

Election Discussion Guidelines



With the 2020 Election happening this week, we wanted to provide staff with some resources to help with the conversations and dialogue that may occur this week.

When discussing the election:	Refrain from:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stay neutral at all times ● Help students have a civil, informed discussion (see resources below) ● Address issues that create unsafe spaces in your classroom (refer to the district policy below) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sharing your own political opinions - stick to the facts ● Judging student’s political beliefs ● Creating a polarized classroom environment (see resources below)

Student Expression and Hate Speech

As a District, we have board policies that address both the right to student expression and activism, as well as harassment as it pertains to hate speech. This time of year, it is a good idea to review the policies and understand the rationale.

Students have the right to take an open stand on a divisive issue, as Justice Fortas pointed out in the landmark Supreme Court case of *Tinker v. Des Moines*, “It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” However, this right is not without limitations. While the First Amendment guarantees free speech and may protect a person’s right to publicly express an opinion, in schools it does not offer protection to those who engage in harassment, including hate speech.

Targeting individuals or groups based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or disability not only disrupts the learning environment, but also negatively impacts the students, themselves. This August, the District took action to specifically include “hate speech” in their anti-harassment policies for both students and staff. These policies include “...the use of language, behavior, image and symbols that express prejudice against a particular group or groups on the basis of any protected characteristic(s).”

***Any student experiencing issues related to the above policy, should be referred to their counselor or an administrator for further assistance.

Additional Resources:

[Respectful Disagreements Lesson](#)

[The Election is Over.....Now what?](#)

[Why Educators Should Remain Neutral In a Politically Charged Time](#)

[Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics](#)

[Establishing Ground Rules](#)