

## **CLASSROOM DISCUSSION OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

The purpose of the controversial issues policy is to define “controversial issues” and to provide procedural guidelines for students, parents, school administrators and teachers to follow surrounding the inclusion or exclusion of controversial issues in the classroom curriculum.

### **I. Definition**

A controversial issue is defined as an issue that is of personal or community concern which may elicit opposing viewpoints. A controversial issue may stem from religious, moral, social, or ethical beliefs known as values.

Parents are society's most valuable means of imparting values. We recognize that students bring a range of values to the school. It is not the function of the school to set values but rather to help students identify values and their impact on people's decisions and actions.

### **II. Procedures**

- A. The policy is defined in terms of the rights and protection of both the students and teachers.
- B. The teacher, in selecting both the content and method of instruction, is mindful of the maturity level of the students, the needs of the students and the appropriateness of the issue to the course of study. Any questionable content should be peer reviewed and if any doubt exists as to the relevance of the issue, an administrator should be consulted.
- C. At the teacher's discretion, a notice to parents may be sent home, informing the parents of the subject matter to be discussed and the dates of the classroom discussion. Some discussions may occur unexpectedly and may be addressed if the teacher, using appropriate judgment, feels it is relevant to the course of instruction.
- D. All discussion of controversial issues in the classroom is to be conducted in an atmosphere of respect and appreciation, presenting all sides of an issue.
- E. Teachers should be constantly mindful of their position of considerable influence in the classroom setting. Restraint and careful judgment must be exercised in stating personal opinions to which students might ascribe more weight than is intended, that might distort or destroy the objectivity of viewpoints, or that might be interpreted as prejudiced, slanderous, or self-serving.
- F. In those cases where parents or students find the subject matter objectionable, state educational requirements permit course withdrawals in part or completely if an alternative assignment is completed by the student. It is the responsibility of the

parent(s) to provide written notification to the principal and classroom teacher involved and to collaborate with the teacher in the development of the alternative curriculum.

- G. Parents and/or students will provide written notification to the classroom teacher and the school principal if they feel the controversial issue policy has not been followed.

The policy will be presented to all new employees during orientation and will be available to existing staff via the staff handbook.

Adopted: June 13, 2001