

210 Controversial Issues in Schools

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Policy

The ability to discuss, listen, and dissent are essential elements of responsible citizenship. Such study provides students with opportunities to develop skills in analyzing issues, respecting the opinion of others, distinguishing between fact and opinion, considering all pertinent factors in reaching decisions, and arriving at group decisions.

Controversy, which is a natural element of a democratic society, necessarily becomes associated with many portions of the school's objectives and curriculum. The study of controversial issues is therefore an appropriate and necessary part of the school program.

Administrative Procedures

Guidelines for Studying Controversial Issues

Such studies will be most productive when:

- the issues have relevance and therefore interest for the student
- the students have free access to appropriate materials and information for analysis and evaluation of the issues
- the teacher is able to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and thoughtful consideration, where discussion of a variety of viewpoints is encouraged
- the topic and materials used are within the scope of the age-group
- the topic is related to a planned educational program
- the teacher keeps parents and principal appropriately informed when sensitive issues are involved

Managing Complaints Regarding Controversial Issues

Complaints regarding controversial issues should be handled in a similar manner to the administrative procedures for challenged learning resources in Policy 201.