

Instruction

Controversial Issues

Learning to deal with controversial issues is one of the basic competencies all students should acquire. Controversial issues are those subjects about which there are significant differences of opinion based for the most part on the differences in the values people bring to the appraisal of the facts of the issue.

Controversy is inherent in the democratic way of life. The study and discussion of controversial issues is essential to the education for citizenship in a free society. Students can become better informed individuals through the process of examining evidence, facts, and differing viewpoints, by exercising freedom of thought and moral choice, and by making responsible decisions. The perpetuation of the fundamental principles of our society requires the guarantee that there be opportunity for students to read, to gather information, to speak and to hear alternative viewpoints, and to reach honest judgments according to their individual ability.

In order for students to learn these competencies, teachers must be free to help students to identify and evaluate relevant information, to learn the techniques of critical analysis, and to make independent judgments. They must reinforce the students' right to present and support their conclusions before persons who have opposing points of view. Teachers should also develop students' ability to recognize the need for continuous and objective re-examination of issues and as new and significant issues and promote a lively exchange of ideas. Although teachers have the right to express their own viewpoints and opinions, they do not have the right to indoctrinate students with their personal views.

(cf. 1312--Public Complaints)

(cf. 4118.21--Academic Freedom)

(cf. 5145.2--Freedom of Speech/Expression)

(cf. 6161--Equipment/Books/Materials: Provision/Selection)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

31-51q Liability of employer for discipline or discharge of employee on account of employee's exercise of certain constitutional rights.

Keyishian v. Board of Regents 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)

Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut Board of Education, 9/9/81)

Policy adopted: November 6, 2003

WATERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Waterford, Connecticut