

Instruction

Controversial Issues

Controversial issues are those subjects in which there are significant differences of opinion based on differing values people bring to an issue; as a basic educational competency, students should develop abilities to deal with controversial issues.

Controversy is inherent in the democratic way of life, and study and discussion of controversial issues is essential to citizenship education in a free society. Students can become better informed individuals through examining evidence, facts, and differing viewpoints; by exercising freedom of thought and moral choice; and through making responsible decisions. Perpetuation of the fundamental principles of American society requires opportunities for students to read, to gather information, to speak, to hear alternative viewpoints, and to reach honest judgments according to individual abilities.

Teachers shall help students identify and evaluate relevant information, learn the techniques of critical analysis, and make independent judgments. They must reinforce students' rights to present and support personal conclusions with those who have opposing points of view. Teachers should also develop student interest in objective re-examination of long-standing issues, and of newly significant issues, and promote vigorous exchanges of ideas. Teachers do not have the right to indoctrinate students with their personal views, or to deviate from the District's curriculum. In matters in which there are differences of opinion, the teacher shall not limit or control the judgment or thinking of students. The teacher shall foster the study of issues rather than teach a particular viewpoint.

The discussion and study of controversial issues shall be objective and scholarly, with a minimum emphasis on opinion, consistent with the District's curriculum. Indeed, such discussion and study of controversial issues may only be initiated and addressed by the teacher as part of and in the context of the curriculum. The teacher shall approach controversial issues in the classroom in an impartial and unprejudiced manner, with consideration of the age of the students. The teacher must refrain from using classroom privileges and prestige to promote a partisan point of view.