

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Training for effective citizenship is accepted as one of the major goals of the district's schools. The instructional program developed to achieve this purpose properly places great emphasis upon teaching about our American heritage, respect for our established institutions, the rights and privileges we enjoy as citizens, and the citizenship responsibilities that must be assumed in maintaining our American way of life.

To enable students to learn how to become effective citizens, the public schools have an obligation to prepare them for intelligent and conscientious participation in a democratic social order. Such participation requires that students have the opportunity to become cognizant of public issues; to learn the skills of analyzing current problems and arguments; to distinguish between fact and opinion; to gather and organize pertinent facts; and to respect the opinions of others. The schools have the additional responsibility of providing students the opportunity to identify, form, and express their own opinions on controversial issues.

Teachers will use the following guidelines for selection and study of controversial issues in the classroom:

1. The topic and method used in its study should contribute toward helping students develop techniques for examining controversial issues.
2. The issue should be appropriate to the maturity level background of the students in the class.
3. The issue should be related to the course content and help achieve course objectives.
4. A balanced and fair presentation of the issue should be presented.

Teachers desiring to bring resource people into the class to discuss a particular viewpoint on a controversial issue must first obtain the endorsement of the principal. A written record is desirable. Care must be taken by the teacher not to expose any one viewpoint as more acceptable than another.