

Teaching Controversial Issues

RESOLVED, That it is an inherent duty of public school teachers to be aware of their responsibilities to insure the continuance of a democratic society by democratic means. A basic axiom held by citizens of the United States is that a democratic way of life establishes the ideas and purposes of a democratic education. American citizens believe in lessons of the past, the wisdom of their laws, the ideals of their Declaration of Independence, the liberties and rights of their Constitution, and the freedoms of their way of life. American democracy has its roots in the heritage of many cultures and personal freedoms have been won with difficulty. Academic freedom, expressed as a search for truth, is regarded as a keystone in the democratic process, and it is believed that an unbiased and objective discussion of controversial issues is necessary in a free and healthy system of learning.

RESOLVED, That in considering controversial subjects the teacher should be aware of the issues that grow from fundamental and historic factors in American development. Courses of study should include issues that are timely, of interest to pupils and encourage the students' intellectual, ethical, and emotional maturity.

RESOLVED, That students should be encouraged to acquire such democratic attitudes as the following: A respect for the opinions of others and a sense of responsibility with regard to working with those who hold different opinions, an ability to think critically and to be open-minded, to reach decisions based on consideration of facts, to seek new facts and to accept new evidence, and to reserve judgment until the full issue is presented.

RESOLVED, That public school teachers have the professional responsibility to abstain from imposing their personal opinions, and beliefs upon their pupils. It is their responsibility to teach their pupils to distinguish between "fact" and "opinion" to urge reservation of judgment and opinion until thorough analysis of all data is made, and to encourage understanding of the existence of honest differences of opinion about a subject. As citizens, teachers have the right of personal opinion on controversial subjects.

Approved by:
School Committee Resolution
as of _____