

## Controversial Issues

The presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom must be on an informative basis. The development of ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled and weighed and to see relationships before drawing inferences or conclusions are among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system. The teachers will guard against giving their personal opinions on sectarian or political questions or any other controversial issues until the students have had the opportunity to:

1. Find, collect and assemble factual material on the subject;
2. To interpret the data without prejudice;
3. To reconsider assumptions and claims and to reach their own conclusions.

By refraining from expressing personal views before and during the period of research and study, the teacher is encouraging the students to search after the truth and to think for themselves.

Before beginning 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 students' maturity level; (3) the approach to instruction; (4) the instructional materials to be used.

The policy can best be described by listing three basic rights and responsibilities of the student:

1. The right to study and discuss controversial issues and problems which have political, economic or social significance in a class atmosphere devoid of partisanship and bias;
2. The right to an explanation by the teacher if an issue is not to be studied;
3. Students have a responsibility to undertake the study of all sides of an issue, to listen to other viewpoints with an open mind and to evaluate issues on an intellectual, rather than an emotional, basis.

Emotional criticism or the promotion of a cause within the classroom are inappropriate and unscholarly. The teacher's attitude should be that of the true scholar which is truth seeking, open minded and tolerant.

END OF POLICY

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**Legal Reference(s):**

[ORS 336.067](#)

[OAR 581-022-1020](#)

[OAR 581-022-1910](#)

United States Constitution, Amendment I.  
Oregon Constitution, Article 1.

**Cross Reference(s):**

IB - Freedom of Expression

IICB - Community Resource Persons