

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Board recognizes that controversial issues are an inherent part of our democratic tradition, and that a knowledge and understanding of these issues is an indispensable part of education.

The Board further recognizes that because the teacher holds a position of authority and respect in the classroom and community, and by virtue of that position, has great influence in the formation of the values of all students. Moreover, although every teacher has a right to express personal views, every teacher also has a responsibility to refrain from an excessive expression of personal views during the instructional program.

Before launching a class in the study of an obviously controversial topic, a teacher will discuss with the principal:

1. Its appropriateness to the course
2. Its appropriateness for the maturity level of the students
3. The approach to instruction
4. The teaching materials to be used

The presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom should be on an informative basis. Staff members have the responsibility to treat controversial topics as impartially and as objectively as possible; to explore the possibility of alternative and/or divergent positions and opinions; to determine the degree and extent of consideration given to a specific issue, based on knowledge, maturity and competence of the student and class; to ensure that an accurate, factual and balanced presentation of materials is readily available for the student; to help students to be tolerant of arguments in opposition to each individual's own prejudices and biases, and to cultivate a habit of delaying decisions until all available facts have been considered.

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