

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL/SENSITIVE ISSUES

Controversial issues are defined as those problems, subjects or questions about which there are significant differences of opinion, for which there are no easy resolutions, and discussion of which generally create strong feelings among people. Although there may be disagreement over what the facts are and what they mean, subjects usually become controversial issues because of differences in the values people use in applying the facts.

Controversy is inherent in the democratic way of life. It is essential, therefore, that the study and discussion of controversial issues have an important place in education for citizenship in a free society. Students can develop into free citizens with informed loyalty to democracy only through the process of examining evidence, facts and differing viewpoints; through the exercise of freedom of thought and moral choice, and through the making of responsible decisions. These procedures are as characteristic of and essential to a free society as authoritarian indoctrination is to totalitarianism.

Each student has the right and need, under competent guidance and instruction, to study issues appropriate to his or her interest, experience, ability and age. Students must have access to relevant information, and students have the obligation to examine carefully all sides of an issue. Students have the right to form and express their own points of view and opinions without jeopardizing his or her position in the classroom or in the school.

Each teacher has the right and the obligation to teach about controversial issues. It is a teacher's responsibility to select issues for study and discussion which contribute to the attainment of course objectives and the educational program established by the Colorado Springs School District 11 Board of Education and to make available to students materials concerning the various aspects of the issues. Teachers also have the obligation to be as objective as possible and to present fairly the several sides of an issue. Although teachers have the right to express their own viewpoints and opinions, he or she does not have the right to indoctrinate students to his or her views. Controversial issues are to be presented with good judgment, keeping in mind the maturity and background of the students. The influence on values, attitudes and responsibility of the individual students must be considered in conjunction with the actual subject content.

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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-R, Regulation to Policy IMB, Teaching About Controversial/Sensitive Issues
IMBB, Exemptions from Required Instruction

CONTRACT REFS.: CSEA Master Agreement