

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

A controversial issue is defined as any political, economic, or social question over which differences of opinion have arisen and been publicly expressed and discussed.

Teachers shall be encouraged and supported in teaching about controversial issues and informing pupils about divergent viewpoints or positions of individuals and groups on current issues and problems.

Teachers handling controversial issues in class must ensure objectivity and make every effort to research and present varying opinions. The age and maturity of students must be taken into account when teaching about controversial issues.

Principals shall encourage teachers to use resource persons from inside and outside of the school system staff for enrichment of instruction. The Principal shall be responsible for approving each outside speaker invited to speak in the school, in a class, assembly, or extra-curricular program.

In their supervision of instruction, administrators will take steps to insure that:

1. Controversial issues are identified by teachers in curriculum development and lesson planning.
2. Divergent viewpoints or positions on controversial issues are fairly represented in teacher presentations as well as through selection and use of outside speakers and materials.
3. Speakers will not be invited whose past statements, background, or record suggest that they would advocate to students the violent overthrow of our government, violation of the law, or disruption of the school system.
4. Pupils and parents will receive advance information about any speaker scheduled to speak in the school on a controversial issue. Parental concerns should be brought to the attention of the School Principal.

Cross-Reference: 1420, Complaints About Curricula or Instructional Materials
1550, Public Use of School Facilities
4200, Curriculum Development
4313, Teaching About Religion
4510, Instructional Materials

Reference: Education Law § 414