

POLICY

OLD BRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Board of Education believes that the consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the instructional program of the schools. Properly introduced and conducted, the consideration of such issues can help pupils learn to identify important issues, explore fully and fairly all sides of an issue, weigh carefully the values and factors involved, and develop techniques for formulating and evaluating positions.

For purposes of this policy a controversial issue is a topic on which opposing points of view have been expressed by responsible and thoughtful persons; likely to arouse both support and opposition in the community; not expressly enumerated in the course guide as appropriate for the course of study; and subject to interpretation as obscene, profane, doctrinaire, or grossly inappropriate, each in relation to the level of maturity of the pupils concerned.

The Board will permit the introduction and proper educational use of controversial issues provided that their use in the instructional program is related to the instructional goals of the course of study and level of maturity of the pupils. The discussion of controversial issues must not tend to indoctrinate pupils or persuade them to a particular point of view. Instead, teachers must encourage fair presentation and open-mindedness and the free exchange of ideas in a spirit of scholarly inquiry, drawing upon information and insights from the widest feasible range of resources.

The Board recognizes that some deviation from the assigned curriculum guide is necessary in the free exchange of ideas in the classroom. However, the Board specifies that under the guidance of the Superintendent and, through administrative directive, the guidance of the staff, that any discussion of controversial issues in the classroom shall be conducted in an unprejudiced and dispassionate manner and shall not:

1. Disrupt the educational process
2. Fail to match the maturity level of students,
3. Be unrelated to the goals of the Board and the appropriate curriculum guide, or
4. Tend toward the doctrinaire.



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When the consideration of controversial issues have not been specified in the course guide, the Board will permit the instructional use of only those issues that have been approved in advance by the principal and central administration.

The discussion of controversial issues in the classroom will be conducted in an unprejudiced and dispassionate manner and can not be allowed to disrupt the educational process. In the discussion of any issue, a teacher may express a personal opinion, provided the expression is characterized as personal opinion and does not attempt to persuade pupils to the teacher's point of view.

The Superintendent shall assist teaching staff members in developing an alertness to the occurrence of controversial issues in the context of the curriculum and developing techniques for the management of controversial issues that do not stifle a spirit of free inquiry.

Adopted: 29 April 1999

Revised: 27 June 2000

