

DRAFT Policy Document

Updated June 15, 2021

Reviewing @Policy Subcommittee Meeting on August 18, 2021

Policy: Supporting the Purposeful Teaching of Challenging (or, *Controversial*) Topics

I. Policy Statement

In keeping with The Watertown Public Schools (WPS) core values of equity, excellence, and community, the district recognizes and embraces the role of public education in preparing students to be civically-empowered participants in society. WPS students develop the skills of civic engagement while upholding human rights. Consequently, the instructional program designed to achieve this purpose must appropriately emphasize cultural diversity, critical thinking, and the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of living in a diverse society. WPS also recognizes that as many students prepare for active civic engagement they often encounter issues that give rise to vigorous debate or are considered "controversial." WPS encourages the examination of topics that may arise from our instruction whether they be part of the formal curriculum or during teachable moments. The examination of controversial (or challenging) issues, as defined by administration, should occur in *inclusive and supportive learning environments* that encourage respect for civil discourse. The district will provide support, professional development opportunities, and curricular guidance to sustain educators in this work. Guidelines will be developed and implemented by the Superintendent in collaboration with the WPS faculty.

Guidelines **Under development through the early fall 2021*