



Political Speech and Controversial Issues Guidelines

A Guide for SCUSD Employees on Political Speech and Controversial Issues

BP 6144 Instruction (Controversial Issues)

The Governing Board believes that students should have opportunities to discuss controversial issues which have political, social or economic significance and which the students are mature enough to investigate and address. The study of a controversial issue should help students learn how to gather and organize pertinent facts, discriminate between fact and fiction, draw intelligent conclusions, and respect the opinions of others.

The Board expects teachers to exercise caution and discretion when deciding whether or not a particular issue is suitable for study or discussion in any particular class. Teachers should not spend class time on any topic which they feel is not suitable for the class or related to the established course of study.

The Board also expects teachers to ensure that all sides of a controversial issue are impartially presented, with adequate and appropriate factual information. Without promoting any partisan point of view, the teacher should help students separate fact from opinion and warn them against drawing conclusions from insufficient data. The teacher shall not suppress any student's view on the issue as long as its expression is not malicious or abusive toward others.

Guest speakers to a classroom shall be encouraged not to use their position or influence on students to forward their own religious, political, economic or social views.

The District respects the right of school officers and employees to engage in political discussions and activities, including political campaigns, on their own time and at their own expense. On such occasions, school officers and employees should make it clear that they are acting as individuals, not as District representatives. These guidelines are intended to provide general information (parameters) on common political speech and/or controversial issue-related situations. If you have any questions about an issue that is not covered by these guidelines, please contact the Communications Office at (916) 643-9042.

AR 6144 Instruction (Controversial Issues)

Controversial issues may be discussed in the classroom, provided that:

1. The issue is related to the course of study and provides opportunities for critical thinking, for developing tolerance, and for understanding conflicting points of view.
2. The issue has a meaningful relationship to matters of concern to the students.
3. Available information about the issue is sufficient to allow alternative points of view to be discussed and evaluated on a factual basis.
4. All sides of the issue are given a proper hearing, using established facts as primary evidence.
5. The issue has points of view which can be understood and defined by the students.
6. The teacher does not use his/her position to forward his/her own religious, political, economic or social bias. The teacher may express a personal opinion if he/she identifies it as such and does not express the opinion for the purpose of persuading students to his/her point of view.
7. Discussion or study of the issue is instigated by the students or by the established curriculum, but not by a source outside of the schools.
8. The discussion does not reflect adversely upon persons because of their race, sex, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, handicap or occupation.
9. The oral or written presentation does not violate state or federal law.

The Superintendent or designee shall have the authority to judge whether the above conditions are being met.

The District respects the right of school officers and employees to engage in political discussions and activities, including political campaigns, on their own time and at their own expense. On such occasions, school officers and employees should make it clear that they are acting as individuals, not as District representatives. These guidelines are intended to provide general information (parameters) on common political speech and/or controversial issue-related situations. If you have any questions about an issue that is not covered by these guidelines, please contact the Communications Office at (916) 643-9042.