

## Series 6000 – Instruction

### 1. Elementary and Secondary

#### D. Curriculum

#### **(4) Teaching About Controversial Issues**

The Board's policy can best be described by listing the following basic rights of the student:

1. The right to study controversial issues that have political, economic or social significance on which, at his/her level, he/she will begin to have an opinion.
2. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
3. The right of access to all relevant information freely available in the school (or public libraries.)
4. The right to form and express his/her own opinions on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing the student's relations with the teacher or the school.

The Suffield Board of Education supports teaching about controversial issues in the schools. The presentation and discussion of controversial issues will be on an informative basis. Teachers will present all appropriate sides of controversial issues and guard against giving their personal opinions in order for students to have an opportunity to find, collect, and assemble factual material on the subject; to interpret the data without prejudice; to reconsider assumptions and claims and to reach their own conclusions. By refraining from expressing personal views, the teacher will encourage students to search after truth and to think and develop conclusions for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled, weighed and relationships seen before drawing inferences or conclusions, is among the most valuable outcomes of a public education system.

Emotional criticism and a promotion of a cause within the classroom are inappropriate and unscholarly. The teacher's attitude will be that of a scholar, which is truth-seeking, open minded and tolerant. The teacher shall approach controversial issues in the classroom in an impartial and unprejudiced manner, and must refrain from using classroom privileges and prestige to promote a partisan point of view.

Every effort will be made to provide emotional supports, both in the classroom and throughout the school community to assist, as needed.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes  
 31-51q Liability of employer for discipline or discharge or employee on account of employee's exercise of certain constitutional rights.  
 Keyishian vs. Board of Regents 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)  
 Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81)

Policy adopted: March 5, 1981  
 Policy revised: April 3, 2007, January 8, 2018

SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
 Suffield, Connecticut