

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY:

It is the very essence of the democratic process to provide for a mature and free discussion of controversial issues. Most pupils in our secondary school have the maturity to profit from a study of the significant issues which face them and the world today. It is our responsibility to provide for this study. It is also our responsibility to provide the sort of classroom leadership which will make the study of controversial subjects a true experience.

RIGHT TO STUDY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES:

1. The right to study any controversial subject which has political, economic or social significance and of which (at his/her level) he should begin to have an opinion.
2. The right to have free access to all relevant information, including 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 opinions on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing the relations with other teachers or the school.

THE TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITY:

1. The teacher does not impose his/her own opinion on the class, but strives to keep the discussion open for the honest expression of all views and the presentation of all facts.
2. The teacher acts as a moderator of controversial issues in class discussion taking care to point out opinions and statements which are not substantiated by credible evidence. Propaganda and distorted information are clearly identified as such.
3. The teacher creates an atmosphere of freedom in the classroom in which the student recognizes his/her right to form and express opinions on controversial issues.
4. The teacher upholds, protects, and defends the fundamental freedoms as documented in the history of our nation.
5. No group or individual may claim the right to present arguments on controversial issues directly to the students in the schools. The teacher may, with the principal's approval, invite representatives of differing viewpoints to discuss issues with the class in order to clarify points.
6. The School Board provides a hearing whenever, in their judgment, the materials of instruction or the work of an individual teacher are attacked in such a way as to interfere with the administration of this policy.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

THE ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY:

The Teacher shall seek the advice of the Immediate Supervisor and/or Principal, and if necessary, the Superintendent when in doubt regarding the advisability of discussing certain issues in the classroom and/or using controversial materials.

Reaffirmed: 5/18/09