drawing, sketch or other form of graphic illustration if possible. If you make your T-shirt a work of art, it will attract customers. Avoid photographs. Observe copyright laws.

3. Allow two weeks to a month for printing.

4. Use coloured T-shirts; they attract more customers than plain white ones do.

5. Don't overestimate demand for your T-shirts. They are expensive. It's better to order a second printing than to end up with a closet full of identical T-shirts.

# Radio Ads

1. While radio ads reach a large audience, they are more expensive than newspaper ads. The cost may prove prohibitive in large centres although it is within reach in rural areas.
2. Keep your ad short and to the point. Like newspaper ads, radio ads should connect with your audience's interests and concerns. Make your message relevant.
3. Deal with only one issue per ad, and convey only one or two points about that issue. You have time only to state your case, not to argue.
4. Keep your language plain and simple. Avoid complex syntax, long sentences, unusual tenses and weighty ideas. Writing good radio ads is quite difficult; leave yourself considerable time for fine tuning.
5. Tie your spots together with a common theme or slogan.
6. Read the copy aloud several times. Check for tongue twisters and stumbling blocks. Is the message clear and concise? Check with others if you have doubts.
7. Time your copy before you forward it to the station. Don't rush yourself. You may be speaking faster or slower than you think you are.
8. Don't buy any spots longer than 30 seconds.
9. Buy time that will reach your intended audience. You are trying to reach not students but their parents and grandparents. Book your time well in advance.
10. Schedule your ads for effect. Increase the number of spots as election day nears.
11. Unless you have a professional newscaster in your group, avoid fancy effects. Let the local announcer read your ad; he or she understands modulation.

# Talk Shows

1. A talk show centring on one of your issues will give you a chance to detail your message and pique the community's interest. Talk shows attract a wide audience and will provide you with a lot of free air time.

2. Telephone or write your local talk show hosts and program directors. Let them know that you would like to discuss your issues with them and the community. You might propose a series of discussions spanning several months. Indicate that teachers and parents in the area are concerned about the issues and that those issues would also be of interest to the community in that 2010 is an election year.

3. If the program director agrees to a talk show, prepare a file of facts and examples from your research to which you can refer during the show. Practise using your file a few times. Once you are on the air, you must be able to handle questions without hesitation.

4. The president of your group seems the most obvious but not necessarily the only choice for the show's guest. Choose someone who is knowledgeable about the issues and who has a relaxed and friendly speaking manner. You may want to use a number of different people if you are doing several shows. It is always better to have two representatives in the studio at one time so that if

one becomes stuck for an answer, the other can help out.

5. Get together with several members of your group and role-play the show. Have one of them make an introductory statement and explain why teachers and parents are concerned about the issues. Then have the other one ask tough questions, irrelevant questions and downright obnoxious questions. You'll face all those types of questions during the phone-in portion of the show.

6. Arrive at the studio early and get used to the place. Relax.

7. Arrange for the spouses or partners of group members to phone in. Make sure that your issues are publicly palatable. You strengthen your position when all segments of society demonstrate support for it.

8. Thank the host on the air for devoting time to education.

9. Follow up with a thank-you letter to the host after the show. Indicate your willingness to return should he or she wish to schedule a follow-up show.

10. After the show has aired, have people write letters to the editor of the local newspaper about the issue and to the program manager, thanking him or her for discussing the issue. Encourage another show on education.

# News and Feature Releases

1. Issue news releases before you place ads. Your message will be conveyed more effectively if it appears in a regular news story or results in an editorial. The public has a built-in resistance to advertising.

2. Use feature releases to draw attention to your issue several weeks or even months before election day. A feature release is a release that is written for immediate publication and does not require extensive editing. It focuses on a problem or program and provides facts and personal experiences. Feature releases are more likely to be picked up in rural areas than in urban ones. Daily newspapers rarely pick up feature releases.

Prepare two or three such releases, and distribute them sequentially to local newspapers. The releases should be researched carefully. Misinformation will not only generate bad publicity but also damage relations between you and local news editors.

3. News releases should be issued sparingly. Ensure that such releases contain news, not rehashed arguments. For example, the group president could challenge candidates to state publicly their position on an issue or announce that the group is campaigning for specific improvements to the school system.

4. Check local news deadlines, and get your news release into the hands of the editor or education reporter well before the deadline. Submitting the release ahead of time will increase the odds of your story's receiving a prominent place in the paper and ensure that your message is not left in the overset pile.

5. Write the news release in journalistic style. Most weekly papers print releases verbatim or edit them minimally. Grab the editor's and readers' attention, and then develop details. The most important information should come first; editors generally cut from the bottom up.

- Cover the five Ws—who, what, when, where and why—in the first paragraph but not necessarily in the first sentence.
  - Use short words, sentences and paragraphs. Ideally, releases should be limited to one page. Don't try to tell all, just the points of principal interest.
  - Use concrete words; avoid education jargon.
  - Double-check spelling (especially names) and grammar. Double-check your facts.
  - Provide the following information at the beginning of the release: the name and address of your group, an indication that the release is a release and the release date. (The release date should be the date the release is issued; leave news embargoes to the government.) Follow with a simple title. Avoid cleverness; your title will probably not appear in the paper in any case.
  - Double space the release, and use only one side of the page. Leave wide margins. Don't carry sentences over from one page to the next. End pages at the end of paragraphs whenever possible. Indicate that the copy continues on the next page by centring - *more* - at the bottom of the page.
  - Centre - *30* - at the end of the release. Follow with the name and telephone number of a contact person.
6. Try to get the release into everyone's hands at the same time. Don't forget any media outlets, and don't play favourites.
7. Don't call the editor or education reporter to ask why the release wasn't covered. If it wasn't covered, it wasn't newsworthy.

# News Conferences

1. News conferences should be called only when your news is truly newsworthy. Don't call one if you don't have anything significant to say. The media will not bother to show up the next time you call a news conference.
2. Schedule the news conference during regular working hours. Like most people, journalists generally work from nine to five.
3. Announce the news conference a day or two in advance through an advisory or through personal telephone contact. Indicate the general topic, time and place of the conference and the speakers who will be there. Don't go into detail; don't give the story away before the conference.
4. Prepare a news release that summarizes the main points covered during the news conference, and distribute the release once the conference begins.
5. Nonalcoholic refreshments should be provided.
6. Pick a room that is large enough for journalists and camera crews. Ensure that the room is well lit. Don't use an auditorium or any other huge open area.
7. Provide an interesting background for the speaker, and put up a few props around the room for camera crews to shoot (eg, posters, banners or copies of reports cited).
8. Start on time. Keeping the media waiting generates not suspense but frustration and even hostility.
9. Introduce the speaker, and indicate that questions may be asked after he or she has delivered the statement.
10. Conclude the news conference when the media has finished asking questions. Some journalists may want exclusive, one-on-one interviews with the speaker once the conference has wrapped up.

# Speeches

1. While speeches are seldom used to muster support, they can prove an effective mechanism through which to present your case and neutralize the opposition.

2. Approach service clubs, chambers of commerce and other interest groups. Indicate that 2010 is an election year and that your group would like to generate interest in education issues. Ask whether a group member could have a few minutes at one of the organization's meetings to talk about those issues.

3. If there is no interest or a polite rebuff, drop the matter. You are more likely to receive a speaking invitation if you know someone who can plant the idea of a speech on education beforehand.

4. Once invited, assemble your group's research on high-priority election issues, and prepare a short set of notes.

5. Refer to the interests of the organization that you are addressing. Try to show how your group's position is compatible with the organization's objectives.

6. Employ personal examples and anecdotes. Avoid generalities and platitudes at all costs.

7. Discuss concrete problems related to the issue before you discuss solutions to the problems, and show how the election connects with those solutions.

8. State your case clearly, simply and strongly. Provide the opposite perspective, and point out why it is incorrect or why it is based on attitudes that are fundamentally at odds with the views of the organization you are addressing.

9. Use repetitive phrases and key words. Let your audience know where you are in your speech. Build to a climactic conclusion; don't peter out.

10. Avoid education jargon.

11. Be brief. Find out how much time you will be allotted, and aim for a few minutes less than that.

12. Develop good platform habits:

- Type your speech or notes (the latter is better than the former), and write in comments on speaking style after having practised your speech two or three times. Underline key words and phrases. Note where you should pause for effect. (Use the pause to take a sip of water.)
- Make sure that your pages or cards are clearly numbered and in order before you begin.
- Be careful not to speak too quickly. Pause. Ensure you are breathing easily.
- Speak loudly. Be sure that the people at the back of the room can hear you before you begin.
- Don't read your speech verbatim. Practise it until you are familiar with it, and then use it as a guide. (For this reason, notes are preferable to scripts.)
- Look around the room as you speak. Make eye contact when you want to emphasize points.

13. End on time, and end emphatically. The audience should know when you have concluded. Applause should not be hesitant.

14. If you entertain questions, don't become flustered if you don't know an answer. Promise to obtain the answer, and follow through on your promise as expeditiously as possible.

15. Pretend you are a member of the audience, and ask yourself questions before you give the speech. You might want to present it to a friend for feedback.

16. Don't become defensive or snarly if you are asked obnoxious questions. Answer such questions with the same tact as you would answer questions favourable to your cause.

17. If you know members of the organization, you might ask one or two of them beforehand to question you once your speech is over if other questions are not immediately forthcoming.

18. Follow up with a thank-you letter to the organization's president.

# Handling Opposition

If your involvement in the election brings controversial issues to the fore or has the potential to influence a significant number of voters, you can expect to face attacks from politicians who are being hurt. You may even face attacks from the media or other interest groups. There is no surefire way to neutralize such opposition, but you can reduce its influence and minimize its impact on your election activities.

1. Be prepared for criticism. When preparing your overall strategy, spend time assessing who may be hurt by your activities and how those individuals are likely to react. If no one is likely to react, you may be planning too innocuous a campaign.

2. Try to neutralize opposition before it gets. If opposition starts to emerge, try to bring that opposition on side by emphasizing areas of agreement. The opposition may be based on misunderstanding rather than on a real difference of opinion.

3. Remain as friendly, approachable and candid as possible. Your involvement in the election is democratic. Don't become defensive.

4. Avoid emotional appeals and inflammatory rhetoric. You will only alienate the public and increase your opponent's popularity.

5. Try to show electors why your views and actions are in their best interests.

6. If possible, don't answer charges levelled against you; don't waste time on those whose minds are already made up. Reacting to charges only gives those who level them more credibility. Consider the implications of the headline "Advocacy group denies interfering in school board elections." (Lyndon Johnson was notorious for rising to power by making his opponents deny doing things he accused them of doing.) If the charges continue, ask a community leader to speak out in favour of what you are doing.

7. Keep group members informed about what you are doing. They shouldn't have to find out from others.

8. Divide the opposition. Try to get someone from the group criticizing you to resign from the group and publicly support your actions.

9. React to charges indirectly by introducing a new element into your campaign. Demonstrate your belief in what you are doing by continuing or expanding your initiatives.

10. Remain calm. If you blow up, the opposition wins.

# Citizen Action Committees

Some individuals will resent your group's involvement in the elections. You might wish to consider working with or through a Citizens Concerned About Education committee. Many communities have such committees during elections, and appropriate representation on the committee will go a long way toward increasing its profile and ensuring it develops sound education policies.

Such committees should be monitored carefully. Unless people knowledgeable about education

become actively involved, citizen action committees can end up focusing exclusively on sex education or other reactionary issues. Keep close tabs on the committee's work by assigning group members to monitor its meetings. You may be able to work with it, or you may have to fight it. If you line yourself up against the committee, ensure that you make the public aware of your issues as early as possible in order to neutralize the committee's plans. Be prepared.





