

INSTRUCTION

Controversial Issues

A. Generally

Students, under the guidance of a teacher, are encouraged to explore, to present and to discuss divergent points of view in the quest for knowledge and truth. However, the discussion of a controversial issue must be tempered by a consideration of the age and maturity of the students.

B. Definition

A controversial issue may be included in-one of the following examples: (1) any problem that society is in the process of debating; (2) any problem for which more than one solution is being supported; or (3) any issue that may arouse strong emotions. These issues may be a part of the instructional program only when they are germane to the subject being taught and only after consideration has been given to the age and maturity of the students. No individual may impose personal views on the students, and a balance must be maintained through the presentation of all sides of an issue.

C. Rights of Students

Students shall have the right:

1. To study at the level appropriate to the student's age those controversial issues germane to course objectives. These issues include, but are not limited to, those that have political, economic, social, scientific, or moral significance.
2. To have free access to major ideas and information related to the topic.
3. To study under qualified instructors in an atmosphere free from bias, prejudice and intimidation and to form and express opinions on controversial issues without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher or the school. This provision does not imply license to infringe on the rights of others.

D. Responsibility of the Teacher

In discussing controversial issues, the teacher shall keep in mind that the classroom is a forum and not a committee for producing resolutions or dogmatic pronouncements. The class should feel no responsibility for reaching an agreement. The teacher has the responsibility to bring out the major facts concerning controversial questions.

The approach of the teacher to controversial issues must be impartial and objective and must include balanced assignments of materials. Before introducing materials to the class, the teacher must discuss with the principal those materials that the teacher believes might contain potentially objectionable language, concepts or graphics. The principal will rule on the appropriateness of these materials and concepts.

Editor's Note

For challenged controversial materials, see School Board Policy 7-12 and any implementing regulations.

Related Links

School Board **Policy 7-12**

School Board **Regulation 7-12.1**

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APPROVED AS TO
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY

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