

Handout 5.3: A Framework for Planning an All-Candidates Meeting

It is important when hosting an event at your school that things are run professionally and efficiently. Consider the following as you arrange your event.

Preparation:

- Decide on a time, date and location.
- Schools should invite all candidates to participate in the meeting/debate.
- Consider organizing the event with another participating school or videotaping/podcasting/live-streaming the event to share with other schools in your electoral division.
- Work with school staff to set up equipment and seating.
- Choose a moderator (teacher/community leader/journalist).

Questions:

- Determine the timing for questions and answers, and whether all, some or one candidate will respond.
- Plan questions in advance and encourage other classes to submit questions to increase interest and engagement. Consider both personal and policy questions (e.g., Why did you decide to run? What makes you qualified for the job? What is the most important issue facing our province and/or electoral division?)
- Include quick-response questions or one-word answers (e.g., What is your favourite thing about our electoral division? What is your favourite meal?)
- Once questions have been selected, confirm which students will ask the questions.

Format:

- Use a combination of short (i.e., 45 seconds or less) and longer responses (i.e., 2 minutes each). Make sure that the time limits are announced and monitored with a stop watch. Give candidates a 15 second warning when their time is almost up.
- Establish an agenda and guidelines for the meeting to share with candidates and participating classes.
- Below is a suggested framework.
 - a) Introduction – The moderator should welcome the audience, introduce the candidates and detail the structure of the meeting (3 minutes).
 - b) Opening statements – Brief introductory statements from the candidates (2 minutes each).
 - c) Planned Questions – Ask the pre-determined questions to the candidates (25-30 minutes).
 - d) Open Questions – Give the audience an opportunity to ask final questions to specific candidates (10-15 minutes).
 - e) Closing statements – Final words from the candidates (2 minutes each).
 - f) Thank you – Plan a formal thank you from designated students (2 minutes).

Additional Suggestions for the Debate:

- Ensure a respectful, non-partisan environment.
- If a candidate declines, cancels or does not show up, respect their campaign schedule and ensure that students are aware that the candidate is running in the election but is unable to attend.
- Let students know expectations regarding their behaviour and participation.
- You can invite parents or members from the community to attend the event, but non-student audience members should NOT ask questions.
- Have students take notes during the debate to review next class.
- If possible, provide time for students to talk with the candidates after the meeting and offer some refreshments.