

## **Studying Controversial Issues**

In determining whether to present a controversial issue, teachers shall consider these questions:

1. Is the topic significant or related to a persistent problem so that the information acquired shall be of continuing usefulness?
2. Is the topic within the emotional, intellectual and social capabilities of students?
3. Is it a topic that the individual teacher can manage from a personal and academic point of view?
4. Is the topic of importance and interest to many students?
5. Are adequate and appropriate materials and/or personnel available to present all sides of the issue?
6. Shall this issue clash with community customs and attitudes? If so, can the issue be studied and discussed in an atmosphere of civility and respect?
7. Is there adequate time to develop the topic effectively?
8. What are the existing board policies concerning this issue?

### **Requirements**

1. Topics shall be discussed only if they are published in an approved scope and sequence and course outlines.
2. Books, films or materials required to pass courses and for which alternative assignments shall not be provided must receive prior approval of principal.
3. If potentially objectionable concepts or language are present in materials, alternative selections must be made available to students who object or whose parents object to the content.
4. Parents shall be informed in advance regarding controversial issues discussed in courses either through course outlines or by letter and shall be afforded the opportunity to withdraw the student from the class activity without penalty.
5. Reasonable requests from parents to view materials shall be honored.

## **Appropriate Practices**

1. When facts are presented by teacher or students, sources shall be cited.
2. One person shall not be permitted to dominate the discussion.
3. Teachers shall assist students in separating fact from opinion.
4. Teachers shall present a thorough objective introduction of the issue.
5. Whenever possible, teachers shall withhold giving personal opinions. If it seems necessary to take a side or agree with a certain author or authority, a teacher shall not attempt to convince students that his/her view is correct.
6. No general class conclusion need come from class discussion of the issue.