

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY

IMB

Controversial Issues in the Classroom

Instruction regarding effective citizenship is one of the major goals of our public schools. Instructional programs developed to achieve this purpose properly place great emphasis upon teaching about our American heritage, the rights and privileges we enjoy as citizens and the citizenship responsibilities that must be assumed in maintaining our American way of life.

It is frequently necessary for pupils to study issues that are controversial. In considering such issues, it shall be the purpose of our schools to recognize the pupils' right and/or obligation:

1. To have free access to all relevant information, including the materials that circulate freely in the community.
2. To study under competent instruction in an atmosphere of freedom from bias and prejudice.
3. To form and express his/her own judgments on controversial issues in a responsible manner without jeopardizing his/her relation with his/her teacher or the school.
4. To recognize that reasonable compromise is often an important facet in decision making in our society.
5. To respect differing opinions.

Teacher-planned Classroom Discussion

1. Controversial issues selected by teachers for classroom discussion must relate directly to the objectives and content of courses approved by the school committee for inclusion in the curriculum.
2. The right of teachers to introduce controversial issues in classroom presentations does not include the right of advocacy. Teachers must refrain from using their positions to express partisan points of view.
3. The approach to discussion of these issues in the classroom must be objective and scholarly with minimum emphasis on opinion and maximum emphasis on intelligent analysis.
4. Teachers must ensure that the reasoned arguments of all sides of an issue are given equal presentation and emphasis in classroom discussions.
5. Teachers may invite visitors from outside the schools to give presentations on controversial issues when the visitors offer qualifications and resources not available in the schools. All visitors are to be guided by the standards of language usage that prevail in the classrooms and by the standards of scholarly inquiry set
6. forth above. Whenever possible, teachers who invite visitors to present one side of an issue will also invite visitors to present to the other side(s).
7. In all cases teachers must obtain from the appropriate principal permission to invite visitors for classroom presentations. Permission must be requested at least 48 hours before the scheduled time of the presentation.

Whenever in doubt about the advisability of taking up a given topic, consultation with the principal is advised. The policy of the school committee is designed to protect teachers as well as students from unfair or inconsiderate criticism whenever students are studying a controversial subject.

Adopted March 21, 1974
Amended April 24, 2002
Amended February 27, 2013