

Policy

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Free discussion of controversial issues--political, economic, social--shall be encouraged in the classroom whenever appropriate for the level of the group.

Issues may be considered controversial which arouse strong reactions, based either on personal conviction or allegiance to a group. School treatment of controversial issues shall be designed to instruct pupils in fair and objective study techniques. The decision on whether a particular controversial issue shall become a matter for school study shall be based on the timeliness of the question, the maturity and needs of the pupils and the purposes of the schools. Classroom discussions on controversial questions which arise unexpectedly shall be the responsibility of the teacher, who shall provide relevant information on both sides of the question. Such discussions shall be kept free from the assumption that there is one correct answer that should emerge from a discussion and be taught authoritatively to the pupils.

Pupils shall be taught to recognize each other's right to form an opinion on controversial issues, and shall be assured of their own right to do so without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher or the school. When public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties: in the classroom, at Haworth Board of Education meetings, and at other meetings related to educational issues affecting the district, the employees are not speaking as citizens for [First Amendment](#) purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline (*Garcetti v. Ceballos*).

The Superintendent/Principal shall have the authority to limit or suspend discussion of controversial issues pending a review of the issue/materials. Instructional materials not previously approved must be reviewed by the superintendent/principal before being introduced into the classroom.

Adopted: January 29, 2002
NJSBA Review/Update: September 2009
Readopted: May 2010

Legal References: [N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1](#) General mandatory powers and duties
[N.J.S.A. 18A:36-34](#) Written approval required prior to acquisition of certain survey information from students
[N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20](#) Powers of board (county vocational schools)

Pupil Protection Rights Amendment - 20 [U.S.C.](#) 1232h

[Tenure Hearing of William Lee Johnson, Clearview Regional School District](#), 79 [S.L.D.](#) 267; 79 [S.L.D.](#) 273 aff'd with deletion of paragraph

[Garcetti v. Ceballos](#) 2006 U.S. LEXIS 4341(May 2006)

Possible

Cross References: *1312 Community complaints and inquiries
5145 Rights
*6115 Ceremonies and observances
*6141.2 Recognition of religious beliefs and customs
*6145.3 Publications
*6161.1 Guidelines for evaluation and selection of instructional materials
*6161.2 Complaints regarding instructional materials

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES (continued)

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.