

Title: Teaching About Controversial Issues

A controversial issue involves a problem about which individuals and/or groups advocate conflicting courses of action. It is an issue for which society has not found consensus, and it is of sufficient significance that each proposed way of dealing with it is objectionable to some sector of the citizenry.

Controversial issues shall be presented fairly in a spirit of honest inquiry so that students may recognize the validity of other points of view but can also learn to formulate their own opinions based upon dispassionate, objective, unbiased study and discussion of the facts related to the controversy.

Public schools as an educational institution and the individual classroom teacher have a responsibility to:

1. Provide the student an opportunity to study controversial issues.
2. Provide the student competent instruction balancing the various and/or conflicting points of view in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
3. Protect the right of the student to study pertinent controversial issues within appropriate limits and to allow the student to express personal opinions without jeopardizing his/her relationship with the instructor or the school.
4. Refrain from advocating partisan causes, sectarian religious views or selfish propaganda of any kind through any classroom or school device; however, an instructor shall not be prohibited from expressing a personal opinion as long as students are encouraged to reach their own decisions independently.
5. Protect and encourage attitudes, practices and social conditions that tend to sustain a moral sphere in which persons can respect one another, despite their differing values.

It shall be the policy of this District to support discussion of controversial issues in a spirit of honest inquiry that demonstrates to students their right to disagree with the opinions of others, but that they have the responsibility to know the facts and to respect the rights of others to hold conflicting opinions.

Cross References:

IASB Model Policy, 604, 604.1, 616, 616.2, 905, 905.1

Legal References:

Iowa Code Section 279.8

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