

The presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom should be on an informative basis. The teachers must guard against giving their personal opinions on sectarian or political questions or any other controversial issues until the students have had the opportunity to find, collect, and assemble factual material on the subject; to interpret the data without prejudice; to reconsider assumptions and claims; and to reach their own conclusions. By refraining from expressing personal views before and during the period of research and study, the teacher is encouraging the students to search after truth and to think for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled, weighed, and relationships seen before drawing inferences or conclusions, is among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system.

The policy can best be described by listing three basic rights of the students:

1. The right to study controversial issues that have political, economic, or social significance on which, at his/her level, he/she should begin to have an opinion.
2. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
3. The right of access to all relevant information that is readily available.

The rights to free and open discussions that present all aspects of issues that concern society are hallmarks of education in a democracy. Whether such issues are controversial is not the matter for dispute; it is whether the discussions are presented fairly that determines their justification in the classroom. The right to speak out on controversial matters without fear of reprisal must be present.

Emotional criticism and the promotion of a cause within the classroom are inappropriate and un scholarly. The teacher's attitude should be that of the true scholar, which is truth seeking, open-minded, and tolerant.

Nothing in this policy shall prevent a parent/legal guardian from exempting their child(ren) from a discussion about human sexuality.

It is not the policy of this School Committee to regard obscene language or actions as controversial matters open to discussion. They are regarded as causes for disciplinary action.

Westford Public Schools Policy References:

P6301 – District Computing Environment

Policy Adopted: April 9, 2001

Policy Reviewed:

Policy Revised:

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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