

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Board of Education believes that the consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the instructional program of the schools.

Properly introduced and contacted, the consideration of such issues can help pupils:

1. Learn to identify important issues;
2. Explore fully and fairly all sides of an issue;
3. Weigh carefully the values and factors involved; and
4. Develop techniques for formulating and evaluating positions.

For purposes of this policy, a controversial issue is a topic on which opposing points of view have been promulgated by responsible opinion, and is likely to arouse both support and opposition in the community. A topic, not expressly enumerated in the course guide as appropriate for the course of study, can be subject to interpretation as obscene, profane, dogmatic, or grossly inappropriate, each in relation to the level of maturity of the pupils.

The Board will permit the introduction and proper educational use of controversial issues, provided that their use in the instructional program:

1. Is approved in the appropriate course overview/unit of study;
2. Is related to the instructional goals of the course of study and level of maturity of the pupils; and
3. Does not tend to indoctrinate or persuade pupils to a particular point of view.

The use of controversial issues in the instructional program must also:

1. Encourage fair presentation and open-mindedness;
2. Be conducted in a spirit of scholarly inquiry;



3. Be instigated by curricular design, or by the pupils themselves, but not be in a source outside the schools; and
4. Draw upon information and insights from the widest feasible range of resources.

When controversial issues have not been specified in the course overview/unit of study, the Board will permit the instructional use of only those issues which have been approved by the Superintendent, who shall report periodically such approval to the Board for their review.

The Board recognizes that some deviation from the assigned course overview/unit of study is necessary in the free exchange of the classroom. However, the Board specifies, for the guidance of the Superintendent, and through administrative directive, the guidance of the staff, that any discussion of controversial issues in the classroom shall be conducted in an unprejudiced and dispassionate manner, and shall not:

1. Disrupt the educational process;
2. Fail to match the maturity level of pupils;
3. Be unrelated to the goals of the Board and the appropriate course overview/unit of study; and
4. Tend toward the dogmatic.

In the discussion of any issue, a teacher may express a personal opinion, but shall identify it as such, and must not express such an opinion for the purpose of persuading pupils to his/her point of view.

The Superintendent shall assist teaching staff members in developing techniques for the management of controversial issues which do not stifle a spirit of free inquiry, and in obtaining prior approval for material liable to be considered controversial.

Adopted: 20 November 2008

