

Instruction

Controversial Issues

The District shall address controversial topics in an impartial and objective manner. Teachers shall not use the classroom to transmit personal beliefs regarding political or sectarian issues. Students and educators shall ensure that, to the extent possible, discussions are conducted fairly and courteously.

A teacher selecting topics for discussion in the classroom shall be adequately informed about the issue and capable of providing instruction on the subject, free from personal bias. In addition, the teacher shall be certain that:

1. The issue in question is within the range, knowledge, maturity, and comprehension of the students.
2. The issue is current and educationally significant.
3. The consideration of the issue does not interfere with required instruction.
4. Sufficient relevant information on all aspects of the issue is provided.

If a teacher is unsure about a topic of discussion or about the methods to employ, the teacher will discuss the issue with the Principal.

In guiding classroom discussion of controversial issues, teachers shall:

1. Foster students' critical thinking skills.
2. Encourage discussion based on rational analysis.
3. Create an atmosphere in which students learn to respect others' opinions and disagree courteously.
4. Ensure that multiple viewpoints about the issue are presented by introducing an unexpressed viewpoint when necessary.
5. Avoid any attempt to coerce or persuade students to adopt the teacher's point of view.

All District employees are privileged within the limitations imposed by state and federal laws and regulations to choose any side of a particular political issue and to support their viewpoints as they desire by vote, discussion or persuading others. Such discussion and persuasion, however, will not be carried on during the performance of District duties, except in open discussion during classroom lessons that consider various candidates for a particular office or various sides of a particular political or civil issue.

On all controversial issues, employees must designate that the viewpoints they represent on the issues are personal and are not to be interpreted as the District's official viewpoint.

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Controversial Issues (continued)

A student or parent with concerns regarding instruction about controversial issues shall be directed to the complaint policy. (#1312)

(cf. 1312 - Public Complaints)

(cf. 4118.21 - Academic Freedom)

(cf. 6161 - Equipment, Books, Materials: Provision/Selection)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

31-51q Liability of employer for discipline or discharge of employee on account of employee's exercise of certain constitutional rights.

Keyishian v. Board of Regents 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)

Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81)

Policy adopted: June 26, 2006

EAST HAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
East Hampton, Connecticut

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Exemption from Instruction

The Administration adheres to the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes 10-16b, prescribed courses of study, which specifies in section (a) that “In the public schools the program of instruction offered shall include at least the following subject matter, as taught by legally qualified teachers, the arts; career education; consumer education; health and safety, including, but not limited to, human growth and development, nutrition, first aid, disease prevention, community and consumer health, physical, mental and emotional health, including reading, writing, grammar, speaking and spelling; mathematics; physical education; science; social studies; including, but not limited to, citizenship, economics, geography, government and history; and in addition, on at least the secondary level, one or more foreign languages and vocational education.....”

In addition to the above, Connecticut General Statutes 10-16b (c) states that “local and regional Board of Education offers at least the program of instruction required pursuant to this section, and that such program of instruction is planning, ongoing and systematic.”

The Administration recognizes that the attainment of subject area knowledge is a building process for the learner, and gaps in this process can lead to a less well-educated person. For learning to occur, class attendance by students is essential; therefore, attendance policies are rigorous and strictly enforced. To meet the goals of public education, the Board of Education provides a K-6 instructional program that is required for all students; electives are introduced at the High School level, where students must meet graduation requirements.

The Administration recognizes that circumstances may arise in which exemption from class attendance is requested by a student or a student's parent(s) or guardian(s). Also, the Administration recognizes the fundamental importance of parents in the education of their children and its policy is to grant reasonable parental requests for exemptions under the circumstances enumerated below:

1. Family Life Education

State curriculum guides for Family Life Education programs, as defined in Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-16c, “shall include, but not be limited to, information on developing a curriculum including family planning, human sexuality, parenting, nutrition and the emotional, physical, psychological, hygienic, economic and social aspects of family life, provided the curriculum guides shall not include information pertaining to abortion as an alternative to family planning.”

Instruction**Exemption from Instruction** (continued)**1. Family Life Education** (continued)

Connecticut General Statute 10-16e states that “no student shall be required ... to participate in any such family life program which may be offered within such public schools.” Therefore, upon receipt of a written request from the student's parent or guardian by the Principal, a student may be exempted from family life education programs which teach the human reproductive system, sexually-transmitted diseases, contraception, parenting, family planning, nutrition, the emotional, physical, psychological, hygienic, economic and social aspects of family life within the family as part of the family life program.

2. AIDS Education

A student may be exempted from instruction on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) per Connecticut General Statute 10-19 (b) upon the Principal's receipt of a written request from the student's parent or guardian.

3. Dissection of Animals

A student may be exempted from actual dissection of animals upon the Principal's receipt of a written request from the student's parent or guardian.

4. Medical

If a student is unable to participate in a class due to a medical reason, a statement from a physician must be presented to the Principal stating the reason for his/her inability to participate.

5. Other Reasons

While most requests for exemption should be covered by the above categories, an occasional request may not fall into an established category. To maintain consistency in the application of this policy, such request should follow the same administrative guidelines as listed below.

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Exemption from Instruction (continued)

General Guidelines

- Any exemption from instruction does not excuse a student from the total hours and credits required for graduation.
- Any exemption should not interfere with the education provided to the other students in the class, put an undue burden on the smooth operation of the school, or negatively impact the school or district budget.
- Substance abuse education is required by Connecticut State Statutes 10-19(A) for all students annually and students are not exempt from instruction in this area.

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Controversial Speakers

American academic tradition stresses the free contest of ideas as a vital element in both curriculum development and in classroom teaching.

In order to foster the study and discussion of controversial issues, the Board of Education, in its effort to educate students for effective citizenship, encourages faculty members to invite speakers to address their classes on subjects which are within the framework of the curriculum and which are not prohibited by law.

Prior to such invitation, the teacher shall consult with the Principal concerning the speaker, the subject matter, and all other pertinent information needed to make an informed judgment concerning the advisability and appropriateness of such invitation. All outside speakers shall be introduced to the Principal on arrival at the school.

In the interest of objective and balanced presentations of all sides of controversial issues, equal opportunity shall be given insofar as is practicable and appropriate to representatives of opposing views on the issue under study to present those views.