

Central School District Teaching and Learning About Controversial Issues

The Central School District respects the tremendous power of American thought that stresses the free exchange of ideas as a vital element of our democracy and supports free and thorough consideration of debatable issues as one way to accomplish this goal.

Instruction that emphasizes deep thought and the development of informed opinions based on established facts should be encouraged and supported at all grade levels. Instruction in critical thinking and respectful civil discourse has an important place in the District curriculum and in course offerings. Teaching should be objective and scholarly with an emphasis on facts and regular opportunities for discussion of student opinions at a developmentally appropriate level.

Regarding the District instructional program, the Board fully recognizes the authority of the State of _____ to establish guidelines for the district curriculum and standards. The Central School District commits to following all applicable state laws and rules.

The Central School District embraces the concept that public schools need to teach our students the full and comprehensive history of our United States, so they can make responsible decisions, avoiding the mistakes of the past, as they prepare to become contributing and involved citizens in our democracy.

Recognizing the desire to develop independence of thought, students have the following rights:

1. The right to study any issue which has political, economic, or social significance at the appropriate age level as one begins developing personal opinions;
2. The right to have free access to all relevant non-confidential information;
3. The right to express opinions on controversial issues without jeopardizing relations with the teacher, fellow students, or the school; and
4. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.

All students deserve an education that helps them understand who they are and where they come from, and gives them the confidence and skills to work and learn constructively with others --- regardless of skin color, ethnicity, social background, or ZIP code.

Our students need the freedom to learn the whole story of America, both our triumphs and the times when our nation has fallen short of its ideals. Only an honest and complete education will prepare the next generation to solve the problems of our shared future.

As teachers and students engage in controversial, debatable issues, it should be noted that the Central School District does not offer instruction in Critical Race Theory.

NOTE: *New Hampshire school districts may choose to insert the following, and other states may choose similar references to their respective state statutes.*

“Consistent with state statute, our school District curriculum offers instruction in United States and New Hampshire government and civics and among other topics, study includes instruction in how intolerance, bigotry, antisemitism, and national, ethnic, racial, or religious hatred and discrimination have evolved in the past, and can evolve, into genocide and mass violence, such as the Holocaust, and how to prevent the evolution of such practices.”

In implementing the District curriculum approved by the Board, teachers shall use the following best practice in their instructional strategies.

1. The teacher is confident that any controversial subject to be discussed belongs within the framework of the curriculum and state standards required to be taught; that the subject is significant, as well as meaningful for the students; and that through discussion, students will have the opportunity to grow their knowledge and understanding.
2. The teacher handles classroom presentations in ways that encourage critical analysis and the development of evidenced-based perspectives by students and strives to present a balance among many points of view without negating any historical truths.
3. The teacher emphasizes keeping an open mind, basing one’s judgment on credible evidence, examining closely the evidence in terms of the subject under discussion, and being prepared to change one’s perspective should new evidence come to light.

Legal References

See state specific statutory language.

Cross References

AD, Educational Philosophy

IMMB, Exemption from Required Instruction

IJJ, Instructional and Library Materials Selection

KE, Resolving Public Complaints

Approved: 00/00/0000

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