

Speakers in the Classroom and at School Functions

The Board encourages the use of outside speakers when the speaker's program is educationally sound, consistent with the curriculum, and follows District policies and procedures.

All speakers must be invited with the school principal's approval. If the subject is controversial the principal may also decide to engage speakers for both sides of the issue(s). In no instance shall a speaker who is known to advocate unconstitutional or illegal acts or procedures be permitted to address the students. Parents will be given the option to remove their student from certain discussions, and an alternative assignment will be given if the speaker is to address a classroom.

Controversial Speakers

The Board recognizes that visiting speakers may be of specific persuasions and that their topics may be controversial. If they are prohibited from speaking because of their points of view, academic freedom is endangered. Students need to examine issues upon which there is disagreement and to practice analyzing problems, gathering and organizing facts, discriminating between facts and opinions, discussing differing viewpoints and drawing tentative conclusions. The Board also recognizes that many topics are not suitable for younger or less mature students. When correctly handled, the use of controversial speakers becomes an invaluable component in accomplishing the goals of citizenship education. However, this places a serious responsibility on the professional staff members to correctly structure the learning situation involving a speaker.

Controversial Speakers Procedure

No overall standard can be established which will automatically separate and exclude as a resource the person whose views or manner of presenting them may actually obstruct the education process or endanger the health and safety of students or staff. The Board, in an effort to uphold the students' freedom to learn while also recognizing obligations which the exercise of this freedom entails, establishes the following rules:

1. Selection of speakers and topics must be appropriate to the age and grade level of the students.
2. Selection of speakers and topics should be congruent with the curriculum of the course or function.
3. The teacher/sponsor and school building administrator shall investigate fully those proposed resource persons for whom the community may question the wisdom of his/her presence:
4. The teacher/sponsor or designee must give one week prior notification to the principal or designee. The principal or designee may waive the one week notification

- requirement if extenuating circumstances are present.
5. Minimal disruption to the normal flow of school operation is a high priority.
  6. An attempt to provide a balance of viewpoints is recommended when dealing with controversial issues or candidates for public office.
  7. No person who encourages or advocates breaking the law shall be invited to speak;
  8. Teachers should ensure that the presentation and follow up is consistent with District approved programs and policies.
  9. The teacher must retain primary responsibility for the instruction and supervision of students when using an outside speaker. The teacher must be present at all times when speakers are in the classroom.
  10. Prior to his/her appearance or participation, the proposed speaker shall be given in writing and shall agree to abide by the following regulations:
    - a. Profanity, vulgarity and lewd comments are prohibited;
    - b. Tobacco use is prohibited;
    - c. The teacher/sponsor responsible for inviting the resource person, or any member of the school administration, has the right and duty to interrupt or suspend any proceedings if the conduct of the resource person is judged to be in poor taste or endangering the safety of students and staff.
  11. In the event an outside community speaker is denied access to the classroom, the teacher may request a meeting to be held between the Superintendent or designee, the principal or designee, and the teacher/sponsor. The meeting shall be held no later than five (5) working days from the date of the request for the meeting. The administrators shall review with the teacher/sponsor pertinent information concerning the request and render a final decision on the issue.

Legal Reference: I.C. § 33-512 Governance of schools

Policy History:

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Revised on: