

INSTRUCTION

6144(a)
Administrative Regulation

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The historic principle of academic freedom grants and protects the teacher's right to raise and reasonably treat controversial issues in the carrying out of approved district curricular policies. However, no statute or court decision has approved of teacher actions or statements which substantially interfere with the reasonable requirements of school discipline or established curriculum. The guarantees of free speech or the doctrine of academic freedom have never been recognized by the courts as vehicles to allow teachers to violate an established and reasonably well-defined curriculum or to create or modify curriculum programs according to his/her beliefs.

Therefore, teachers, in determining whether to present a controversial issue in class, will consider the following questions and requirements:

1. Is the topic significant or related to a persistent problem so that the information acquired will be of continuing usefulness?
2. Is the topic within the emotional, intellectual and social capacities of students?
3. Is it a topic that you, as a teacher, can handle from both a personal and academic point of view?
4. Is the topic of importance and interest to the students?
5. Are adequate and appropriate materials and/or personnel available to present opposing sides of the issues?
6. Will this issue clash with community customs and attitudes? If so, can the issue be studied and discussed reasonably?
7. Is there adequate time to develop the topic effectively?

Requirements

1. Topics will be discussed only if they are within published and approved scope and sequence and course outlines.
2. If potentially objectionable concepts or language are present in materials, alternative selections must be made available to pupils who object or whose parents object to the content.
3. Reasonable requests from parents to view materials will be honored.

INSTRUCTION

6144(b) Administrative Regulation

In taking up controversial issues, teachers recognize clearly four rights of students:

1. The right to study any controversial issue which has political, economic or social significance and concerning which the student, at his/her level. Should begin to have an opinion.
2. The right to have free access to all relevant information.
3. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
4. The right to form and express his/her own opinions on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing the student's relations with the teacher or the school.

Teaching of controversial issues which are not part of the regular curriculum will require the recommendation of the appropriate Instructional Team member and approval of the building Principal. The Superintendent of Schools will inform the Board of Education in advance of the activity or program taking place.

The Board of Education has an obligation to defend its administrators and teachers against unjust reprisals for acting in the spirit of this policy. Complaints regarding the teaching of controversial issues may be presented in writing in accordance with supportive regulations.

cf. 1110.1 Challenged Material
cf. 4118.21 Academic Freedom

Reference: Students Rights and Responsibilities, 1985

Litchfield Board of Education
Regulation Adopted: November 25, 1986
Regulation Reviewed: October 1, 1998