

January 18, 1943

MEMORANDUM TO: Sub-committee on Controversial Issues
Secondary Division of Teachers Curriculum Committee
Manzanar Teachers Study Groups

SUBJECT: Controversial issues in the classroom

A copy of your letter of January 16 addressed to Mr. Merrit has come to my attention. It should be kept in mind that in curriculum direction the Superintendent ordinarily has the final say as to policy and philosophy that shapes the curriculum content of a school system. The Superintendent has requested that for the time being, perhaps one week perhaps three weeks, that all controversial issues concerning Japanese evacuation, the recent disturbance of December 6, war aims, relocation and related topics which might lead opinion into heated discussion be avoided.

This does not seem unreasonable in view of the sequence of circumstances that have arisen here. This decision was based on the recommendations of Mrs. Adams, Mr. Merritt, and a committee of Japanese who came to my office. The Japanese committee in particular asked us not to allow school discussion to drift into topics that would create a situation in which boys might speak out of turn. They felt the young people had not had opportunity yet to calm themselves and that it was up to teachers to prevent situations from arising that might permit them to make remarks which probably not be said later on during the year.

I realize that no matter what a teacher plans for her class and what topic she plans to avoid that she cannot control the spontaneous questions that will arise in the classroom. What she can say is that they will have a place to take up that topic later on in the course and give an answer that is satisfactory for the moment to the individual who raised the question.

I am sure the Education administration had no intention of forever taking out controversial issues out of its social studies core [sic]. There would be very little left of social studies if there were no controversial issues. It has been suggested to several that certain drill in English be emphasized now or other such neutral subjects. By keeping in touch with teachers and with the general tone of the students we will be able to determine at what point we can again introduce the topics that rightfully belong in a social studies core.

One of our main objectives is educating for relocation. We certainly should have definite plans for the content of the senior problems course, which should deal with relocation.

Should the committee desire, I will be glad to arrange an appointment for Mr. Merritt to speak to the social studies teachers on a topic which has been suggested beforehand. It might be beneficial if the whole senior class could be gathered together to hear Mr. Merritt. If you will keep me or Mr. High advised as to the problems that are disturbing, or questions that need attention, we would be very glad to meet with you and assist you.

Your job as social studies teachers is to keep us in constant touch with the trends and attitudes of the students so that we can better direct the curriculum content.

/s/ Genevieve W. Carter
Genevieve W. Carter
Superintendent of Education