

*Controversial Issues in the Curriculum*

A controversial issue involves a problem about which different individuals and groups urge conflicting courses of action. It is an issue for which society has not found a solution, and it is of sufficient significance that each proposed way of dealing with it is objectionable to some sector of the citizenry. The objection may result from a feeling that a cherished belief, an economic interest, or a basic principle is threatened.

Because the development of rational thinking and preparation for citizenship are among the educational goals of the school system, the District has a responsibility to include, in various curriculum areas at all grade levels, content dealing with current critical issues, some of which will be controversial.

The District, as an educational institution, and the individual classroom teacher have a responsibility to give the student:

- An opportunity to study controversial issues which have political, economic or social significance about which students will begin to have an opinion.
- Access to all relevant information, including the materials that circulate freely in the community.
- Competent instruction balancing the various points of view in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
- The right to form and express opinions on controversial issues without jeopardizing relations with teachers or the schools.

In fulfilling this responsibility the teacher shall make a deliberate effort to achieve balance within a reasonable period of time in the viewpoints and information to which students are exposed.

In selecting certain controversial issues to be included in the instructional program the staff shall use the following guidelines:

- The issue should contribute toward helping students develop techniques for examining other controversial issues.
- The issue should be suitable for students of the maturity and background represented in the class.
- The issue should be related to the course content and help achieve course objectives.
- The issue should be of continuing significance.

In instances where a controversial issue arises on an unanticipated basis during the course of a class discussion, as the result of a student's question, or in the coverage of current events, and where that issue is neither directly related to the course content nor specified as a part of the curriculum, the teacher may deal with the issue on a limited basis, recognizing the existence of legitimate student interest and devoting sufficient time to the question to assure balanced, impartial coverage.

Recognizing the difficult position in which teachers will sometimes be placed in carrying out this Policy and in giving students an opportunity to study a controversial issue, the Board places trust and confidence in its employees and will support their actions in such a manner that they are protected insofar as possible from anonymous, unreasonable, or ill-considered complaints.