

TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education recognizes the role of public education in preparing students for effective citizenship. Consequently, the instructional program developed to achieve this purpose must appropriately emphasize cultural heritage, and the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizenship. The Board also recognizes that as students prepare for effective citizenship, they often encounter issues that may be considered controversial. The Board of Education encourages the examination of controversial issues related to Board approved curriculum in an impartial and objective manner.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the teaching of controversial issues.

III. Definitions

- A. Controversial Issue – a point or matter about which there exist significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives.
- B. Curriculum – the prescribed elements of programs and courses which state clearly and specifically what students are to know and be able to do, how well they will be able to do it, how they will meet the learning objectives and by what means they will be assessed.

IV. Standards

- A. A controversial issue may be considered when the following conditions are met:
 - 1. The issue has political, economic, or social significance and is presented within appropriate curricular guidelines.
 - 2. Students are provided access to relevant and credible information pertaining to the issue under study.
 - 3. The issue is presented in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
 - 4. Students are able to form and express their own opinions on the issue without jeopardizing their relationship with teachers or the school.
- B. Controversial issues must be presented in an impartial and objective manner.
- C. The use of resource speakers in teaching controversial issues is permitted if coordinated with the immediate supervisor of the individual arranging for the speaker.

V. Compliance

- A. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that information from all views on a controversial issue is presented in an appropriate manner.
- B. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that their personal views, when appropriate, are presented as opinion rather than fact.
- C. Principals are responsible for developing and implementing school-based procedures for approving controversial issues to be considered in the classroom.
- D. Central Office Teaching and Learning staff, particularly those with curricular responsibilities, are responsible for providing assistance and advice with regard to the teaching of controversial issues.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

References: U.S. Constitution, Amendment I
NYS Education Law §1709.3
Malverne UFSD v. Sobol
181 AD 2d 371, *appeal withdrawn*
80 N.Y. 2d 972 (1992)

Cross References: *Equity and Educational Excellence Policy (0201)*

Adopted November 15, 2018 pursuant to Resolution No. 2018-19: 471