

## **INSTRUCTION**

### **Discussing Controversial Issues in the Classroom**

Consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in classroom instruction. For purposes of this policy, a controversial issue is a topic likely to arouse a variety of viewpoints within the schools and community. Properly introduced and conducted, the consideration of such issues can help students learn to identify important issues, explore fully and fairly all sides of an issue, weigh carefully the values and factors involved, develop techniques for formulating and evaluating positions, and act in a responsible and effective manner.

The introduction and proper educational use of controversial issues shall be permitted in the classroom provided that such use:

- Is related to the outcomes of a course of study, to the school mission, and to the level of maturity of the students;
- Does not indoctrinate students to a particular point of view; and,
- Encourages open-mindedness and is conducted in a spirit of scholarly inquiry.

Students may initiate discussion of controversial issues provided the issues are presented in the context of instruction. Furthermore, every effort must be made to ensure that a balanced view of the issue is presented to the students.

In discussing controversial issues, a staff member expressing a personal opinion shall identify it as such.

#### **POLICY**

Adopted: 01-12-76

Amended: 06-12-06

Reviewed:

## **Discussing Controversial Issues in the Classroom - Regulations**

The following standards of professional and student responsibility shall apply when a controversial issue is introduced and considered in a classroom:

1. The teacher shall encourage the students to study varying points of view.
2. The teacher and students shall respect every person's right to form her or his own judgment.
3. The teacher shall not exploit the institutional privileges of her/his professional position to promote candidates or partisan activities or views, nor shall students use the occasion to promote candidates or partisan activities or views.
4. The teacher shall protect the educational program against undesirable infringement.
5. The teacher shall be allowed to interpret and use the writings of others and educational research with intellectual honesty.
6. Opinion should be stated as such and theory for what it is.
7. The teacher shall have the right to stop any discussion at any time.

In addition, the teacher shall be cognizant of the maturity of her/his students in establishing and conducting instructional presentations and shall provide for careful consideration of the attitudes, beliefs, convictions, and aspirations of parents and the citizenry.

The teacher will notify his or her principal of any controversial topics scheduled to be discussed in the classroom as well as any controversial topics that come up during routine class work.