

Controversial Issues

Section 1. General. Controversial issues arise from conflicts in cherished interests, beliefs, or affiliations of large groups of our citizens. Controversial issues are those on which conflicting views are held by political parties, by management and labor, by city and country, and by other large groups of our people who disagree with the proposed solutions to important problems.

The school curriculum is composed of established truths and generally accepted values, but it also includes many controversial issues. Gradual social change is inevitable, and the public schools include the study of some important unsolved problems, which involve controversial issues. The schools provide opportunities for pupils, according to their maturity, to analyze current problems, to gather and organize pertinent facts, to discriminate between fact and opinion, to detect propaganda, to identify prejudice, to draw intelligent conclusions, to respect the opinions of others and to accept the principles of majority rule and the rights of minorities.

Section 2. Rights and Responsibilities of Students. In the study of controversial issues in the public schools, the student has certain rights and responsibilities:

1. The right to study a controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance and concerning the development of opinion.
2. The right to have free access to all relevant public information.
3. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere as nearly free from bias and prejudice as possible.
4. The right to form and constructively express opinions on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing relations with teachers or the school.
5. The right to express opinions provided that the nature of such expressions do not disrupt and/or hamper the educational program of any school system.

Section 3. Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers. The study of controversial issues is to be done in an objective and scholarly manner with a minimum emphasis on opinion. The teacher is to approach controversial issues in the classroom in a manner as impartial and unprejudiced as possible.

The teacher may express himself/herself on controversial issues; however, the teacher must state that such expressions are individual opinions concerning the topic being discussed.