

Teaching Controversial Issues

A “controversial issue” is defined as an area of significant academic inquiry about which substantial segments of the citizens of this community, state, or nation hold sincere, conflicting points of view.

It is the belief of this school board that controversial issues should be fairly presented in a spirit of honest academic freedom. To that end, individual students may recognize the validity of other points of view. Students will be encouraged to formulate their own opinions based upon dispassionate, objective, unbiased study and discussion of the factual bases underlying the controversy.

It shall be the responsibility of the instructor to present fully and fairly the opportunity and means for students to study, consider, and discuss all sides of controversial issues. It shall be the responsibility of the instructor to protect the rights of the student to study pertinent controversial issues within limits of good judgment. Students will be allowed appropriate expression of their personal opinions without jeopardizing their relationships with their instructors or school.

It shall be the responsibility of the instructor to refrain from advocating partisan causes, sectarian religious views, or selfish propaganda of any kind through any classroom or school device. However, an instructor shall not be prohibited from expressing a personal opinion as long as the student is encouraged to reach his/her own decision independently.

It shall be the policy of the school board to encourage instructors to lead full discussions in a spirit of academic freedom. To that end, the student may learn that individuals have the right to disagree with the opinion of another. Both students and the instructor have the responsibility to base the disagreement upon the facts and at the same time respect the right of another to hold a conflicting opinion.

Approved: October 19, 1998

Reviewed: September 29, 2015