

INSTRUCTION

Controversial Issues and Materials

Controversial Issues

The Board of Trustees believes that free discussion of controversial issues is the heart of the democratic process. Freedom of speech and free access to information are among our most cherished traditions and are a vital part of the instructional program.

The study of controversial issues shall be objective and scholarly, with a minimal emphasis on imposed opinion. Discussion should enrich pupil understanding of a point of view and should not be construed as advocating that point of view. The teacher shall approach controversial issues in the classroom in an impartial and unprejudiced manner, and must refrain from using classroom privileges and prestige to promote a partisan point of view.

Teachers shall provide pupils with the opportunity to analyze current problems, gather and organize pertinent facts, discriminate between fact and opinion, draw informed conclusions, and respect the opinions of others. The study of controversial issues shall be commensurate with the maturity of pupils; that is, selection of a topic that is socially, emotionally, and intellectually appropriate for the pupils in the class and is within the content of grade level expectations, the adopted curriculum, and the course outline of the subject under discussion.

The Board of Trustees recognizes the following rights of pupils relative to the study of controversial issues:

1. The right to study controversial issues which have political, economic, or social significance
2. The right of free access to relevant information
3. The right to study under competent instruction, in an objective atmosphere, free of bias and prejudice
4. The right to form and express opinions on controversial issues without jeopardizing the pupil's relations with the teacher or the school.

Complaints Concerning Controversial Materials

"Controversial materials," as used in this Policy 6164, are instructional materials that arouse strong reaction among individuals or groups holding opposing viewpoints. These materials are usually associated with sensitive subjects like:

1. Sex education and human physiology;
2. Racial, ethnic, and sexual prejudice;
3. Political philosophy;
4. Religion; and
5. Family life and alternative life styles.

The district's selection and use of controversial materials, in the areas of religion, race, sex education, and other instructional areas, will conform to current California Education Code

provisions.

Persons who want the district to reevaluate the methods or instructional materials used in the study and discussion of any issue shall submit a completed District Complaint Form to the Superintendent's Office. The Superintendent will refer the complaint and materials to the school principal, librarian, or other district official, as appropriate, for review and evaluation under Policy 6160: Part VI, Procedures for Requesting a Review of Instructional Materials - Administrative Guidelines. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to make final decisions regarding use or exclusion of instructional materials.

Legal References: California Education Code, Sections:
18111 Exclusion of Books by Governing Board
51510 Prohibited Study of Supplemental Materials
51511 Religious Matters Properly Included in Courses
of Study
60002 Selection of Instructional Materials;
Involvement of Teachers, Parents, and Members
of the Community

Policy

Adopted: March 27, 1986

Revised Policy

Adopted: July 15, 1997

