

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Board of Education recognizes that controversial issues deal with matters about which there are varied levels of opposing views, biases, emotions and/or conflict shall arise as a natural part of assuming an adult role in society.

Therefore, the Board shall provide the following guidelines in order to allow staff to prepare and execute lessons that will be as objective as possible while considering the nature of the potentially controversial subject matter.

1. In the classroom, matters of a controversial nature shall be handled as they arise in the normal course of instruction and not introduced for their own sake. Such issues shall be neither sought nor avoided.
2. When presenting various positions on a controversial issue, the teacher shall take care to balance major views and to assure that as many sides of the issues as possible are presented in a fair manner, with no position being espoused by the teacher as the only one acceptable.
3. When materials dealing with controversial topics are to be used, assigned or recommended, such materials must:
 - balance major views and provide as many sides of the issue as possible in a fair manner, with no position presented as the only one acceptable;
 - be appropriate to the maturity level of the students; and
 - not adversely affect the attainment of the district's instructional goals or result in substantial disruption of the normal operation of the classroom.
4. Prior to presenting materials on such an issue, the classroom teacher shall present the materials to the Principal for prior approval who will review the materials pursuant to the guidelines established by the Board.
5. Before a guest speaker is permitted to address the students, approval must be granted by the Building Principal, who must be informed of the scheduling of all guest speakers.

Ref: Education Law §414
Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier, 484 US 260 (1988)
Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 US 503 (1969)
Board of Ed., Malverne UFSD v. Morgan, 3020-a panel decision; Howard C. Edelman, Esq., chairman (Feb. 2, 1990)
Matter of Morgan, 29 EDR 363 (1990)
Malverne v. Sobol (RJI # 01-90-ST2690) Sup. Ct., Albany County, G. Cobb, J.S.C., 4/1/91

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