

6135 TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The freedoms to teach, to learn, and to express ideas without fear of censorship are fundamental rights held by public school teachers and students, as well as all other citizens. These freedoms, expressed and guaranteed in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, must be preserved in the teaching/learning process in a society of diverse beliefs and viewpoints and shared freedoms. Public schools must promote an atmosphere of free inquiry and a view of subject matter reflecting a broad range of ideas so that students are prepared for responsible citizenship. However, criticism of educational resources and teaching methods and the advocacy of additional educational resources are also essential First Amendment rights of students, faculty, parents, and other members of the community. Parents may request an alternate assignment should they have serious objections to the controversial topic/assignment.

School District personnel shall:

1. Select curriculum, teaching methods, resources, and materials appropriate to the educational objectives and the maturity and skill levels of the students based on their professional competence as educators and according to established school board policies and procedures. However, school personnel shall not be allowed to indoctrinate students with their own personal views.
2. Provide students with access to a broad range of ideas and viewpoints.
3. Encourage students to become decision makers, to exercise freedom of thought, and to make independent judgments through the examination and evaluation of relevant information, evidence, facts, and differing viewpoints.
4. Support students' rights to present their ideas, even if some people might find the ideas objectionable.
5. Discuss issues, including those viewed by some as controversial, since such discussion is essential to students' development of critical thinking and other skills which prepare them for full participation as citizens in a democratic society.

The School District is committed to parental and community involvement in the decision-making process for the schools. It is the responsibility of the School Board to provide opportunities for a variety of opinions to be expressed, but it is their further responsibility to protect the educational process from individuals or groups outside the public schools who wish to:

1. Use the public schools to indoctrinate students with particular viewpoints or beliefs.
2. Determine which viewpoints will be presented or avoided in public schools.
3. Require the disciplining of professional staff for including issues or resources considered controversial in their classes if the reasons for including them are educationally sound.

Adopted: 11-12-1985 ISD 709

Revised: 06-20-1995

10-19-2004 ISD 709

