

Instruction

Instruction on Topics of Political and Socio-Cultural Importance

The Board of Education recognizes that the District's educational program may sometimes include instruction on topics of political and socio-cultural importance, including topics related to personal values and beliefs, political philosophy, culture, religion, or other influences. Instruction concerning such topics shall be relevant to the grade level content standards, adopted course(s) 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 diverse points of view, and ability to engage in civilized discourse.

The Board expects administrators and teachers to exercise professional judgment when deciding whether or not a particular topic is suitable for study or discussion in accordance with California Education Code and State Law (such as the FAIR Education Act, 2011). 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 such a topic, the following guidelines shall apply:

1. Instruction on issues that may elicit differing beliefs or opinions shall be presented in a balanced manner, addressing all sides, as appropriate, without bias or prejudice. In leading or guiding class discussions, a teacher shall not advocate their personal opinion or viewpoint.
2. In the classroom, teachers act on behalf of the District and are expected to adhere to grade level and subject matter content standards and frameworks and utilize adopted curriculum and supplementary instructional materials that are suitable to the age and maturity of the students.
3. Students shall be assured of their right and encouraged to form and express an informed opinion without jeopardizing their grades or being subject to discrimination, retaliation, or discipline, provided the viewpoint does not constitute harassment, threats, intimidation, or bullying or is otherwise unlawful.
4. Students shall be informed of appropriate conduct expected during such instruction and the importance of, and how to demonstrate, being courteous and respectful of the opinions of others.
5. Factual and verifiable information shall be provided to help students objectively analyze and evaluate the topic and draw their own conclusions.
6. The subject matter of the instruction shall not otherwise be prohibited by state or federal

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law, nor shall it be discriminatory, harassing, intimidating or bullying towards persons because of their actual or perceived race, color, ancestry, national origin, nationality, immigration status, ethnic group identification, ethnicity, age, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, physical or mental disability, medical condition, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

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 child be excused from the instruction. Students whose parents/guardians decline such instruction shall be excused from that instruction and be offered an alternative activity of similar educational value.

A student or parent/guardian with concerns regarding instruction about such topics or the use of curriculum and supplemental instructional materials shall communicate directly with the teacher or principal and/or use appropriate District complaint procedures (Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 1312.2 Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials).

Should a parent/guardian, or any member of the community, attempt to threaten, humiliate, berate, or admonish a teacher who has taught using State or District-approved curriculum and supplemental instructional resources, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the individual(s) in writing that the teacher performed their duties according to District Policy, and any further concerns shall be addressed directly to the Superintendent or designee. If the original comments were made in a public forum, the Superintendent or designee shall release the notification publicly. Should the threatening or harassing behavior directed at the teacher continue, the Superintendent or designee may implement Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 1313 – Civility.

If it is found that a teacher did not use District-approved curriculum or supplemental instructional resources, following the procedure detailed in Administrative Regulation 1312.2 a review will ensue to determine appropriate next steps. The review committee shall review the criteria specified in Board policy and shall determine the extent to which the challenged material supports the grade level or content curriculum, the educational appropriateness of the material, and its suitability for the age level of the student (Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 6141 and Board Policy 6161.11). Should a parent/guardian, or any member of the community, attempt to threaten, harass or bully this teacher during or after the review process, the Superintendent or designee may implement Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 1313 – Civility.

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Legal Reference: Education Code, Sections 220; 48950; 51240; 51500; 51510; 51511; 51513; 51930; 51930-51939; 60040; 60044; 60045

Court Decisions:

Johnson v. Poway Unified School District, (2011) 658 F.3d 954 (9th Cir.)

Mayer v. Monroe County Community School Corporation, (2007) 474 F.3d 477 (7th Cir.)

Garcetti v. Ceballos, (2006) 547 U.S. 410

Policy Adopted: 06/16/1959

Policy Amended: 07/02/1985; 12/06/1994; 08/20/1996; 10/15/2022; 11/26/2018; 03/07/2023

(Formerly BP 6133, 6143)