

Community Conversation – Open Forum
May 6, 2019

Comments during full-group discussion:

Drug testing for students:

It shouldn't be seen as punitive, but should target students with social-emotional issues
Should only be students in extra-curriculars (they're the only ones legally allowed to be tested)
But does that leave others out
It's one more tool for parents

Discussing religion in schools:

I'm a moderate progressive. I appreciate that people in my group are willing to get involved to explain their foundation, about how to bring back in discussion of religion to public schools.

It doesn't necessarily have to be Christian. All kids should be treated the same. Is that an equal right versus a special right?

One analogy is like a cake mix. If we aim at the mix, and never talk about any of the ingredients, then you may not really understand what a cake is. The root of culture is cult, and cult is Latin for religion. I would like for the kids to learn about religions. By focusing on the cake so much, we don't learn about the ingredients.

It is good to know about Buddhism, Islam, etc. but (not) to force them to memorize four pillars, etc. I don't want anyone's religion forced on a child, but want them to understand other religions.

There should be no evangelizing, no proselytizing, about religions.

Student rights:

There's things like the little signs on the doors, safe zones, etc. In 2019, if you publicly post signs like that, you'll get people pushing back on you. Students are getting it shoved in their face because a teacher has the sticker on the door.

The world is not a safe zone. Offering them doesn't prepare kids for the future.

It's understanding that whether you're conservative, or liberal, you don't want anyone to feel that the school board and the administration is hostile to a viewpoint.

Neither is right to do, to dismiss a viewpoint. However, on some of these issues, it's really hard to figure out a win-win. On some of these issues one side's going to lose. I would encourage the board, whenever there's a win-win solution possible, to pursue it.

One of the main concerns is specifically for students. We want to make sure that rights of students are respected. The separation of church and state, it takes some time to dissect. Students have right to express their faith and practice it. We don't want any student's rights trampled by any other group.

[Discussion of situation at Lebanon High School, where a student was disciplined in regard to posting material related to religion.]

That's a perfect example of Christian rights being trampled on.

But religions are things they believe in. LGBT kids are about who I am, and need to be supported.

They're shoving a lifestyle down people's throats.

GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) is a club with a sponsor. The kids could have a religious club with a sponsor.

The kids do a prayer circle around the flagpole before school.

Let's not focus on Christian values, let's focus on common values. Honesty, hard work, respect, integrity. Values are values.

Teaching the Constitution:

We should all agree on constitutional values. We really need to be teaching the constitution, and the intent of the founding fathers, not just in the senior year but continuously. That will help establish values.

Every senior has to take a government class. I opted for AP government. So kids learn more government than you might think.

Small-group discussions:

In our group it was polite, civil. We had more in common than we thought. We all want what's best for our kids.

It's hard to get started talking about this stuff. It's not an easy thing.

We should have started with a common definition of natural law.

Student well-being:

Every child deserves respect, that's a real key. If you show respect, you're letting that child know you're not putting them down.

My daughter's in seventh grade and comes home and tells me she and her friends disagreed about something, but they're still texting each other.

In order to discuss an issue, you have to know the facts. So often it's all about feelings. But feelings are secondary. You need information and facts first.

Additional general comments:

Most of the schools do culture celebrations. It's not pushing that culture, it's just celebrating it.

You have to be careful when hear a news story. It's not happening everywhere.

We do a great job of empowering our students.

I'm impressed with the education at Lakota, specifically in history.

I want to be the one teaching my children religious values. I don't want the school teaching that. But the board and the administration should listen to all opinions.

I wanted to give a shout-out to our teachers. I didn't even know my teachers' political and religious affiliation. They have a really hard job.