

# Walla Walla Public Schools

## BOARD POLICY

Policy No. 2331

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### CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES/GUEST SPEAKERS

The district shall offer courses of study which 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 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 shall guide 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 fact, 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 presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom should be on an informative basis. The teachers should guard against giving their personal opinions on sectarian, religious, or political questions, or any other controversial issues, especially 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.

When an invited speaker expresses opinions which are partisan or considered controversial by a large portion of the community, the school shall 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.
- B. In the event the speaker's topic is determined to be controversial, the teacher will notify parents in writing at least two weeks prior to the presentation. Any student, whose parent does not wish him/her to attend, will receive an alternative assignment of equal value.

**Adopted by the Board: July 16, 2002**  
**Revised: April 20, 2005**