

358 Controversial Issues

358.01 A “controversial issue” is a topic which is likely to arouse differing points of view and generate strong support and opposition to it in the District, including topics which deal with political, social, economic and religious issues. The rational discussion of controversial issues within the context of curriculum is an important part of the educational process. It is essential to expose students to a variety of ideas they will face throughout their lives, to cultivate the skill of respectful dialogue, to teach them how to apply their values and to introduce them to a process of critical thinking to arrive at thoughtfully developed points of view.

358.02 The Board encourages the introduction of controversial issues into the curriculum provided they are studied within the following educational framework:

1. The topic must be consistent with and in furtherance of the approved curriculum. The topic must assist the student in examining the issue objectively and in an open-minded manner.
2. The topic shall be presented that all legitimate points of view are presented in a balanced way. The topic shall be presented in a manner which is respectful to all sides of the issue.
3. The topic shall be appropriate for the age and maturity of the students.
4. The classroom teacher shall not attempt to indoctrinate or persuade students to a particular point of view or advocate that students take any particular action or position with respect to the topic.

358.03 The District recognizes the rights of parents to inspect instructional materials and to excuse their children from certain curricular activities in accordance with state and federal law. Questions or complaints regarding the teaching of controversial issues within the District shall first be addressed to the building principal. If those questions or complaints are not addressed by the building principal to the satisfaction of the person making them, the question or complaint may then be addressed in writing to the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall act upon the question or complaint and report his/her response to the Board. The Board shall have final authority regarding questions arising from the teaching of controversial topics.

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