

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL/SENSITIVE ISSUES

The following regulations constitute the frame of reference within which the accompanying policy is to be used:

1. Good teaching of subjects involving controversial issues requires particular skill, and so far as possible only teachers with appropriate training and experience will be assigned subjects in which a large body of material deals with such issues.
2. The approach of the teacher to controversial topics must be impartial and objective.
3. Teachers should use the following criteria for determining the appropriateness of certain issues for consideration as a part of the curriculum:
 - a. The treatment of the issue in question must be within the range, knowledge, maturity and competence of the students.
 - b. There should be study materials and other learning aids available from which a reasonable amount of data pertaining to all aspects of the issue should be obtained.
 - c. The consideration of the issue should require only as much time as is needed for satisfactory study by the class, but sufficient time should be provided to cover the issues adequately.
 - d. The issue should be current, significant, real and important to the students and teacher. Significant issues are those which in general concern considerable numbers of people, are related to basic principles or at the moment are under consideration by the public and press.
4. In discussing controversial issues, the teacher should keep in mind that the classroom is a forum and not a committee for producing resolutions or dogmatic pronouncements. The class should feel no responsibility for reaching an agreement.
5. It is the teacher's responsibility to bring out the facts concerning controversial questions. The teacher has the right to express his or her opinions, but in so doing it is important that the students understand that it is the teacher's own opinion and is not to be accepted by them as an authoritative answer.
6. A teacher who is in doubt concerning the advisability of discussing certain issues in the classroom should confer with the principal as to the appropriateness of doing so. If the teacher and principal are unable to agree, the issue should be referred to the appropriate division director, the Assistant Superintendent for instruction, Curriculum and Student Services or, through the teacher, to the Superintendent.

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CROSS REFS.: IB, Academic Freedom
IJJ, Instructional Resources and Materials Selection and Adoption

IJL, Library Media Selection, Adoption, Acquisition and Reconsideration
IMB, Teaching About Controversial/Sensitive Issues
IMBB, Exemptions from Required Instruction