

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, USE OF CONTROVERSIAL MATERIALS, GUEST SPEAKERS OR PROGRAMS

As free objective discussion of controversial issues is the heart of the process of representative government, freedom of speech and free access to information is among our most cherished traditions.

Controversial issues are defined as those problems, subjects or questions about which there are significant differences of opinion and discussions of which generally create strong feelings among people. Although there may be disagreement over what the facts are and what they mean, subjects usually become controversial issues because of differences in interpretation or the values people use in applying the facts.

Controversial materials are defined as learning resources which are not part of the district's approved learning resources and which are subject to disagreement as to appropriateness because they refer or relate to a controversial issue or present material in a manner which is itself controversial. Examples of such materials include, but are not limited to, those that depict explicit sexual conduct, graphic violence, profanity, drug use, or other socially undesirable behaviors, or materials that are likely to divide the community along racial, ethnic or religious lines.

Films and/or videos rated R, PG-13 or PG will be considered controversial in accordance with this policy. X rated and NC-17 rated films and videos will not be used in district schools. PG, PG-13 and R rated films and videos will be considered controversial at the elementary school level. PG-13 and R rated films and videos will be considered controversial at the middle school level. R rated films and videos will be considered controversial at the high school level.

Teachers may use controversial learning materials and/or guest speakers and discuss controversial issues if they contribute to the attainment of course objectives directly related to Board-adopted academic standards. The educational purpose of teaching about controversial issues or using controversial materials must be student achievement in academic standards rather than reaching conclusions about the validity of a specific point of view.

In teaching about controversial issues, teachers will work cooperatively with the building principal. Teachers will obtain approval from the building principal prior to the use of any controversial materials or guest speakers. If a teacher has a question regarding whether an issue, guest speaker or resource is controversial within the meaning of this policy, the teacher will contact the principal. The principal will instruct the teacher to notify students' parents/guardians and obtain parents/guardians' permission prior to discussing a controversial issue or using controversial materials or guest speaker. Teachers will inform the principal of controversial issues that arise unexpectedly which cause or are likely to cause concern for students and/or their parents/guardians.

When teaching about controversial issues, teachers may express their personal viewpoints and opinions; however, they also have the obligation to be objective and impartially present the various sides of an issue. Controversial issues are to be presented with good judgment and coordination with the building principal, keeping in mind the maturity of the students.

When controversial issues or controversial materials are used as part of the instructional program, alternative learning activities will be provided when feasible at the request of a student or the student's parents/guardians.

Adopted prior to 1985
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Cross ref.: IJ, Instructional Materials
KEC, Public Concerns/Complaints about Instructional Resources
KEF, Public Concerns/Complaints about Teaching Methods, Activities or
Presentations