



discussion guidelines

Our classroom is a social studies classroom, emphasis on the *social*. We will be learning about our state's and nation's history that includes tough subjects such as slavery, racism and anti-Semitism, party politics and current events. As your teacher, it is my full intent to provide a platform in which we can learn, discuss and debate where every student's input is valued. But our comments must be respectful, without intent to hurt others and we must strive to make arguments supported by evidence and rooted in fact. We are all different. And that is okay! We all differ in our physical appearance, our life experiences and our personal beliefs. As a result, not everyone will agree on everything. The saying "Treat others the way you would want to be treated" goes a long way in this classroom. Please review and adhere to the following:

- Be open-minded: Even if you don't agree with someone, be willing to acknowledge and see others' points of view.
- Think before you speak: Is what I'm about to mean to attack, belittle and/or shame someone? How is what I'm about to say going to further the conversation? What will be the impact of what I'm about to say? How can I get my point across in the most effective yet respectful way possible?
- Although you are entitled to your opinion, you may not intentionally offend others by using profanity or slurs pertaining to race, gender, ethnicity, religion or national origins. This is absolutely unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- When presenting your opinion on current events, be prepared to contextually justify your opinion/ claim/ argument. Is what you are about to say illegal? Does it go against our class commonly shared values (I'm thinking of having each class generate their own set of commonly shared values. It would be a good exercise prior to introducing these guidelines to show how we all differ in opinion). Does it go against American ideals and values? Does it go against Constitutional rights and civil liberties?
- Be aware of facial expressions, body language and gestures as others are speaking.
- Refrain from using too many anecdotal references. Let's keep our arguments relevant to the topic at hand, supported with evidence and rooted in context. *You will be fact-checked! (I'm thinking of designating a student or getting a volunteer to be the discussion fact-checker).
- Focus your rebuttals on the person's claim and not the person, personally. Do not attack someone for sharing their thoughts and beliefs. This applies to people in power, historical figures and high-profile individuals.
- Do not try to take over the discussion. Be aware of yourself and know when to come in as well as step back.
- Student input: What would you like to see added to our expression guidelines?

I have read the information regarding the information and policies of Mrs. Ellis' class for the 2020-2021 school year. I agree to assist the teacher in the implementation of these policies and pledge my cooperation.

X _____ (Student Signature)

Parent/Guardian Name: _____