

Instruction

Controversial Issues

The school shall foster objective and scientific studies of controversial issues in an atmosphere free of partisanship) bias, prejudice, and passion.

In matters in which there are differences of opinion, the teacher shall not limit or control the judgment or thinking of students. The teacher shall foster the study of issues rather than teach a particular viewpoint.

Free discussion, free speech, and free access to information are essential to the democratic process. Only through the study of controversial issues – political, economic, social, religious, and scientific - can our youth develop abilities needed for citizenship in our democracy. The right of the students to free discussion, free speech, and free access to relevant material in accordance with his/her maturity shall be the same as for all Americans.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

31-51q Liability of employer for discipline or discharge of employee on account of employee's exercise of certain constitutional rights.

Keyishian v. Board of Regents 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)

Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81)

Policy adopted: September 8, 2010

ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Andover, Connecticut

Instruction

Exemption from Instruction

The Administration adheres to the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes 10-16b, prescribed courses of study, which specifies in section (a) that “In the public schools the program of instruction offered shall include at least the following subject matter, as taught by legally qualified teachers, the arts; career education; consumer education; health and safety, including, but not limited to, human growth and development, nutrition, first aid, disease prevention, community and consumer health, physical, mental and emotional health, including reading, writing, grammar, speaking and spelling; mathematics; physical education; science; social studies; including, but not limited to, citizenship, economics, geography, government and history; and in addition, on at least the secondary level, one or more foreign languages and vocational education.....”

In addition to the above, Connecticut General Statutes 10-16b (c) states that “local and regional Board of Education offers at least the program of instruction required pursuant to this section, and that such program of instruction is planning, ongoing and systematic.”

The Administration recognizes that the attainment of subject area knowledge is a building process for the learner, and gaps in this process can lead to a less well-educated person. For learning to occur, class attendance by students is essential; therefore, attendance policies are rigorous and strictly enforced. To meet the goals of public education, the Board of Education provides a K-6 instructional program that is required for all students; electives are introduced at the High School level, where students must meet graduation requirements.

The Administration recognizes that circumstances may arise in which exemption from class attendance is requested by a student or a student's parent(s) or guardian(s). Also, the Administration recognizes the fundamental importance of parents in the education of their children and its policy is to grant reasonable parental requests for exemptions under the circumstances enumerated below:

1. Family Life Education

State curriculum guides for Family Life Education programs, as defined in Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-16c, “shall include, but not be limited to, information on developing a curriculum including family planning, human sexuality, parenting, nutrition and the emotional, physical, psychological, hygienic, economic and social aspects of family life, provided the curriculum guides shall not include information pertaining to abortion as an alternative to family planning.”

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Exemption from Instruction (continued)

1. Family Life Education (continued)

Connecticut General Statute 10-16e states that “no student shall be required ... to participate in any such family life program which may be offered within such public schools.” Therefore, upon receipt of a written request from the student's parent or guardian by the Principal, a student may be exempted from family life education programs which teach the human reproductive system, sexually-transmitted diseases, contraception, parenting, family planning, nutrition, the emotional, physical, psychological, hygienic, economic and social aspects of family life within the family as part of the family life program.

2. AIDS Education

A student may be exempted from instruction on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) per Connecticut General Statute 10-19 (b) upon the Principal's receipt of a written request from the student's parent or guardian.

3. Dissection of Animals

A student may be exempted from actual dissection of animals upon the Principal's receipt of a written request from the student's parent or guardian.

4. Medical

If a student is unable to participate in a class due to a medical reason, a statement from a physician must be presented to the Principal stating the reason for his/her inability to participate.

5. Religious

Reasonable accommodation will be made in order to honor a request for exemption for a student's religious reasons. The parent or guardian of a minor must present a written request for exemption to the Principal stating the conflict involved.

6. Instructional Materials

Occasionally, objections may be made to specific instructional materials. If the issue cannot be easily resolved at the classroom level, matters shall be referred to the Principal for resolution.

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Exemption from Instruction (continued)

7. Other Reasons

While most requests for exemption should be covered by the above categories, an occasional request may not fall into an established category. To maintain consistency in the application of this policy, such request should follow the same administrative guidelines as listed below.

General Guidelines

- Any exemption should not interfere with the education provided to the other students in the class, put an undue burden on the smooth operation of the school, or negatively impact the school or district budget.
- Substance abuse education is required by Connecticut State Statutes 10-19(A) for all students annually and students are not exempt from instruction in this area.

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Reading Assignments and Other Instructional Material

Student reading assignments and other instructional material shall be selected with regard to a student's maturity and capacity to understand the material.

Book selection and instructional material cannot isolate students from reality, and it shall be recognized that even with judicious selection he/she will be exposed to books and other instructional material which portray less desirable aspects of life.

However, no student shall be required to read material which he/she or his/her parents/guardians find offensive for any ethical or religious reasons.

Legal Reference: Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education 9/9/81).

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Reading Assignments and Other Instructional Material

Use of Videos in the Classroom

The following guidelines have been established to govern the use of videos in all Andover Elementary School.

1. Since classroom time for teaching and learning is very limited and since active rather than passive modes of instruction are more beneficial to students according to the latest research, videos (including feature length movies and filmstrips) are to be used both appropriately and sparingly. Excerpting is a recommended approach.
2. A video is never to replace direct skills development with students in various subject areas as called for in the curriculum.
3. Video/movie content must always be of merit and relate to the curriculum for that grade level course.
4. Video viewing time, on the above, is not to exceed no more than two (2) hours per month with Principal permission. A lesson plan incorporating the use of the video must be presented at the time of request to the Principal.
5. Video content must always be of recognized merit and relate to the curriculum for that grade level/course. Videos should be listed on the course syllabus presented to students/parents at the beginning of each school semester/year. If a film is chosen at a later date, students/parents should be notified that a rated movie/video will be viewed.
6. In general, videos/movies of literary works are viewed as a supplement to the study of the print version, not in place of it.
7. In general, students must respond critically in writing to a video presentation after viewing it.
8. Full-length feature movies/videos which directly support the school curriculum may be used in the classroom provided that only G-rated movies/videos are used.
9. At all grade levels, an unrated video such as those produced by The National Geographic Society or a documentary from The Learning Channel or Public Television on brain research or the like must be age-appropriate and related directly to the objectives of the curriculum at that grade level in that course of study. If there is any question as to the appropriateness of the film for use in the classroom, the Principal is to be consulted prior to the film being shown in a classroom.
10. Teachers must, without exception, preview all videos/films in their entirety before showing them to their students.

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Regulation approved: September 8, 2010

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