

In our society, we are exposed to a wide range of ideas and values. It is important that students realize that, although people have differing values, not all values or value systems are equally acceptable within the framework of societal living. One role of the school is to introduce or discuss issues of concern to the community. These issues may be considered controversial since differing religious, moral, and ethical views are present in all communities. The school committee supports the discussion of controversial issues in an atmosphere of respect and appreciation of all sides of the issues.

To promote the fair and appropriate consideration of controversial issues in the instructional setting, the following guidelines are established:

- a. All discussion of controversial issues will be conducted in an atmosphere of respect and appreciation of all sides of the issue. Educators must be fully aware of their responsibility to have all viewpoints presented.
- b. The handling of a controversial issue in classes should be free from the assumption that there is only one correct opinion. The purpose is to have students see, as fully as possible, all sides of the question and begin to develop their own techniques for the consideration of controversial issues.
- c. A controversial issue is to be discussed by an educator prepared for the responsibility. The educator should be comfortable with the issues to be discussed in class and if she/he feels there is a need for professional development in a certain area of the curriculum, the building administrator should be notified prior to teaching the curriculum. If the educator's concern is of a personal nature, an alternative method for covering that classroom material should be explored e.g. team teaching with another educator.

Adopted: Blue Hill School Committee - August 12, 1992

I. General Procedures

A. The parent will contact the principal to set up a meeting with appropriate staff members to review the specific curriculum areas in question. The parent will meet with the selected staff to discuss concerns and rationale for the curriculum and its delivery. If the parent requests that the child be released from specific portions of the curriculum, educational alternative will be discussed. (See Part II)

B. If the parent and staff cannot reach agreement, they may request a meeting with the principal. A written request for release from instruction must be submitted to the principal prior to this meeting. The request must include:

1. Student's name and grade level,
2. Name of teacher and subject,
3. Specific topics, materials, or methods in question,
4. Reasons for concerns,
5. And, preferred alternatives to regular scheduled instruction.

C. Should the parent, staff members, and principal fail to reach an acceptable agreement through the above process, the parent will be referred to the superintendent of schools.

D. If the parent finds the decision of the superintendent unacceptable, a hearing may be requested before the school committee.

II. Educational Alternatives

A. If an objection to an audio visual resource is not resolved, a written assignment on the topic may be substituted.

B. If an objection to a print resource (e.g. text, pamphlet) is not resolved, another print resource on the subject may be substituted:

II. Educational Alternatives (continued)

C. If a specific topic or teaching method, within one or more areas of the curriculum is objectionable, an independent assignment (s) on a related subject will be selected and evaluated by the classroom teacher. The parent may assist in the selection of independent assignments.

D. If the area of the objectionable curriculum is not mandated by State Educational Requirements, the child may be excused from the activity in question. School staff will work with the parent (s) to create an educationally appropriate alternative.

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