

Walla Walla Public Schools

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

No. P-2331

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CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING APPROPRIATENESS OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Teachers should exercise good professional judgment in determining the appropriateness of the controversial issue to the curriculum and the maturity of the students. When in doubt regarding appropriateness, the matter should be referred to the principal/assistant principal.

Problems and issues for discussion and study should be relevant to the course goals and objectives. The topic selected for study should contribute to the purposes of the school curriculum.

The Responsibilities of Professional Staff

1. The principal has ultimate responsibility for the administration and supervision of the program of instruction in the school building. The principal must be aware of courses and programs relating to controversial issues and should provide appropriate supervision.
2. The key to the appropriate presentation and discussion of controversial issues is the classroom teacher. The following guidelines should be followed by the teacher:
 - a. The teacher, as facilitator, should treat controversial issues in an objective manner, point out alternative points of view, and ensure that the major aspects of an issue are honestly and respectfully presented.
 - b. The teacher should make sure the topic and treatment are within the range of the normal expectancies of the knowledge, maturity, and competence of the students involved.
 - c. Time allotment for the study of any issue should allow for adequate treatment.
 - d. Age-appropriate study materials and other learning aides, which present alternate points of view, should be readily available.

A teacher should first obtain the building principal's approval before inviting prospective speakers to address a class on controversial issues. Teachers should try to present a speaker or speakers with opposing viewpoints. Speakers should not use the opportunity to address students for overt solicitation of membership into any organization

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Student Rights and Responsibilities Regarding Controversial Issues

1. The student has the right to study, in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice, controversial issues that contribute to course goals.
2. The student has the right to form and express his or her own opinion without jeopardizing his or her relationship with the teacher or school.
3. The student has the right to learning experiences that are appropriate to the student's age and level of understanding.
4. The student has the right to explore issues, have access accurate to information, study under competent teachers, and to form, hold and express their own opinions without threat of prejudice or discrimination.
5. The above student rights carry commensurate student responsibilities such as courtesy and civility toward other students, teachers, and guest speakers.

Parental/Guardian Rights and Responsibilities

1. A course syllabus, prepared by each teacher for each course, will be made available to parents/guardians at the beginning of the term. Parents/guardians should review the assignments and instructional materials for the class. If there are concerns, the parent should schedule to meet with the classroom teacher to discuss any questions regarding items on the syllabus. The teacher will, to the extent reasonably practical, accommodate the parent/guardian request with an alternate assignment of equal value.
2. If the parents or guardian know in advance that they have specific ideas to which they do not want their child exposed, they may contact the principal. The principal in conjunction with the classroom teacher shall, to the extent reasonably practicable, accommodate the concerns of the parent/guardian.

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