

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Governing Board believes that students should have opportunities to discuss controversial issues which have political, social or economic significance and which the students are mature enough to investigate and address. The study of a controversial issue should help students learn how to gather and organize pertinent facts, discriminate between fact and fiction, draw intelligent conclusions, and respect the right for others to have opinions.

The Board expects teachers to exercise caution and discretion when deciding whether or not a particular issue is suitable for study or discussion in any particular class. Teachers should not spend class time on any topic which is not suitable for the class or related to the established course of study. For public schools, policy on controversial issues is defined in terms of the rights of pupils rather than in terms of the rights of teachers. The pupils have four rights to be recognized:

1. The right to study any controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance and concerning that which he should have an opinion at his/her level.
2. The right to have access to all relevant information including the materials that circulate freely in the community.
3. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
4. The right to form and express his/her own opinion on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing his/her relations with teachers or the school administration.

The Board also expects teachers to ensure that all sides of a controversial issue are impartially presented, with adequate and appropriate factual information. Without promoting any partisan point of view, the teacher should help students separate fact from opinion and warn them against drawing conclusions from insufficient data. The teacher shall not suppress any student's view on the issue as long as it is not malicious or abusive toward others.

Teachers sponsoring guest speakers shall either ask them not to use their position or influence on students to forward their own religious, political, economic or social views or shall take active steps to neutralize whatever bias has been presented.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES (Continued)

In order to assure that materials of a potentially controversial nature are appropriately used as part of the instructional program the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Materials will be previewed and evaluated by a committee which should include members of the appropriate department or task force, a library media specialist, and a site administrator.
2. Upon approval of materials, a recommendation will be submitted to curriculum council, the site principal, the assistant superintendent for instructional services, and to the Board of Education. A list of approved resources will be available for referral.
3. Preview of potentially controversial materials will be made available before classroom use within an appropriate amount of time.
4. The parents or guardian will be notified in advance if materials of a potentially controversial nature are to be used in classroom instruction. This will include movies or videos with any other than a "G" rating. The parent or guardian has the prerogative to request that an alternative instructional activity or alternative class be provided for his/her child.

Legal References:**EDUCATION CODE**

35160.5	Requirement for policies and procedures for parent complaints re-employees
51550	Prohibited instruction or activity
51550	Prohibited study or supplemental materials
51511	Religious matters properly included in courses of study
51530	Prohibition and definition re advocating or teaching communism with intent to indoctrinate
51550	Sex education courses
60040	Portrayal of cultural and racial diversity
60044	Prohibited instructional materials
60045	Required to be accurate, objective, current, and suited to needs and comprehension at respective grade levels.