

# The Politics of an English Teacher

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## Standard 6:

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

### Knowledge

Models and strategies of change and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural and economic

### Dispositions

Recognizes a variety of ideas, values, and cultures

### Performances

- There is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups,
- The school community works within the framework of policies, laws, and regulations enacted by local, state

## *The Politics of an English Teacher*

The school year is off to a very good beginning. Teachers and students are pleased with the changes that have been made and the budget was sufficient enough to allow Mr. Buck to meet the needs of the faculty. All seemed right with the world. Everything was in place for the open house with invitations sent, halls clean, and student ambassadors at the ready. Mr. Buck felt good about the evening and looked forward to meeting the parents of the students.

The following morning Mr. Buck was reflecting on the previous evening. It had been a big success with parents complementing on the building and the positive attitude their children had about school. Teachers were pleased with the turnout and Mr. Buck was in the process of writing a memo to the superintendent highlighting the first open house.

The ringing phone quickly interrupted the calm of the moment. It was the superintendent asking Mr. Buck to come to her office immediately. All the way to the superintendent's office Mr. Buck racked his brain wondering what the superintendent needed. He had asked on the phone, but was just told to get there as soon as possible. As Mr. Buck entered the superintendent's office he was shocked to see such a large group of people. The superintendent introduced Reverend Smith and the other members of the party.

"There seems to be a problem with a poster in Mrs. Caster's classroom" stated the superintendent. "It would seem that Mrs. Caster is promoting the presidential campaign of Mr. Austin. She is requiring her students to do papers about Mr. Austin for credit and sending home political propaganda with students."

"Mr. Austin supports several issues that are against our beliefs and the beliefs of my congregation. We want to know what you are going to do about this? We want the poster down and the teacher to stop campaigning for Mr. Austin" stated Reverend Smith in a polite but firm voice. "I will expect a call at the end of the day."

The superintendent listened, smiled and thanked the Reverend for coming in. Reverend Smith and his party left leaving Mr. Buck amazed and confused.

**List areas of conflict from this situation.**

1. Are there models and strategies of conflict resolution that could be applied? If so list and discuss briefly.
2. What are some possible responses to the Reverend by Mr. Buck, or the superintendent?
3. What are some possible ways to deal with Mrs. Caster? What conflicts might arise from your dealing with Mrs. Caster?
4. How can dialogue with representatives from the community help to frame the policies and procedures of the local school district and/or the state with respect to the education of students?

## **Instructor's Notes and Scoring Guide**

For

### **The Politics of an English Teacher**

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#### **Issues in this case study**

The intent of the author is to have the candidate/student look at political influence local organizations have on the school system, while at the same time understand the importance of conflict resolution when dealing with members of the community and staff.

#### **Discussion**

One person's view of teaching and learning may differ greatly from another's. This case study should cause the candidate/student to look at the conflict that arises when a teacher's view conflicts with what members of the community deem as appropriate for their children. The issue of educational freedom vs. community norms and district policy should be a focus in the discussion.

#### **Extended Learning Activities**

The instructor may choose to extend the learning in one or more of the following ways:

- Having the student's role-play each of the principles in the case study and report on how they would react to the situation.
- Continue the dialogue between the superintendent and the principal. What should the superintendent have done? Is there a communication problem?
- Have the student/candidate develop a plan of action to meet with the teacher.
- Have the student/candidate develop their response to the Reverend.
- Have the student/candidate support this case study under another ISLLC Standard.

#### **Student responses to the case study may be assessed in one or more of the following areas:**

- Sensitivity to all parties involved based on the issue(s) and not personal beliefs
- Knowledge of a teachers legal right to support an individual or political party

- Knowledge of facilitating dialogue with the teacher and the Reverend
- The affect on the teaching and learning process

*Score: 2*

Response cites the civil rights issue of an instructor actively supporting a political candidate in the classroom and includes at least one of the following:

- Meeting with the instructor to discuss the issue and gather information regarding the concern.
- Suggestions of alternative activities which would allow students to explore all political candidates as a learning activity.
- Follow-up dialogue with the superintendent.
- Follow-up dialogue with Reverend Smith

*Score: 1*

Response specifically cites one of the following:

- The civil rights issue of an instructor actively supporting a political candidate in the classroom.
- Meeting with instructor to discuss the issue and gather information regarding the concern.
- Suggestions for alternate learning activities to be used in the classroom.
- Follow-up dialogue with the superintendent.
- Follow-up dialogue with Reverend Smith

*Score: 0*

Response is vague, omits reference to the teachers civil rights, fails to offer any alternatives, and does not identify communication with the parties involved.