

## Studying Controversial Issues

Since our society is based on the free exchange of ideas and diversity of political and social thought, it shall be the policy of this district to encourage unbiased, unprejudiced and scientific study of controversial issues as they arise as part of school curriculum. A controversial issue may be defined as any topic or problem which society is in the process of debating on which there is honest disagreement. Such issues arise when different interpretations are given to a particular set of circumstances.

The basic goal in studying controversial questions should be to enable the student to develop techniques for considering such questions; techniques which he/she will use habitually in later life. Learning situations shall provide opportunities for the development of clear thinking, balanced judgment, intelligent choices, informed opinion, an ability to differentiate fact from opinion and an understanding of propaganda devices. Questions treated should come within the range of the knowledge, maturity and competence of the students. Issues selected for study should be current, significant and of interest to the students.

The teacher is the most important member of the staff in the actual handling of controversial issues. The role of the teacher should be such as will reveal to students the processes used by the social scientist to identify, study and solve problems. The teacher shall avoid indoctrination in his/her own personal viewpoint and shall not attempt to control or limit the judgment of students. The selection of materials, guest speakers and classroom activities in general shall be done with studied impartiality for the purpose of fairly presenting all sides of an issue.

Before launching a class in the study of an obviously controversial topic, a teacher will discuss with the [superintendent] [principal]: (1) its appropriateness to the course; (2) its appropriateness for the maturity level of the students; (3) the approach to instruction; (4) the teaching materials to be used.

The administration of this policy in the district is the immediate responsibility of the building principal under the guidance of procedures established by the superintendent.

END OF POLICY

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**Legal Reference(s):**

[ORS 336.067](#)

[OAR 581-022-1020](#)

[OAR 581-022-1910](#)

U.S. CONST. amend. I.

OR. CONST., art. I.