



CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

I. Criteria for the Study of Controversial Issues

- A. Problems and issues for discussion and study should be significant and important in that they contribute to the purpose of the curriculum by helping to achieve the course goals and objectives.
- B. Study materials and other learning aids which yield a reasonable amount of data on all sides of the issue should be readily available.
- C. Time allotment for the study of any issue should allow adequate treatment.

II. The Responsibilities of Professional Staff

- A. The teacher is responsible for treating controversial issues objectively and academically.
- B. The teacher, as a moderator and a participant, will point out the possibility of alternative points of view. When handling controversial issues, the teacher may not present the teacher's own personal position as the only acceptable position which may be taken on that particular issue. The teacher is responsible to see that issues are honestly presented, and that students evaluate their sources of data as well as their own procedures and conclusions. The issue will be explored on all sides and aspects with educationally appropriate and suitable Curriculum Materials Adoption Committee (CMAC) approved print, electronic and/or media materials.
- C. When handling a controversial issue, the teacher will be provided suggested resource materials or sources of information on as many aspects of the issue the teacher can in order that all students may pursue individual reading and study so that they may reach individual conclusions with respect to that particular issue.
- D. If the teacher believes that materials outside of the CMAC approved materials would contribute to the course and its goals and these materials may be considered controversial in nature due to ratings (PG-13 or R) or topics, the teacher shall notify the school principal and request approval to use such materials in the classroom.
 - If the principal grants approval to use these materials, the teacher shall notify students and parents/guardians of the students in advance of the controversial nature of the materials and/or topic.
 - Any student or parent/guardian objecting and not wishing to read, watch, and/or be a part of the use of these materials shall receive an equivalent, alternative assignment.
- E. Materials and references presenting all sides of controversial issues should be made available by the school library.



- F. The teacher must recognize that dealing with controversial issues in the classroom requires special skill in guiding discussions with thoroughness and objectivity that promotes respect for opinion of others; develops the processes of critical thinking; encourages active participation in the democratic processes; and recognizes opposing viewpoints, the importance of fact, the value of judgment and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinion. The tradition of “respectful argumentation” based on evidence, conducted with courtesy and leading to the exposition of truth, is a precious part of our heritage and should be continually emphasized.
- G. In handling controversial issues, the teacher shall encourage students to keep the problem-solving attitude in mind.
- H. The teacher has the responsibility of making certain that students, within the limits of their ability and maturity, understand the importance of, and the reasons for, considering controversial issues. In handling controversial issues, the teacher shall not seek to bring about a single conclusion to which all students must subscribe. Nor shall a teacher allow a single student to dominate the discussion. The expression of a view will not be derogatory, malicious, or abusive toward other students’ views.
- I. The principal has a major responsibility for the administration and supervision of district approved program of instruction. If the principal has reason to believe that the use of the controversial materials or topics would not contribute to the course and its goals and objectives or would be harmful to the students, the principal may deny the use of said materials.

III. Student Rights and Responsibilities Regarding Controversial Issues

- A. The student has the right to study in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice controversial issues which have political, economic or social significance that contribute to course goals.
- B. The student has the right to form and express his or her own opinion.
- C. Student’s rights must carry responsibilities during the process of student-teacher interaction.

Controversial Issues – Guest Speakers

The following procedures will be in effect when guest speakers are being considered for use in the classroom.

When a teacher believes that a guest speaker will contribute to the curriculum by helping to achieve the goals and objectives of the course, the staff member will follow the procedures set out below.

1. At least two weeks before the date the speaker will visit, the teacher will notify the principal whom the teacher wants to invite, how the



- speaker's topic will relate to the curriculum, and when the speaker will visit.
2. Any teacher may request a waiver of the two-week notice and any principal may grant such a waiver in order to accommodate the scheduling of a speaker on short notice. However, such a waiver shall be at the sole discretion of the principal, and the previous granting of such waivers shall not obligate any principal to grant a waiver for any future requests. If the teacher and principal believe that the guest speaker's topic may be controversial, both parties will proceed with the following course of action to address the controversial issue:
 - The teacher shall notify students and parents/guardians of the students in advance of the speaker's controversial topic/issue.
 - Any student, objecting and not wishing to attend the presentation shall receive an equivalent, alternative assignment.
 - Unless the principal approves otherwise, the teacher will not allow non-class members to hear the speaker of a potentially controversial topic.
 3. If the principal has reason to believe that the appearance of the guest speaker would not contribute to the curriculum by helping achieve the goals and objectives of the course or would be harmful to the students, the principal may deny the appearance of the guest speaker.