

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Millburn Public Schools

INFORMATION ITEM

May 3, 2010

To: Board of Education Members

From: Ellen E. Mauer, PhD

Subject: First Reading-Teaching about Controversial Issues-6:80

This policy was brand new in 2006. I could not find one in our electronic policy manual so I must assume we do not have one. We will need to adopt this policy as a new policy.

We ask that you use this as your first reading period and then put this on the next BOE meeting agenda for a second reading and approval.

Instruction

Teaching About Controversial Issues ¹

The Superintendent shall ensure that all school-sponsored presentations and discussions of controversial or sensitive topics in the instructional program, including those made by guest speakers, are:

- Age-appropriate. Proper decorum, considering the students' ages, should be followed.
- Consistent with the curriculum and serve an educational purpose.
- Informative and present a balanced view.
- Respectful of the rights and opinions of everyone. Emotional criticisms and hurtful sarcasm should be avoided.
- Not tolerant of profanity or slander. Disruptive conduct is prohibited and may subject a student to discipline.

The District specifically reserves its right to stop any school-sponsored activity that it determines violates this policy, is harmful to the District or the students, or violates State or federal law.

CROSS REF.: 6:40 (Curriculum Development), 6:255 (Assemblies and Ceremonies)

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

¹ This policy contains an item on which collective bargaining may be required. Any policy that impacts upon wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment, is subject to collective bargaining upon request by the employee representative, even if the policy involves an inherent managerial right. Before adopting this policy, a school board should review the scope of any clause on academic freedom contained in a collective bargaining agreement.

While this sample policy and its contents are discretionary with each board, its implementation should respect the constitutional rights of students and teachers to free speech and free association. The intent of this policy is to inform students, staff members, and the community that the board has established standards for the teaching and discussion of controversial topics in order to avoid culture wars from being fought in school.