

## 2240 CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Watchung Borough Schools provide opportunities for the study of controversial issues.

The presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom must be on an informative basis. Teachers shall guide discussion of controversial issues toward appreciation, and respect differences in beliefs. Teachers must guard against giving their personal opinions on sectarian or political questions or any other controversial issues until the students have had the opportunity to:

- A. Find, collect, and assemble factual materials on the subject;
- B. Interpret the data without prejudice;
- C. Reconsider assumptions and claims;
- D. Reach independent conclusions.

By refraining from expressing personal views before and during the period of research and study, the teacher encourages the students to search after truth and to think for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled, and weighed and relationships seen before drawing inferences or conclusions is among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system.

Students must be guaranteed the right to:

- A. Study any controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance and concerning which (at his or her level) he or she should begin to have an opinion;
- B. Have free access to all relevant information, including the material that circulates freely in the community;
- C. Study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice;
- D. Form and express his or her own opinions on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing his or her relations with the teacher or the school.

When public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties: in the classroom, at Board meetings, and at other meetings related to educational issues affecting the district, the employees are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline (*Garcetti v. Ceballos*).

Adopted: 19 October 2016

