

Studying Controversial Issues

The guidelines which follow have been devised to achieve an educational environment through which teachers and students of the district may enter the marketplace of free ideas with hope, anticipation and enthusiasm for the achievement of individual excellence consistent with individual ability

1. Controversial issues shall be handled as they arise in the classroom and shall not be avoided in order to restrict or restrain the academic freedom of either the teacher or the student. Neither the teacher nor the student in the classroom shall avoid an issue simply because it is of a controversial nature, nor shall an issue be raised merely because it is of a controversial nature.
2. When handling controversial issues the teacher may not present his/her own personal position as the only acceptable position which may be taken on that particular issue, nor shall the teacher seek to bring about a single conclusion to which all students must subscribe.
3. Controversial issues shall be studied with as much objectivity as the ability of both teacher and students will permit. When handling a controversial issue all sides will be explored. The teacher will provide suggested resource materials or sources of information on as many aspects of the issue as he/she can in order that all students may pursue individual reading and study to reach individual conclusions with respect to that particular issue.
4. Materials and references presenting all sides of a controversial issue should be made available by the school library.
5. In handling a controversial issue the teacher shall not suppress a student's view on that issue as long as the expression of that view is not derogatory, malicious or abusive toward other students' views, but on the other hand one student shall not be permitted to dominate the discussion. In handling controversial issues in the classroom both teachers and students shall be encouraged to keep the problem-solving attitude in mind; in other words, rather than determining what is right and what is wrong in certain issues, students shall be encouraged to come to their own conclusions to a particular problem after independent inquiry.
6. The handling of controversial issues does not always require an extensive examination, but all the competency of both teacher and student shall be exerted to make a clear definition of the issue.
7. Propaganda when recognized should always be distinguished from fact.
8. Speakers dealing with special fields and printed or visual material from organizations which are thought of as "pressure groups" should be secured or used only with the written consent of the principal.