

MEMORANDUM

January 28, 2021

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools *mc*

SUBJECT: STAFF FOLLOW-UP: SCHOOL BOARD MEETING OF NOVEMBER 18, 2020, AGENDA ITEM H-10, PROVIDING GUIDANCE TO INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL ON HOW TO PROPERLY ADDRESS POLITICAL VIEWPOINTS AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM

At the School Board meeting of November 18, 2020, the Board approved Agenda Item H-10, proffered by School Board Member Dr. Marta Perez, requesting the Superintendent of Schools to provide appropriate guidance, as may be necessary, to remind instructional personnel regarding how to properly address or discuss controversial issues and political viewpoints with students during classroom instruction. This information should indicate that classroom instruction is not to be used in an attempt to indoctrinate or persuade students to a particular point of view and should be mindful to not infringe on the academic freedom provided to instructional personnel in these matters.

The Division of Academics, Department of Social Sciences, has continuously offered support to school-site administrators and instructional staff in accordance with Florida State Statute 1003.42, Required Instruction and M-DCPS' Student Progression Plan, on the appropriate instructional strategies to utilize when teaching controversial subject matter.

To provide support to instructional personnel in teaching controversial issues, the Office of Professional Development and Evaluation, in partnership with the Department of Social Sciences, will facilitate training and peer-to-peer conversations through Professional Learning Support Teams (PLSTs) PD Cafés. The PLSTs at each school will collaborate with school leadership to provide strategies on how to properly address or discuss controversial issues and political viewpoints with students during classroom instruction. In addition, the Office of Professional Standards will provide guidelines and training to ensure compliance with School Board Policies when teaching such topics through *Ethics Matter* trainings, specifically, Remain Neutral: Addressing Controversial Issues in the Classroom. These guidelines and training will also be provided to new teachers through the New Teacher LAB (Learning At the Beginning).

Additionally, as a result of School Board Item H-20 under the subject "Political Bias" proffered by former School Board Member Dr. Martin Karp at the School Board Meeting of October 21, 2020, the Division of Academics, Department of Social Sciences, and the Department of Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis published Weekly Briefing #29297 "Student Survey Regarding Politics" on January 22, 2021. The 2021 High School Survey-Instruction Regarding Politics was developed to ascertain students' experiences. 11th grade U.S. History teachers and 12th grade U.S. Government/Economics teachers have been asked to provide their students with an opportunity to complete the survey via a link

provided in the weekly briefing. Students have until February 26, 2021 to respond to the voluntary survey. Survey questions are largely based on School Board Policy 2240: Controversial Issues and Student Expression. As per School Board Item H-20 from October 21, 2020, a report will be provided to the School Board at the May 19, 2021 regular school board meeting highlighting student survey results regarding political bias.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mr. Jose L. Dotres, Chief Human Capital Officer, Office of Human Capital Management, at 305 995-7260, or Dr. Sylvia J. Diaz, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Academics & Transformation, at 305 995-4255.

AMC:jmc
M787

cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet
Ms. Lisette Alves
Ms. Tricia M. Fernandez
Ms. Gisela F. Feild
School Board Agenda Office



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Book	Policy Manual
Section	2000 Program
Title	CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES AND STUDENT EXPRESSION
Code	po2240
Status	Active
Adopted	May 11, 2011

2240 - **CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES AND STUDENT EXPRESSION**

Students are encouraged to participate in discussions, speeches, and other expressions in which many points of view, including those that are controversial, are freely explored. A controversial issue is a topic on which opposing points of view have been promulgated by responsible opinion or likely to arouse both support and opposition in the community.

The introduction and proper educational use of controversial issues are permitted if their use in the instructional program:

- A. is related to the instructional goals of the course of study and level of maturity of the students;
- B. does not attempt to indoctrinate or persuade students to a particular point of view;
- C. encourages open-mindedness and is conducted in a spirit of scholarly inquiry;
- D. provides students with the right to form and express an opinion on controversial issues without subjecting them to academic consequences or disciplinary action for expressing their viewpoints;
- E. provides students with the right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice; and
- F. provides students with the right to form and express an opinion on controversial issues without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher or the school.

Controversial issues related to the instructional program may be initiated by the students themselves provided they are presented in the ordinary course of classroom instruction and are not substantially disruptive to the educational setting. Students shall not be disturbed in the exercise of their constitutionally guaranteed right to assemble peaceably and to publicly and privately express ideas and opinions, including the use of social media, provided that such exercise does not infringe on the rights of others and does not interfere with the operation of the schools.

Students seeking to express their ideas and opinions through demonstration must discuss reasonable time, place, duration, and manner restrictions with their sponsor or an administrator in advance.

Disciplinary action may be taken against students who violate provisions of the Code of Student Conduct (Policy 5500), School Board policies, or engage in the following types of activities, including through social media, libel; violence or destruction of property; speech that is obscene, vulgar, lewd, or indecent; encouraging illegal drug use; or urging violation of law or school regulations. Student expression through symbols, buttons, badges, emblems, armbands, and dress/grooming is subject to the same limitations and may be prohibited if it signifies or is related to gangs, gang membership, or gang activity, or otherwise causes or may cause a disruption at school.

The right to free speech for students with regard to school-sponsored publications, productions, and performances is outlined in Policy 5722. Controversial issues may be introduced in school-sponsored publications, productions, and performances provided equal opportunity is given to present opposing viewpoints.



Briefing ID #: 29297

ALL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS/APs/TEACHERS: Social Sciences- Student Survey
Instruction Regarding Politics
Category: For Your Information

Audience: Principals/APs (Senior High), All Teachers
Post Date: Jan 21, 2021

Due Date: n/a
Meeting Date: n/a
Master Calendar: n/a

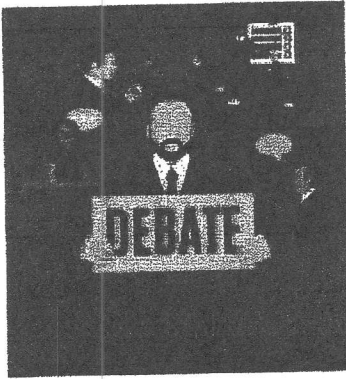
Attachment(s): [SB Policy 2240.pdf](#)

To inform Senior High Schools of a survey for 11th and 12th grade students regarding instructional experiences about politics.

- The Division of Academics, Department of Social Sciences and the Department of Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis are pleased to inform Senior High Schools of a survey for 11th and 12th grade students regarding instructional experiences about politics.
- At the School Board Meeting of October 21, 2020, former school board member, Dr. Martin Karp, proffered School Board Item H-20 under the subject "Political Bias." Said item was approved by the School Board and called for students to be surveyed regarding political biases in the classroom and at school.
- As such, the **2021 High School Survey-Instruction Regarding Politics** was developed to ascertain students' experiences. Senior High School 11th grade U.S. History teachers and 12th grade U.S. Government/Economics teachers are asked to provide their students with the following survey link, and allow class time to complete the survey in order to comply with the School Board's request.
- **The 2021 High School Survey-Instruction Regarding Politics may be administered between January 21 – February 26, 2021, and is available at the link which follows:**
<https://surveygoldcloud.com/s/016A7DB176134ECA/160.htm>
- Please note the following regarding the survey:
 - Survey questions are largely based on the attached School Board Policy 2240: Controversial Issues and Student Expression.
 - Completing the survey is anonymous and voluntary.
 - Teachers are encouraged to provide incentives for their students to complete the survey (e.g. an extra credit grade).

- Should you have questions or need additional information, please contact Dr. Tarek Chebbi, Director, Office of Program Evaluation, at tchebbi@dadeschools.net or Mr. Robert C. Brazofsky, Executive Director, Department of Social Sciences, rbrazofsky@dadeschools.net or see the contact information below.

Contact: Mr. Robert C. Brazofsky, Executive Director (305 995-1982)
Department: Department of Social Sciences



2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics

The purpose of this survey is to gather the opinions of high school students about instruction that takes place concerning politics, controversial issues, and student expression. Questions on this survey are largely derived from existing School Board policies. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The information gained from this survey is completely anonymous. Your responses will be combined with those of other students. For this reason, you **SHOULD NOT** put your name or other personal information on the survey. **INSTRUCTIONS:** Please read each statement carefully and decide how much you agree or disagree with the statement as it applies to your school or use the drop-down menu to select the appropriate answer.

Introduction

Use the drop-down list to select your school (Please note that schools are listed by School number).

What is your grade level?

What is your gender?

Which ethnic group/race you identify with the MOST?

Continue

Controversial issues may not be initiated by a source outside the schools unless prior approval has been given by the principal. The principal is responsible for the administrative implementation of this policy.

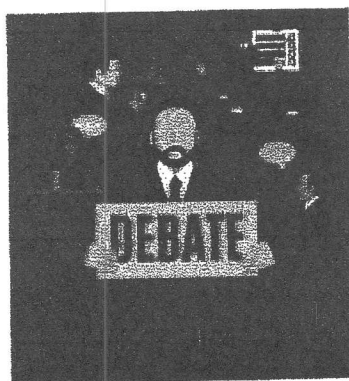
A course of study or certain instructional materials may contain content and/or activities that some parents find objectionable. If after careful, personal review of the program lessons and/or materials, a parent indicates to the school that either the content or activities conflicts with his/her religious beliefs or value system, the school will consider a written request for his/her child to be excused from a particular class, lesson, or activity for specified reasons. The student, however, will not be excused from participating in the course and will be provided alternate learning activities during times of such parent requested absences.

Parents wishing to file formal complaints regarding controversial issues or the use of particular materials must do so according to Policy 9130.

Effective 7/1/11

Legal

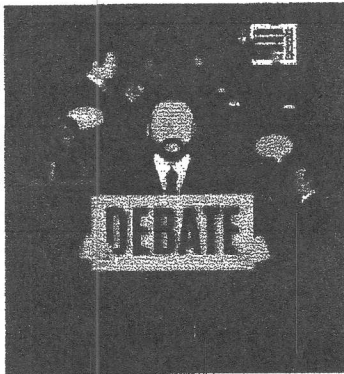
20 U.S.C. 1232h



2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics

Feedback about instruction related to politics or controversial issues

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Instruction related to politics or controversial issues has been related to the instructional goals of the courses that I have taken.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instruction related to politics or controversial issues was not delivered in a way to persuade me to accept a particular point of view.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instruction related to politics or controversial issues was done in an atmosphere that encouraged open-mindedness and was conducted in a spirit of scholarly inquiry.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instruction related to politics or controversial issues respected my right to express my opinion without subjecting me to negative consequences (academic and/or disciplinary).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instruction related to politics or controversial issues was provided in an atmosphere free from bias and/or prejudice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instruction related to politics or controversial issues allowed me to express my opinion without jeopardizing my relationship with my teachers and/or with my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instruction related to politics or controversial issues has	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics

Instructional materials ...

Strongly Agree

Agree

Don't Know

Disagree

Strongly
Disagree

Instructional materials [textbooks, news articles, videos etc.] that have been used during instruction related to politics or controversial issues have been balanced, not favoring one particular view.

☐☐☐☐☐

If instructional materials were presented to me that portrayed one particular political viewpoint or party, most of the time additional materials were presented that portrayed another viewpoint.

☐☐☐☐☐

During my experiences in school, my constitutional right to assemble peacefully and to publicly and privately express ideas and opinions has NOT been infringed upon, given that I did not disrupt the educational setting.

☐☐☐☐☐

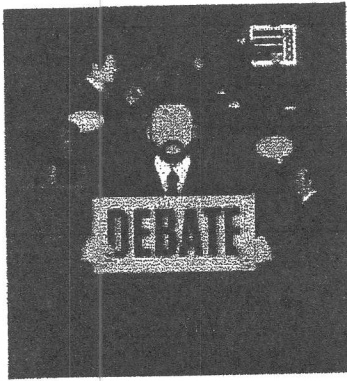
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2/22/2021

2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics

been balanced and, in large
part, non-partisan.

Continue



2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics

Experiences during the 2020 election season...

Did you discuss politics or public issues in the following settings?

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ At home, with my family
- ☐ At school, with my friends
- ☐ At school with my teachers
- ☐ Online with my friends or people I know
- ☐ Online with people I do not know
- ☐ None of the above

Have you done any of the following activities?

(Select all that apply)

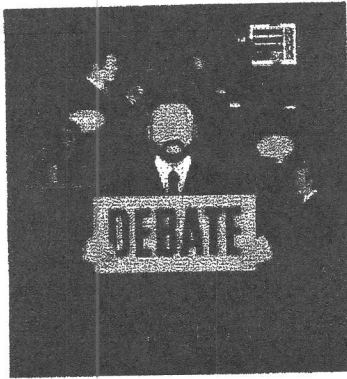
- ☐ Campaigned for a political candidate or party
- ☐ Attended a political rally
- ☐ Expressed support for a political candidate or a public cause
- ☐ Voted in the 2020 election
- ☐ None of the above

Did you receive any of the following in exchange for your political engagement?

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Volunteer hours needed for High school graduation
- ☐ Promises for assistance with college application
- ☐ Financial compensation or gifts
- ☐ Other incentive
- ☐ None of the above

Submit Your Responses



2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics

Political activities and/or influences outside the classroom

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In general, I believe there are political biases at my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have personally witnessed political biases at my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I was offered volunteer/community service hours in exchange for helping a specific party or candidate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I was offered other incentives in exchange for helping a specific party or candidate (such as: assistance with college application, material compensation (money, gifts)).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Continue

MEMORANDUM

May 10, 2021

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools *AMC*

SUBJECT: STAFF FOLLOW-UP: SCHOOL BOARD MEETING OF OCTOBER 21, 2020, AGENDA ITEM H-20, POLITICAL BIASES

At the School Board meeting of October 21, 2020, the Board approved Agenda Item H-20, proffered by School Board Member Dr. Martin Karp. This item directed the Superintendent to 1) include in the School Climate Surveys and/or in a separate student survey, questions to gauge whether students believe they have been the subject of political biases in the classroom and anywhere at school; 2) review survey responses and take any necessary corrective actions; and 3) provide a response to the School Board no later than the School Board Meeting of May 2021. As follow-up to this Board item to maximize student participation, District staff has taken the following actions.

As an extension of the School Climate Survey, the Office of Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis, in conjunction with the Division of Academics, and Department of Social Sciences administered the 2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics. The survey addressed students' perceptions and experiences during instruction and interactions at school regarding politics. The survey was carried out between January 21 and April 6, 2021. The survey questions were largely based on the School Board Policy 2240: Controversial Issues and Student Expression.

Attached is an Evaluation Matters report, *Results of the 2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics*, with the complete survey results from a student population of 13,991 respondents. Below are notable highlights:

- Most of the students indicated that instruction and instructional materials used in their classes presented a balanced viewpoint and respected their individual opinions.
- Slightly less than half believed there were political biases in the school, with 41% indicating that they had personally witnessed political bias.
- Few students were offered incentives, such as community service hours, for helping a political party or political candidate.
- Most of the students had engaged in discussions of politics in their homes with families and at school with their friends, but fewer, in the range of 40-45%, online with friends or at school with their teachers.
- Overall, about one-third of the students had expressed support for a political candidate, but very few had engaged in other political activities.

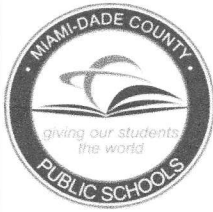
The results of this survey indicate that no systemic corrective action is necessary. Teachers should continue to provide instruction on such topics in an unbiased and balanced manner. Schools should maximize efforts to encourage civil discourse that will guide students when approaching these topics outside of the classroom.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Dr. Sylvia J. Diaz, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Academics and Transformation, at 305 995-1451.

AMC:gf
M1206

Attachment

cc School Board Attorney
 Superintendent's Cabinet
 Ms. Lisette Alves
 Ms. Gisela Feild
 Mr. Robert C. Brazofsky
 Dr. Sally A. Shay
 Dr. Tarek Chebbi



Evaluation Matters

Volume 10, Number 7

May 2021

Dr. Tarek Chebbi, Director

Results of the 2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics

1. What is the purpose of this report?

The 2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics was carried out by the Office of Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis, in conjunction with the Division of Academics, Department of Social Sciences, as a result of a Board request to gauge whether students believe they have been the subject of political biases at school (School Board Meeting of October 21, 2020, Agenda Item H-20, Political Biases), given the political atmosphere in the nation during the 2020 presidential election. The survey addressed students' experiences during instruction and in interactions at school with regard to politics. The survey was initially scheduled to be administered to 11th and 12th-grade students between January 21 and February 26, 2021, and was extended through April 6, 2021. The survey questions were largely based on the ***School Board Policy 2240: Controversial Issues and Student Expression***.

2. Which populations were targeted for this survey?

All 11th and 12th-grade students in traditional (non-charter) senior high schools who were enrolled in U.S. History or U.S. Government/Economics courses were asked to provide their feedback by completing the anonymous online survey. The 2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics was administered online, using SurveyGold. Teachers in the targeted classes were asked to provide class time for students to respond to the survey. In order to increase participation, teachers were encouraged to give their students an incentive to complete the survey (e.g., an extra credit grade).

3. Who responded to the survey?

Overall, 13,991 students in grades 11 and 12 responded to the survey, representing 30% of the targeted students. The responding students were enrolled in 63 District (non-charter) high schools. The average number of respondents by school was 222. Additional demographic characteristics of the respondents by grade, gender, and ethnicity are presented in Table 1.

It should be noted that the demographic distribution of the respondents to the survey is very similar to the distribution of the overall student population in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. As such, the results may be generalizable to the targeted population.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Students Who Responded to the Survey

	Number	Percent	District Student Population
11 th Graders	7,131	50.97%	49.49%
12 th Graders	6,860	49.03%	50.51%
Male	7,559	54.03%	51.00%
Female	6,432	45.97%	49.00%
Hispanic	10,025	71.65%	72.60%
Black Non-Hispanic	1,999	14.29%	19.20%
White Non-Hispanic	910	6.50%	6.40%
Multiracial	456	3.26%	0.60%
Did not answer	351	2.51%	---
Asian	206	1.47%	1.10%
Others	44	0.32%	0.10%
TOTAL	13,991	100%	100%

4. What were the students' perceptions of political bias in classes and their school?

The survey was comprised of four main sections: 1) feedback about instruction related to politics or controversial issues; 2) instructional materials; 3) political activities and/or influences outside the classroom; and 4) experiences during the 2020 election season.

The survey items addressed in Tables 2 – 4, regarding the students' perceptions of political bias, conformed to a Likert-scale format, with the following responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, or Do Not Know. For purposes of this summary, the Strongly Agree and Agree options have been combined for overall "Agreement", while the Disagree and Strongly Disagree options have been combined for overall "Disagreement." Note that students who did not express an opinion, and answered, "Do not Know" are not included on the tables which follow, therefore the sum of percentages of "Agreement" and "Disagreement" will not total 100%.

As seen in Tables 2 and 3, the majority of the students indicated that instruction and instructional materials used in their classes presented a balanced viewpoint and respected the students' individual opinions.

Table 6: Have you done any of the following activities?

	Percent
Expressed support for a political candidate or a public cause	31.33%
Voted in the 2020 election	7.25%
Attended a political rally	6.37%
Campaigned for a political candidate or party	5.63%
None of the above	61.75%

Table 7: Did you receive any of the following in exchange for your political engagement?

	Percent
Volunteer hours needed for high school graduation	8.06%
Promises for assistance with college application	3.14%
Financial compensation or gifts	2.83%
Other incentive	2.60%
None of the above	87.92%

6. Summary

The results from the 2021 Survey of High School Students about Politics have provided insight into students' perceptions of instructional practices and their experiences regarding politics at a critical time, during the 2020 election cycle. The results show that the instruction that took place, along with instructional materials regarding politics and/or controversial issues seem to have been provided in a balanced and fair manner, as addressed in School Board Policy 2240: Controversial Issues and Student Expression. Nevertheless, the results suggest that when engaged in discussions or dialogue regarding politics and/or controversial issues outside of the classroom, students were more likely to report that bias did exist. It should be noted, however, that the results do not indicate widespread use of incentives in support of any political party or candidate.