

**CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

The Governing Board believes that students should be given age appropriate opportunities to investigate, address and discuss controversial issues which have religious, political, social economic, ethical or moral significance. The study of a controversial issue should help students learn how to gather and organize pertinent facts, discriminate between fact and fiction, draw intelligent conclusions, and respect the opinions of others.

The Board believes that addressing such controversial issues, in the school setting, may bear the mark of approval of the School District. Thus, the Board expects teachers to exercise caution and discretion when deciding whether or not a particular issue is suitable for study or discussion in any particular class. Teachers should not spend class time on any topic which is not directly related to the established course of study.

The Board also expects teachers to ensure that all sides of a controversial issue are impartially presented, with adequate and appropriate factual information. Without promoting any partisan point of view, the teacher should help students separate fact from opinion and warn them against drawing conclusions from insufficient data. The teacher shall not suppress any student's view on the issue as long as its expression is not malicious or abusive toward others. After the presentation of a controversial issue, a teacher should be able to assist students on obtaining valid and objective information on such subject and then encourage them to form and express their own opinions only after making carefully considered evaluations.

Teachers sponsoring guest speakers shall either ask them not to use their position or influence on students to forward their own religious, political, economic or social views or shall take active steps to neutralize whatever bias has been presented.

In raising and discussing controversial issues, the Board expects teachers to act appropriately and professionally and be considerate and respectful of the beliefs and the values, however personally contrary to their own they may be, of their students, colleagues and the community.

Nothing contained in this policy is intended to detract from the rights enjoyed by all citizens to engage in political and social matters outside of the work place and outside of working hours.

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In addressing controversial issues the Board expects all employees to act appropriately and professionally and to be considerate and respectful of the opinions, beliefs and values of the community, other colleagues and students.

Controversial issues may be discussed in the classroom, provided that:

1. The issue is related to the course of study and provides opportunities for critical thinking, for developing tolerance, and for understanding conflicting points of view.
2. The issue has a meaningful relationship to matters of concern to the students.
3. Available information about the issue is sufficient to allow alternative points of view to be discussed and evaluated on a factual basis.
4. All sides of the issue are given a proper hearing, using established facts as primary evidence.
5. The issue has points of view which can be understood and defined by the students.
6. The teacher does not use his/her position to forward his/her own religious, political, economic or social bias. The teacher may express a personal opinion if he/she identifies it as such and does not express the opinion for the purpose of persuading students to his/her point of view. If the teacher does express a personal opinion, he/she shall inform the students that the expressed views are personal and are not the views of the Board or the School District.
7. Discussion or study of the issue is initiated by the students or by the established curriculum.
8. The discussion does not reflect adversely upon persons because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, handicap or occupation.
9. The discussion is conducted in such a way as to acknowledge, consider, evaluate and balance the diverse opinions of the community.
10. Employees are to act appropriately and professionally, being respectful of the beliefs and the values of students, the community and colleagues.
11. The oral or written presentation does not violate state or federal law. No employee shall advocate or promote the violation of any state or federal law.
12. Teachers discuss guest speakers, topics and materials to be used, with the site administrator or designee prior to scheduling the event.

**CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES (continued)**

The Superintendent or designee shall have the authority to judge whether the above conditions are being met.

Student and employee information obtained by School District employees within the course and scope of their employment is confidential information. Employees may not reiterate, emphasize, disseminate or comment on confidential information outside of the classroom or school setting.

Teachers have the same rights to use District facilities as other citizens, pursuant to the Civic Center Act and the District's Facility Use Policy.

School District equipment and supplies (copiers, telephones, paper, etc.) with regards to this section, are provided for teachers to use exclusively within the courses and scope of their employment. It is understood that the District is a public agency whose equipment and supplies may not be used for personal purposes. In no event shall District equipment and supplies be used to advocate any social, religious or political position or belief.