

Studying Controversial Issues

In determining whether to present a controversial issue in class, teachers will consider these questions:

1. Is the topic significant or related to a persistent problem so that the information acquired will be of continuing usefulness?
2. Is the topic within the emotional, intellectual and social capacities of students?
3. Is it a topic that you, as a teacher, can handle from both a personal and academic point of view?
4. Is the topic of importance and interest to the students?
5. Are adequate and appropriate materials and/or personnel available to present opposing sides of the issues? Will this issue clash with community customs and attitudes? If so, can the issue be studied and discussed reasonably?
6. Is there adequate time to develop the topic effectively?
7. What are the existing Board policies concerning this issue?

Requirements

1. Topics will be discussed only if they are within published and approved scope and sequence and course outlines.
2. Books, films or materials required to pass courses and for which alternative assignments will not be provided must receive prior approval of building principal or designee.
3. If potentially objectionable concepts or language are present in materials, alternative selections must be made available to students who object or whose parents object to the content.
4. Parents will be informed in advance regarding controversial issues discussed in courses either through course outlines or by special issues and will be afforded the opportunity to withhold the student without penalty.
5. Reasonable requests from parents to view materials will be honored.

Appropriate Practices

1. When facts are presented by teachers or students, sources should be cited.
2. One person should not be permitted to dominate the discussion.
3. Separate fact from opinion.
4. Permit freedom of expression.
5. Give a thorough, objective introduction.
6. Withhold personal opinion except under unusual circumstances. If it seems necessary to take a side, agree with a certain author or authority, but do not attempt to convince students that your view is correct.
7. No general class conclusion needs to come from class discussion of the issue.