

POLICY 6810

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Controversial issues shall not be avoided, and teachers and students shall be free to explore such issues and problems on the basis of principle, not prejudice, as part of the adopted curriculum. Parents must be notified in writing of their child's right to receive alternative instruction when controversial issues are presented.

School personnel shall refrain from teaching topics not aligned with the Board adopted Mission Statement, content Standards and Benchmarks, and Life-Long Learning standards. For those approved topics which may involve controversial issues, study and discussion of such issues shall be objective and impartial and within the appropriate context of a District course of study.

Teachers shall complete the Teaching of Controversial Issues Request Form and submit it to their building administrator. This form shall then be forwarded to the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for final review and approval. Teachers must be notified of approval before the topic may be presented.

School personnel shall refrain from exploiting the institutional privileges of their professional position to promote candidates or parties, and shall not be involved in partisan political activities during normal working hours on District premises while in the presence of students. Study and discussion of such issues shall be objective and impartial and within the appropriate context of a District course of study. The term "partisan political activity" as used herein includes not only activity relating to political parties and their candidates and causes, but also activity in support of or in opposition to any particular candidate for public office. There shall be no infringement on employee to employee communication.

LEGAL REF.: Wisconsin Statutes

- Sections 118.01 [Instructional program goals requirements]
- 120.12(2) [Board duty; advise regarding progress and instruction of students]
- 120.13(1) [Board power to do all things reasonable for the cause of education]
- 121.02(1)(h) [Instruction materials standard]

Wisconsin Constitution

- Article X, Section 3 [Sectarian instruction prohibited]

CROSS REF.: 6110, Instructional Program Mission and Beliefs

- 6233, Holiday/Religious Observances
- 6234, Prayers in the Classrooms
- 6300, Curriculum Development and Improvement
- 6330, Privacy Rights in District Programs
- 6413.1, Family Life Education (Instruction on Human Sexuality)
- 6461, Parental Consent for Testing
- 6530, Community Resources
- 6610, Selection of Instructional Materials
- 6620, Library Resources

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS: 6810, Hypnosis or Mind Control Activities

AFFIRMED: September 24, 1991

REVISED: May 14, 2002

RULE 6810

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

1. The teacher shall consult with the building principal where a question of prejudice, objectivity or partiality, or controversial teaching issues may arise.
2. Approval requests for the teaching of controversial issues, including instructional materials or names of speakers being considered for appearances in a school should be submitted to the building principal using the Controversial Issues Request Form for proper review and consideration at least three weeks in advance. Final approval must be obtained from the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction.
3. Instructional materials or guest speakers representing issues or groups considered offensive to school and community (such as current hate group members or former members who have not disavowed allegiance) shall not be approved.
4. Guest speakers or instructional materials for a classroom or school will be selected carefully, in terms of benefits to be derived by the students. Instructional materials shall be previewed and/or speakers shall be interviewed as to the appropriateness of their message prior to the submission of the request form. Guest speakers shall confine their remarks to appropriate content or program-related subjects. Speakers who deviate from the approved content shall be asked to cease their presentation by the teacher or administrator in attendance. The Assistant Superintendent of Instruction shall be notified of any speakers not following District policy.
5. Instructors shall provide time for discussion of the topic following the presentation.
6. Media interviews with guest speakers shall be conducted in a private location so as to minimize classroom disruption.
7. Schools shall not be used to promote political or religious views. Speakers shall be prohibited from announcing religious services, political gatherings, or other privately sponsored events or to invite the students publicly to those events, while in the school building.