

Controversial Issues in the Curriculum

Both principals and department chairs shall be responsible for informing all staff members of the Policy on coverage of controversial issues in the curriculum. In doing so they shall emphasize the basic assumption that the school is providing an opportunity for students to study controversial issues, not teaching controversial issues.

A teacher who is in doubt concerning the advisability of discussing certain issues and materials in the classroom shall confer with the principal as to the appropriateness of doing so. The principal should involve the department chair or establish a special review procedure. If the teacher and principal are unable to agree, the issue should be referred to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.

Complaints can be resolved most expeditiously if they are taken first to the staff member or administrator immediately in charge of the area in which the problem arises, then through successive administrative levels to the Superintendent, and subsequently to the Board of School Directors, if necessary. Whenever a complaint dealing with the handling of a controversial issue in the curriculum or in the classroom is made directly to the Board as a whole or to a Board member as an individual, it shall be referred to the Superintendent for study and possible resolution through normal channels.

If a specific employee is involved because of the circumstances, that employee shall be advised of the nature of the complaint and shall be given every opportunity for explanation, comment, and presentation of the facts as the employee sees them.

Failing to reach a satisfactory resolution to the problem or complaint with the administrator immediately in charge of the area in which the problem arises, the complainant shall be encouraged to ask for review and further consideration through successive administrative levels to the Superintendent, and subsequently the Board, if necessary, as indicated below.

The administrator shall promptly provide the Superintendent with a written report including:

- A statement of the complaint prepared by the complainant and using the format appended to this Regulation.
- A summary of the positions taken on both sides of the matter during the study of the complaint.
- A summary of the opportunity afforded both sides to be heard.
- A statement on how the complainant would propose to resolve the matter.
- A statement of how the staff member(s) involved would propose to resolve the matter.
- A statement on how the complaint can best be resolved from the point of view of the administrator.

If the complaint has not been resolved at the building level, the Superintendent shall establish a review committee composed of the central administrator immediately in charge of the areas concerned and five or more members selected from the administrative and instructional areas directly concerned.

In their deliberations, the review committee shall consider the educational philosophy of the District, the professional opinions of other teachers of the same subject and of other competent authorities, reviews of the materials by reputable bodies, the teacher's own stated objectives in using the materials, and the objections of the complainant.

The findings of the review committee shall be made in writing and be transmitted to the superintendent who will make a decision on the course of action to take and the appropriate response to the complainant.

The Superintendent shall submit the reports from the building level and District review committee, along with their recommendation, if Board involvement becomes necessary to resolve the complaint.

An individual student may be excused from class activities involving the controversial issue in question. The teacher will then assign the student alternate activities of equal merit. Although individuals may be excused from the activity, the continuation of the activity by class, school or District shall not be restricted until final disposition has been made in accordance with this Regulation.

Complaint on Handling of a Controversial Issue

This is the format we request to ensure smooth, expeditious consideration of a complaint on handling of a controversial issue in the school program. We realize there is not enough space to respond adequately to these questions and would prefer that you use other sheets, following this format.

1. Please summarize the nature of the issue which gives rise to the complaint: _____

2. Is the issue involved a part on an accepted and approved curriculum?
Yes _____ No _____ Don't know _____

3. Were opposing points of view also presented pertaining to this issue?
Yes _____ No _____ Don't know _____

4. Would you please specify your objection regarding the matter under consideration?
a. For example, if it is thought the controversial issue should not be in the curriculum at all, please give reasons and indicate what you feel might be the result of including this controversial issue in the curriculum:

b. For example, if it is thought the controversial issue should not be in the curriculum at this grade level and curriculum area, please indicate why and suggest another grade level and curriculum area:

c. For example, if it is thought the instructional methods were inappropriate, please explain:

d. For example, if it is thought the resource materials used were inappropriate, please explain:

e. What would you suggest in its place?

f. Other specific concerns:

Signature _____ Date _____

Enclosure: Regulation 6136, "Controversial Issues in the Curriculum"