

Controversial Issues/Guest Speakers

The district will offer courses of study which will afford learning experiences appropriate to the level of student understanding. The instructional program will respect the right of students to face issues, to have free access to information, to study under teachers in situations free from prejudice and to form, hold, and express their own opinions without personal prejudice or discrimination. The district encourages staff members to provide for the free and orderly flow and examination of ideas so that students may gain the skills to gather and arrange facts, discriminate between facts and opinion, discuss differing viewpoints, analyze problems and draw their own tentative conclusions.

Teachers will plan discussions and procedures, including the use of guest speakers to gain divergent points of view, with thoroughness and objectivity to acquaint students with the need to recognize opposing viewpoints, the importance of facts, the value of judgment and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions. Teachers will exercise professional judgment in determining the appropriateness of the issue to the curriculum and the maturity of the students. When in doubt regarding appropriateness, the matter should be referred to the principal.

The superintendent will establish procedures for the approval of the use of a guest speaker. When an invited speaker expresses opinions which are partisan or considered controversial by a large portion of the community, the school will provide for the presentation of opposing views.

- A. If the teacher and the principal believe the guest speaker's topic is controversial, they will develop a plan whereby the issue(s) can be presented in an objective, unbiased manner; and
- B. In the event the speaker's topic is determined to be controversial, the teacher will notify students beforehand that any student who does not wish to attend the presentation may have an alternative assignment.

The district shall offer courses of study that will afford learning experiences appropriate to the level of student understanding. The instructional program shall respect the right of students to face issues, to have free access to information, to study under teachers in situations free from prejudice and political bias, and to form, hold, and express their own opinions without personal prejudice or discrimination.

Academic freedom is not to be construed as a freedom to stray from adopted standards or the instructional learning targets. Controversial issues are permissible when they can logically arise from clearly defined instructional learning targets; they are not permissible when they are contrived outside the scope of the daily learning targets and district approved standards. Instruction that may be considered of a controversial nature should be well-planned and must comply with all other District Policies and Procedures.

It should be noted that, free inquiry in a democratic society requires that controversial issues arising in the normal classroom situation be handled as a regular aspect of instruction and learning in such a way as to not inhibit the dignity, personality or the intellectuality of either the teacher or the student.

Teachers shall guide discussions and procedures with thoroughness and objectivity to acquaint students with the need to recognize opposing viewpoints, the importance of fact, the value of judgment and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions. It is the Board's belief that quality instruction derives from a focus on teaching students to think critically, and not from instruction

designed to sway the learner. Teachers will exercise professional judgment in determining the appropriateness of the issue to the curriculum and the maturity of the students. When in doubt regarding appropriateness or the level of resolution about the controversial issue, the matter should be referred to the principal.

The district shall respect the right of parent(s) or guardian(s) to be informed of controversial issues. It is the Board's belief that two-way communication should occur between parent(s)/guardian(s) and school staff regarding controversial topics that are pre-planned or that arise in the classroom setting. If concerns regarding a controversial topic persist, the building principal will examine the situation procedurally.

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Oroville School District