

PROCEDURE - PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

5016P

District stakeholders (Board of Directors, Employees, Parents, Volunteers, Contractors, and Visitors) must exercise professional judgment in discussing controversial issues and their personal views with students, as described in District Policy 5016. To implement this policy, District stakeholders must follow the below procedure:

1. In case of doubt, seek the principal's guidance;
2. Where discussion of a controversial issue and/or the stakeholder's personal viewpoint is reasonably anticipated:
 - a. Create a plan to present the issue in an objective, thorough, neutral, unbiased, respectful, and welcoming manner.
 - b. Provide notice to parent(s) or guardian(s) before the topic and prepare an alternative assignment of similar difficulty for students whose parent(s) or guardian(s) opt out of the lesson.
3. Where discussion of a controversial issue and/or the stakeholder's personal viewpoint is not reasonably anticipated, the stakeholder should only proceed if they can present the issue in an objective, thorough, neutral, unbiased, respectful, and welcoming manner without further preparation. In many circumstances, it is appropriate for the stakeholder to preview the discussion but otherwise hold the topic over to another day. Doing so enables the stakeholder to consult with the principal, prepare education materials, and/or consult their lesson plan.
4. As discussed in District Procedure 2330P (Academic Freedom), in the event a complaint is lodged, the investigation of the complaint could involve seeking answers to the following questions:
 - a. How does/did the issue relate to the subject matter and maturity level of the students?
 - b. Was an effort made to:
 - (1) Identify biases pertinent to the issue?
 - (2) Identify divergent points of view about the issue?
 - (3) Get students to explore the issue from the various viewpoints?
 - c. Were students encouraged to voice their personal reactions and views concerning the issue?
 - d. Was every reasonable effort made to accord respect for the rights and opinions of the discussants and of the principals in the issue?

5. At conclusion of the lesson, the stakeholder should summarize and review the main points of the discussion. Further, the stakeholder is responsible for determining whether any follow up or supplemental lessons or discussions are necessary to provide an objective, thorough, neutral, and unbiased lesson.

6. The stakeholder is responsible for keeping written records of important, basic facts pertaining to the handling of the controversial topic. Additionally, the stakeholder should inform the principal of their handling of controversial topics and any issues that arose during the discussion and/or lesson.

Adopted: July 18, 2023