

**Teaching About Controversial Issues**

The Board supports teaching about controversial issues in the schools; however, the presentation and discussion of controversial issues will be on an informative basis. When controversial issues are being discussed in classroom instruction, every effort will be made to present various viewpoints fairly, impartially, and discreetly.

**I. STUDENTS' RIGHTS TO STUDY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

1. The right to study controversial issues that have political, economic, or social significance on which, at his level, he will begin to have an opinion.
2. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
3. The right of access to all relevant information freely available to the school or public libraries.

**II. GUIDELINES TO BE USED IN HANDLING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM**

- A.** Teachers will present all sides of controversial issues and guard against giving their personal opinions until students have had an opportunity to find, collect, and assemble factual material on the subject; to interpret the data without prejudice; to reconsider assumptions and claims; and to reach their own conclusions. By refraining from expressing personal views before and during the period of research and study, the teacher will encourage students to search after truth and to think for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled, weighed, and relationships seen before drawing inferences or conclusions, are among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system.
- B.** Controversial issues will be studied with as much objectivity as possible. The teacher will provide suggested resource materials or sources of information on as many aspects of the issue as he/she can in order that all students may reach individual conclusions with respect to the particular issue.
- C.** In discussing controversial issues, the teacher will not seek to bring about a single conclusion to which all students must subscribe.
- D.** In discussions of controversial issues, the teacher will not suppress a student's view on the issue as long as the expression is not derogatory, malicious, or abusive toward others' views, but on the other hand, one student will not be permitted to dominate the discussion.

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**II. GUIDELINES (continued)**

- E.** It will be the responsibility of the teacher to distinguish opinion or interpretation from fact, when recognized.

**III. SPEAKERS ON CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS**

- A.** Any faculty member may invite speakers to address his/her class on subjects which are within the framework of the curriculum and which are not prohibited by law.
- B.** Permission to invite a speaker to address a class must be received from the building principal and the request for such permission must be made in writing.
- C.** If speakers are to be used, every attempt should be made to provide speakers to represent opposing views of controversial subjects, and the speakers should be recognized as experts on the subject

**Policy Approved: 6/24/85**

**Policy Revised: 4/20/98**