

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Board of Education recognizes that controversy, under orderly rules, is the process by which Americans have historically attempted to organize and unify American thought. Within this framework, controversy is defined as a difference of opinion relative to all areas of thought and ideas. Issues become controversial when some of their proposed alternatives conflict with the intellectual or emotional commitment of citizens to those ideas.

The Board believes that students should have opportunities to discuss controversial issues which have political, social or economic significance and which the students are mature enough to investigate and address. The study of a controversial issue should help students learn how to gather and organize pertinent facts, discriminate between fact and fiction, draw intelligent conclusions and respect the opinions of others.

The Board expects teachers to exercise caution and discretion when deciding whether or not a particular issue is suitable for study or discussion in any particular class. Teachers should not spend class time on any topic which they feel is not suitable for the class or related to the established course of study.

The Board also expects teachers to ensure that all sides of a controversial issue are impartially presented, with adequate and appropriate factual information. Without promoting any partisan point of view, the teacher should help students separate fact from opinion and warn them against drawing conclusions from insufficient data. The teacher shall not suppress any student's view on the issue as long as its expression is not malicious or abusive toward others.

Teachers sponsoring guest speakers shall either ask them not to use their position or influence on students to forward their own religious, political, economic or social views or shall take active steps to neutralize whatever bias has been presented.

(cf. 1312.1 - Complaints Concerning District Employees)

(cf. 1312.2 - Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials)

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression: Publications Code)

Legal Reference: (See page below)

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

51510 *Prohibited study or supplemental materials*

51511 *Religious matters properly included in courses of study*

51530 *Prohibition and definition re advocating or teaching communism with intent to indoctrinate*

51550 *Sex education courses*

60040 *Portrayal of cultural and racial diversity*

60044 *Prohibited instructional materials*

60045 *Required to be accurate, objective, current, and suited to needs and comprehension at respective grade levels*