

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Springfield, New Jersey 07081

POLICY: CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Any discussion of controversial issues in the classroom shall be conducted in an unprejudiced and dispassionate manner designed to foster a spirit of inquiry. Such discussion shall not:

- A. Disrupt the educational process;
- B. Fail to match the maturity level of the pupils;
- C. Be unrelated to the goals of the board and the appropriate curriculum guide;
- D. Present any one opinion as definitive.

If teachers wish to supplement the course guide with material that may be of a controversial nature, i.e., subject to interpretation as obscene, profane, doctrinaire or inappropriate, each in relation to the maturity level of the class, they should review the material with the principal first. In doubtful cases, the Chief School Administrator may present the matter for board consideration.

In determining speakers to be invited for a class or school-wide program, the must consider whether:

- A. The speaker is controversial for any reason;
- B. The topic is controversial, or sensitive, or known to arouse strong community feelings;
- C. The proposed speaker would gain an advantage by having a "captive" audience.

When public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties: in the classroom, at board meetings, and at other meetings related to educational issues affecting the district, the employees are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline (*Garcetti v. Ceballos*).

Legal References:

N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 General mandatory powers and duties

N.J.S.A. 18A:36-34 Written approval required prior to acquisition of certain survey information from students

N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20 Powers of board (county vocational schools)

Pupil Protection Rights Amendment - 20 U.S.C. 1232h

Tenure Hearing of William Lee Johnson, Clearview Regional School District, 79 S.L.D. 267; 79 S.L.D. 273 aff'd with deletion of paragraph

Garcetti v. Ceballos 2006 U.S. LEXIS 4341 (May 2006)

Cross References:

1312 Community complaints and inquiries

5145 Rights

6115 Ceremonies and observances

6141.2 Recognition of religious beliefs and customs

6145.3 Publications

6161.1 Guidelines for evaluation and selection of instructional materials

6161.2 Complaints regarding instructional materials

Approved: August 28, 1989

Revised: June 30, 1997

Revised: August 18, 2008