

Instruction

Controversial Issues – Guest Speakers

In a society of free people, the free exchange of ideas means that disagreements will be a common experience. A free society must recognize the value of the discussion of controversial issues. The obligation of the public schools is not to teach controversial subjects, but to provide opportunities for their study. The study of controversial issues must take place under the direction of competent instructors. Since the objective is truth and understanding for intelligent citizenship, the problem is to find a means of instruction without the direct imposition of the teacher's own viewpoints and guarding against conclusions based upon emotionalism. The atmosphere in which controversial subjects are best handled is one in which there is a free exchange of facts and ideas between students and teachers. It is recognized, however, that basic concepts relative to the national security, survival, etc. cannot be left to chance discovery by students. It is accepted that relative values may sometimes become distorted in the minds of immature students. However, to avoid the risk of criticism by teaching only problems already solved is to limit the student of any chance in assuming the role of responsible citizenship. The willingness to consider questions for which no generally accepted answers have been determined, a hearing of arguments in opposition to one's own belief, and habit of suspending decisions until one has studied the facts available before action must be taken, are fundamental qualifications for a citizen in a growing, changing society.

Study of controversial issues leads to important and unique educational outcomes. Some of these outcomes should be:

1. The ability and will to study complex life situations and make intelligent choices of alternatives;
2. The skill of analyzing materials, recognizing propaganda and evaluating sources of information;
3. The ability and desire to make use of rational methods in considering significant issues and coming to decisions about them;
4. A willingness to recognize the necessity for and value of different viewpoints;
5. A readiness to accept desirable compromises when necessary;
6. A respect for minority positions and acceptance of the rights of minorities by democratic process to attempt to become majorities; or
7. An appreciation of the role of controversy as an instrument making for progress.

The following guidelines should be adhered to when studying controversial issues:

1. The issue should be within the maturity level of the students;
2. The issue should be of interest to the students;
3. The issue should be socially significant and timely for the course and grade level;
4. The issue should be one which the teacher feels they can handle objectively from a personal standpoint;
5. The issue should be one which has adequate materials available;
6. The issue should be one for which there is adequate time to justify the presentation; or
7. Controversial issues that are studied should be of such nature that they can be discussed reasonably in the local community.

The role of the teacher when studying controversial issues should be to:

1. Help students discover the processes by which social problems are identified, studied, and solved;
2. Select issues within the maturity of understanding of students to accomplish the above;
3. Assist students in learning to control personal behavior where personal emotions are involved and that the purpose is to find the truth in the best way;
4. Find and select suitable materials;
5. Instruct in techniques of how propaganda is used in establishing opinion;
6. Approach most issues through their historical background and development;
7. Develop a classroom atmosphere in which students feel free to express their opinions and challenge ideas;
8. Exercise their position to ensure that students will learn to seek and value documented information and not be satisfied with the mere exchange of opinion;
9. Gain continued depth in his/her major area of academic responsibility and inform themselves about current problems through continuous study; and

10. Inform the principal of subjects and techniques to be used in dealing with a particular issue.

Guest speakers should be considered for use in the classroom only if a teacher concludes that such a speaker will contribute to the curriculum as a supplementary resource helping to achieve the goals and objectives of the course. In such cases, the following procedures will be followed:

1. At least two weeks before the date the guest 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.

Any teacher may request a waiver of the two-week notice period, and the principal may grant such a waiver in order to accommodate the scheduling of a speaker on short notice. However, such a waiver will be at the sole discretion of the principal, and the previous granting of such waivers will not obligate any principal to grant a waiver for any future request.

2. If the teacher and the principal believe the guest speaker's topic is controversial, both parties will attempt a course of action that adheres to the requirements of policy 2331 and this procedure including the objective and unbiased presentation of issues and alternative assignments for students.
3. Unless the principal approves otherwise, the teacher will not allow non-class members to hear the guest speaker.
4. The guest speaker will be registered in the office by the teacher on the day they speak.
5. Approval of a guest speaker will be exercised in a manner consistent with the principles of free inquiry and expression.
6. If the principal has reason to believe that the appearance of the guest speaker would not provide a contribution to the curriculum or would be harmful to the students, the principal may deny the appearance of the guest speaker.

Elected Official or Political Office Visits

1. Must follow all guest speaker requirements as outlined in Policy 2331 and this procedure above.
2. Information is educational in nature;
3. Does not promote or oppose political candidates, parties, ballot measures, or positions;

4. Does not include solicitation, sign-ups, or advocacy;
5. Complies with all legal restrictions on political activity in public schools;
6. All materials intended for student distribution must be approved by the building administrator;
7. Parents/guardians will be notified at least 48 hours ahead of a planned elected official or political office visit by normal communication channels;
8. Parents/guardians will follow policy 4312 and procedure 4312P – Visits to Schools and District Facilities if they want to visit a classroom.
9. A certificated staff member must be present during the entire visit;
10. The following are prohibited:
 - a. Campaign or advocacy materials;
 - b. Branded political outreach materials;
 - c. QR codes or link encouraging political engagement, sign-ups, or advocacy;
 - d. Requests for student contact information.

Adopted: January 22, 1992
Revised: September 9, 2020
Revised: February 25, 2026