

Personnel – Certified

Academic Freedom

The Board of Education recognizes the right of a teacher to discuss social, economic, or political problems as well as the right of a student to discuss the same and hold any belief without interference from the teacher.

The Board believes, however, that freedom carries with it responsibility. Academic freedom also carries with it academic responsibility that is determined by the basic ideals, goals, and institutions of the local community as they are expressed in the goals and objectives of the school system. The teacher's responsibility should be to show objectivity to see that various sides of controversial issues are given. To carry out this responsibility a teacher should be well informed in the areas being studied.

As a consequence of its responsibility to guarantee academic freedom to both students and teachers, the Board expects that:

1. All classroom studies will be curriculum-related, factual, objective, and impartial;
2. Teachers will create and maintain an atmosphere of open-mindedness and tolerance;
3. Teachers will not attempt, directly or indirectly, to limit or control students' judgment concerning any issue, but will make certain that full and fair consideration is given to the subject and that facts are carefully examined as to their accuracy and interpretation.

Academic freedom is not absolute. It must be exercised within the law and the basic ethical responsibilities of the teaching profession. Those responsibilities include:

1. An understanding of our democratic tradition and its methods;
2. A concern for the welfare, growth, maturity, and development of children;
3. The method of scholarship; and
4. Application of good taste and judgment in selecting and employing materials and methods of instruction.

(cf. 1220 - Citizens' Advisory Committees)

(cf. 1312 - Public Complaints)

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)

(cf. 6144 - Controversial Issues)

(cf. 6161 - Equipment, Books, Materials: Provision/Selection)

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Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
53a-193 through 53a-200
Keyishian v. Board of Regents, 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)
Perry v. Sindermann, 408 U.S. 593 (1972)
Pickering v. Board of Education, 391 U.S. 563 (1968)
Sterzing v. Fort Bend Independent School District, 376F. Supp. 657 (S.D. Tex 1972)
Grayned v. City of Rockford, 408 U.S. 104(1972)
Miller v. California, 413 U.S. 15 (1973)
Amendment to U.S. Constitution, Article I
Connecticut Constitution, ARTICLE FIRST, Declaration of Rights, Sections 4,5
Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/8/81)

Policy adopted: April 11, 2016

THOMASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Thomaston, Connecticut

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1. Teachers and administrators shall have the right to determine and select which instructional material and methods are to be used in the schools, subject to budgetary consideration.
2. The exercise of this right shall be within the framework of good taste and the growth and maturity of children.
3. Partisan views of teachers, administrators, the public, and/or Board members may not be used to suppress (or promote) instructional materials that are otherwise appropriate (or inappropriate).
4. The goal in selecting and utilizing instructional materials is the development of children's critical faculties, and of their ability to learn for themselves and make sound judgments; therefore, the selection of materials should be broad rather than narrow, factual rather than dogmatic.
5. Teachers shall not exclude relevant materials simply because it is unpopular or not widely accepted.
6. Teachers' personal opinions may be presented provided that the teacher does not use them to indoctrinate students.
7. Teachers shall not penalize students who disagree with them or who present views which are unpopular and/or not widely accepted.

(cf. 6144 - Controversial Issues)