

INSTRUCTIONControversial Issues

The Governing Board recognizes that the district's educational program may sometimes include instruction related to controversial issues that may arouse strong reactions based on personal values and beliefs, political philosophy, culture, religion, or other influences. Instruction concerning such topics shall be relevant to the adopted course of study and curricular goals and should be designed to develop students' critical thinking skills, ability to discriminate between fact and opinion, respect for others, and understanding and tolerance of diverse points of view.

*(cf. 6141.2 - Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs)*  
*(cf. 6142.1 - Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Instruction)*  
*(cf. 6142.3 - Civic Education)*  
*(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)*  
*(cf. 6142.94 - History-Social Science Instruction)*  
*(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)*

The Board expects administrators and teachers to exercise professional judgment when deciding whether or not a particular issue is suitable for study or discussion. They shall consult with the Superintendent or designee as necessary to determine the appropriateness of the subject matter, guest speakers, and/or related instructional materials or resources.

*(cf. 6141 - Curriculum Development and Evaluation)*  
*(cf. 6161.1 - Selection and Evaluation of Instructional Materials)*  
*(cf. 6161.11 - Supplementary Instructional Materials)*

When providing instruction related to a controversial issue, the following guidelines shall apply:

1. The topic shall be suitable to the age and maturity of the students.
2. Instruction shall be presented in a balanced manner, addressing all sides of the issue without bias or prejudice and without promoting any particular point of view.
3. The teacher may express a personal opinion provided he/she identifies it as a personal opinion and clarifies that he/she is not speaking on behalf of the school or district. The teacher shall not express an opinion for the purpose of persuading students to his/her point of view.
4. No student's viewpoint shall be suppressed, provided such expression is not malicious or abusive toward others. Students shall be assured of their right to form and express an opinion without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher or school.

*(cf. 5022 - Student and Family Privacy Rights)*  
*(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)*  
*(cf. 6145.5 - Student Organizations and Equal Access)*

5. Students shall be informed of conduct expected during such instruction and the importance of being courteous and respectful of the opinions of others.

*(cf. 5131 - Conduct)*  
*(cf. 5131.2 - Bullying)*  
*(cf. 5137 - Positive School Climate)*

6. Adequate factual information shall be provided to help students objectively analyze and evaluate the issue and draw their own conclusions.
7. The instruction shall not reflect adversely upon persons because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, or any other basis prohibited by law.

*(cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)*  
*(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)*  
*(cf. 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior)*

8. The subject matter of the instruction shall not otherwise be prohibited by state or federal law.

When a guest speaker is invited to make a presentation related to a controversial issue, the Board requires that he/she be notified of this policy and the expectations and goals regarding the instruction. If the guest speaker is presenting only one point of view on an issue, the teacher shall be responsible for ensuring that students also receive information on opposing viewpoints.

*(cf. 6145.8 - Assemblies and Special Events)*

When required by law or otherwise deemed appropriate by the teacher or administrator, parents/guardians shall be notified prior to instruction related to any controversial issue and parent/guardian consent shall be obtained for student participation. Students whose parents/guardians decline such instruction may be offered the option to participate in an alternative activity of similar value.

*(cf. 1312.1 - Complaints Concerning District Employees)*  
*(cf. 1312.2 - Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials)*

*Legal Reference:*

*EDUCATION CODE*

*220 Prohibition of discrimination*

*51500 Prohibited instruction or activity*

*51510 Prohibited study or supplemental materials*

*51511 Religious matters properly included in courses of study*

*51530 Prohibition and definition regarding advocating or teaching communism with intent to indoctrinate*

*51933 Sex education courses*

*51938 Right of parent/guardian to excuse child from sexual health instruction*

*60040 Portrayal of cultural and racial diversity*

*60044 Prohibited instructional materials*

*60045 Criteria for instructional materials*

Policy adopted: 7/23/02

Policy revised: 9/22/15