



## 2023 Elections

As a citizen, you're encouraged to vote in the upcoming election, and you can be involved in campaigning. As an educator, you have a significant influence on ākonga – because you're figures of authority and help shape their views and understanding of the world.

In an election year there is likely to be extra interest in discussions around democracy, and the different political parties and policies. These can be rich topics for learning – but care is needed to ensure the personal and the political are separated.

Teachers have the same rights to freedom of speech and political activity in your private lives as any New Zealander. Chatting about politics or policy in private conversation with colleagues in the staffroom or campaigning for a party in the weekend is all good (in general).

However, when acting as an employee, best practice is to be politically neutral (the Public Service Act has been amended, and teachers are now clearly part of the public service).

### What does this mean for me in my day job?

In matters such as this, *Ngā Tikanga Matatika mō te Haepapa Ngāiotanga* | *Code of Professional Responsibility* provides guidance. *Ngā Tikanga Matatika* | *Code* includes a commitment to our learners that teachers will “be fair and effectively manage assumptions and personal beliefs” [Code 2.6].

Examples of behaviour that demonstrate this include:

- critically reflecting on how my own beliefs or bias may impact on my teaching practice and the achievement of learners with different abilities, needs, backgrounds, genders, identities, and culture.
- helping learners to think critically about issues and understand different views, theories, perspectives, and experiences.
- presenting issues or subject matter in an open way and being transparent about my own beliefs or perspective.
- Encouraging learners to be engaged citizens.

Some examples of behaviour that do not demonstrate this are:

- using my authority as a teacher to undermine the personal beliefs of my learners or inappropriately influence them to take a course of action
- encouraging learners to vote for a particular person, party, or policy.

Chatting about politics or policy in a private conversation with interested colleagues is acceptable but more overt, politically partisan, conduct may not be. For example, it is not appropriate to:

- wear political party advertising on a t-shirt in the workplace
- campaign for a political party or a candidate in the workplace
- provide work contact details to political parties
- engage with political parties while at work.

If you have any questions about what you can do in your particular setting, seek advice from your mentor, professional leader, centre owner, or Board of Trustees.

### What if I want to be politically active in my personal life?

Being politically neutral at work does not generally stop you from being politically active outside work, such as attending political party meetings or delivering pamphlets, door knocking, etc.

You can identify yourself as a teacher, but you can't give the impression that you speak on behalf of teachers – your unions and associations (or candidates) can speak on your behalf on the campaign trail.

Take care using social media - private comments can become public on social media. Social media posts are covered by the Electoral Act 1993 rules on political advertising (where payment is involved), but political comments expressed on personal social media accounts are not.

Any teacher standing as a candidate for a political party should be on leave from the Nomination Day (Fri 15 September) until the day after the election.

### For more information:

- [General Election Guidance Summary 2023](#)
- The **Public Service Act 2020** includes a definition of State Services in the Interpretation section:
- **State Services:** (d) includes the education services (but not tertiary sector). Education service has same meaning as 10(7) Education and Training Act.
- **Education and Training Act 2022** Interpretation: 10(7) For the purposes of subparts 3 and 4 of Part 6 [which includes payment of salaries to teachers employed at regular schools], unless the context otherwise requires, – **education service** means:
  - (a) service in the employment of:
    - (i) a state school; or
    - (ii) an institution; or
    - (iii) any other place of education for which a separate employer for the purposes of this Act is designated by any enactment or by the Minister.
  - (b) service as a registered teacher in the employment of any free kindergarten association that controls a free kindergarten
  - (c) service as a teacher in the employment of the Secretary under section 614.