

Teaching about Controversial Issues

The Board's policy can best be described by listing three basic rights of the student:

1. The right to study controversial issues that have political, economic or social significance on which, at his/her level, he/she will begin to have an opinion;
2. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice;
3. The right of access to all relevant information freely available in the school or public libraries.

The Board supports teaching about controversial issues in the schools. The presentation and discussion of controversial issues will be on an informative basis. Teachers will present both sides of controversial issues and guard against giving their personal opinions until students have had an opportunity to find, collect and assemble factual material on the subject, to interpret the data without prejudice, 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 will encourage students to search after truth and to think for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled and weighed, and relationships seen before drawing inferences or conclusions is among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system.

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

Before launching 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 maturity level of the students; (3) the approach to instruction; (4) the teaching materials to be used; and (5) the need for parental notification.

If a parent requests their child be excused from a learning activity about a controversial issue, the school principal will see that an appropriate alternative learning opportunity is provided.

END OF POLICY

Legal Reference(s):

[ORS 336.067](#)

[OAR 581-022-1020](#)

[OAR 581-022-1910](#)

U.S. CONST. amend. I.

OR. CONST., art. I.

Cross References:

IB – Academic Freedom

IICB – Community Resource Persons