

Community Resource Persons

One goal of education is to prepare students to participate constructively in a democratic, pluralistic society, a society in which many differing opinions are held and differing causes are espoused. It is important that students develop an understanding of divergent ideas. It is also important that they develop judgment, a capacity to discern the difference between fact and opinion and to weigh arguments, slogans and appeals. Books, films and other media are valuable for giving students exposure to many differing ideas, but for effective learning it is also useful to invite appropriate persons not on the district educational staff to speak to or to meet with groups of students as part of the educational process.

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

1. The teacher/sponsor and school building administrator are expected to exercise judgment and to investigate fully those proposed resource persons about whom questions may arise;
2. Teachers/Sponsors should encourage the use of resource persons representing various approaches or points of view on a given topic to afford students a more comprehensive understanding of it;
3. An appropriate record will be made of each resource person used and of that person's presentation;
4. The ideas presented and the resource person invited to present them will have a demonstrable relation to the curricular or co-curricular activity in which the participating students are involved;
5. 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 health and safety of students and staff.

END OF POLICY

Legal Reference(s):

Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. Sections 4071-4074.

Westside Community Board of Education v. Mergens, 496 U.S. 226 (1990).