

## Instruction

### Controversial Issues

Students in the schools shall have the opportunity for responsible discussion of controversial issues.

Such free discussion requires that students have the following rights:

1. The right to study any controversial issue which has political, economic or social significance and concerning which the student, at his/her level, should begin to have an opinion.
2. The right to free access to all relevant information including the materials that circulate freely in the community.
3. The right to form and express his/her own opinions on controversial issues without jeopardizing the student's relations with the teacher or the school.

The discussion and study of controversial issues shall be objective and scholarly, with a minimum emphasis on opinion. The teacher shall approach controversial issues in the classroom in an impartial and unprejudiced manner and must refrain from using classroom privileges and prestige to promote a partisan point of view.

Instructional policy on controversial issues is stated by the Board of Education to protect teachers and school administrators from unwarranted attack by pressure groups, and to insure youth a well-balanced preparation for American citizenship.

(cf. 1220 - Citizens' Advisory Committees)

(cf. 1312 - Public Complaints)

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)

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

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes  
 31-51q Liability of employer for discipline or discharge of employee on account of employee's exercise of certain constitutional rights.  
*Keyishian v. Board of Regents* 385 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)  
 Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81)

Policy adopted: October 15, 2007

THOMASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
 Thomaston, Connecticut

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### **Guest Speakers**

American academic tradition stresses the free contest of ideas as a vital element in both curriculum development and in classroom teaching.

In order to foster the study and discussion of controversial issues, the Board of Education, in its effort to educate students for effective citizenship, encourages faculty members to invite speakers to address their classes on subjects which are within the framework of the curriculum and which are not prohibited by law.

Prior to such invitation, the teacher shall consult with the Principal concerning the speaker, the subject matter, and all other pertinent information needed to make an informed judgment concerning the advisability and appropriateness of such invitation. All outside speakers shall be introduced to the Principal or designee on arrival at the school.

In the interest of objective and balanced presentations of all sides of controversial issues, equal opportunity shall be given insofar as is practicable and appropriate to representatives of opposing views on the issue under study to present those views.