

BOARD POLICY

Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District

Instruction

6144 - BP

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Governing Board recognizes that the district's educational program may sometimes include instruction related to controversial issues that may arouse strong reactions based on personal values and beliefs, political philosophy, culture, religion, or other influences. Instruction concerning such topics shall be relevant to the adopted course of study and curricular goals and should be designed to develop students' critical thinking skills, ability to discriminate between fact and opinion, respect for others, and understanding and tolerance of diverse points of view.

The Board expects teachers, staff, and administrators to exercise professional judgment when deciding whether or not a particular issue is suitable for study or discussion. They shall consult with the Superintendent or designee as necessary to determine the appropriateness of the subject matter, guest speakers, and/or related instructional materials or resources.

When providing instruction related to a controversial issue, the following guidelines shall apply:

1. The topic shall be suitable to the age and maturity of the students.
2. Instruction shall be presented in a balanced manner, addressing all sides of the issue without bias or prejudice and without promoting any particular point of view.
3. In the classroom, teachers act on behalf of the district and are expected to follow the adopted curriculum. In leading or guiding class discussions about issues that may be controversial, a teacher may not advocate his/her personal opinion or viewpoint. When necessary, the Superintendent or designee may instruct teachers to refrain from sharing personal views in the classroom on controversial topics.
4. Students shall be assured of their right to form and express an opinion without jeopardizing their grades or being subject to discrimination, retaliation, or discipline, provided the viewpoint does not constitute harassment, threats, intimidation, bullying or is otherwise unlawful.
5. Students shall be informed of conduct expected during such instruction and the importance of being courteous and respectful of the opinions of others.
6. Adequate factual information shall be provided to help students objectively analyze and evaluate the issue and draw their own conclusions.
7. The instruction shall not reflect adversely upon persons because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, or any other basis prohibited by law.
8. The subject matter of the instruction shall not otherwise be prohibited by state or federal law.

When a guest speaker is invited to make a presentation related to a controversial issue whether in person or virtually, the Superintendent or designee shall notify him/her of this policy and the expectations and goals regarding the instruction. If the guest speaker is presenting only one point of view on an issue, the teacher shall be responsible for ensuring that students also receive information on opposing viewpoints.

When required by law, such as in regards to comprehensive sexual health and HIV prevention education, parents/guardians shall be notified prior to instruction that they may request in writing that their student be excused from the instruction. Students whose parents/guardians decline such instruction may be offered an alternative activity of similar educational value.

A student or parent/guardian with concerns regarding instruction about controversial issues should communicate directly with the teacher or principal.

Legal Reference:

Education Code	Section 220 Section 7054	Prohibition of Discrimination Prohibition on Use of District Resources for Political Purposes
	Section 48950	Speech and Other Communication
	Section 51240	Excuse from instruction due to religious beliefs
	Section 51500	Prohibited instruction or activity
	Section 51510	Prohibited study or supplemental materials
	Section 51511	Religious matters properly included in courses of study
	Section 51513	Personal beliefs
	Section 51530	Advocacy or teaching of communism
	Section 51930-51939	California Healthy Youth Act
	Section 60040	Selection of instructional materials
	Section 60044	Prohibited instructional materials
	Section 60045	Criteria for instructional materials

Management Resources

Court Decision	Garcetti v. Ceballos, (2006) 547 U.S. 410
Court Decision	Mayer v. Monroe County Community School Corporation, (2007) 474 F.3d 477 (7th Cir.)
Court Decision	Johnson v. Poway Unified School District, (2011) 658 F.3d 954

Cross References

Board Policy	0410	Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities
	1312.1	Complaints Concerning District Employees
	1312.2	Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials
	1325	Advertising And Promotion
	1311.1	Political Activities Of School Employees
	5131.1	Student Anti-Bullying
	5145.2	Freedom of Speech/Expression
	5145.3	Nondiscrimination/Harassment
	6115	Ceremonies and Observances
	6141.6	Curriculum Development And Evaluation
	6141.2	Recognition Of Religious Beliefs And Customs

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6145.5
6145.8
6161.1

Courses Of Study
Student Organizations And Equal Access
Cocurricular Activities/Transportation Fee
Selection of Instructional Materials

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