



Election Do's and Don'ts

The following is a detailed list and corresponding analysis of what school districts and district employees can and cannot do with regard to teaching civic engagement, including voting, and promoting public education.

What school districts **can do to promote the right and responsibility of voting:**

1. School district resources, including newsletters and social media, can be used to encourage students, staff, and parents to vote, as well as to share factual information about voter registration, polling sites, dates, and hours of voting.
2. Districts can plan field trips to polling locations in furtherance of teaching the required social studies TEKS. Field trips are a well-established expenditure of public funds intended to provide hands on practical experience that enhances student learning, particularly of the TEKS.
3. Districts can adopt policies to support principals in fulfilling their role and legal requirement as voter registrars.
4. Local school district funds can be used to advocate for the interests of Texas public education, as long as the advocacy does not include campaigning for a specific candidate, political party, or measure.

What educators, including superintendents, principals, teachers and board members, **can do to promote the right and responsibility of voting:**

1. Superintendents can set policies which create a culture of civic engagement, voting, and support for public education.

Such policies can include providing information:

- a. On the importance of voting,
 - b. On the logistics of voting such as registration and the time and place of polling locations,
 - c. On the importance of supporting public education through civic engagement and the legislative process;
 - d. To principals on how to discharge their duty under Texas law to serve as voter registrars at their individual campuses;
 - e. On encouraging voter participation of staff and eligible students.
2. Principals can:
 - a. Robustly discharge their duty under Texas law to serve as voter registrars by actively encouraging all eligible students and staff on their campuses to register.
 - b. Discuss with campus staff, students and parents the importance of supporting public education through civic engagement, including voting,

- c. Encourage voter participation through activities like cross campus voter participation challenges/contests and offering jeans/casual days for showing your “I voted” sticker.

Note: Federal law prohibits either giving or promising anything with monetary value in exchange for either voting or registering to vote in an election with a federal candidate on the ballot.

3. Teachers and other staff can model civic engagement for students and colleagues by openly discussing the importance of voting as part of non-partisan non-candidate specific get out the vote campaigns, holding one another accountable for voting, and proudly displaying symbols that they have voted such as an “I voted” sticker.
4. All educators, including superintendents, principals, teachers, other school personnel and board members, can on their own time, including during a duty-free lunch, speak about candidates they support or oppose. They can communicate such opinions either directly, through personal email, or personal social media accounts.

What school districts and educators **cannot** do:

1. Expend public funds to support or oppose a specific candidate, party or ballot measure. This includes a new expenditure of funds such as the purchase of an advertisement, the use of existing resources such as district paper and ink, or the use of staff time.
2. Use an internal mail system, such as ISD email or a campus routing system, to distribute a message that supports or opposes a specific candidate, party or ballot measure. These systems can be used to support general get out the vote efforts or the importance of supporting public education generally.
3. Spend public funds for the benefit of a person or group without a public/educational purpose. It is important to note that the term educational purpose is broad, school boards generally determine what does and does not have an educational purpose within their district, and that furtherance of anything in the TEKS or promoting the general importance of public education would certainly be considered educational purposes.

Why creating a culture of voting, modeling civic engagement and voting are educational:

1. The SBOE approved Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies include civic engagement, citizenship, and voting as skills required to be taught every year from K-12.
2. Advocating for public schools is an obligation of school board service, as established by the SBOE in its Framework for School Board Development.
3. No law prohibits school districts from engaging in get out the vote efforts or advocating for the interests of public schools.

Texas Educators Vote (TEV) is a non-partisan 501c3 organization dedicated to creating a culture of voting in Texas public schools. Neither TEV, nor its partner associations, support any specific candidates, political parties, or measures.