

Studying Controversial Issues

Training for effective citizenship is accepted as one of the major goals of our public schools. Our instructional program developed to achieve this purpose properly places great emphasis upon teaching about our American heritage, the rights and privileges we enjoy as citizens and the citizenship responsibilities that must be assumed in maintaining our American way of life.

In training for effective citizenship, it is frequently necessary for students to study issues that are controversial. In considering such issues, it shall be the purpose of our schools to recognize the student's right and/or obligation to:

1. Study any controversial issue concerning which (at his/her level) the student should begin to have an opinion;
2. Have free access to all relevant information, including the materials that circulate freely in the community;
3. Study under competent instruction in an atmosphere of freedom from bias and prejudice;
4. Form and express his/her own judgments on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing his/her relations with teachers or the school;
5. Recognize that reasonable compromise is often an important facet in the decision making in our society;
6. Respect minority opinion.

Controversial issues, as well as controversial instructional methods, materials and resource personnel associated with them, by definition generate dissension. There is also an inherent risk that such dissension may escalate into antagonism which may be sufficient to disrupt the educational process. Members of the professional staff are expected to be sensitive to student, staff and community attitudes, to carefully weigh the risks against the significance and educational merit of the issues, methods, materials and personnel involved and, when doubt remains, they are to seek the counsel of their supervisors.

END OF POLICY

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