

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The School Board believes that students should have opportunities to discuss controversial issues which have political, social or economic significance and which the students are mature enough to investigate and address. The study of a controversial issue should help students learn how to gather and organize pertinent facts, discriminate between fact and fiction, draw intelligent conclusions, and respect the opinions of others.

The Board expects teachers to exercise caution and discretion when deciding whether or not a particular issue is suitable for study or discussion in any particular class. Instruction that involves controversial issues must be within the district content standards and curriculum. The overriding educational purpose of teaching about controversial issues must be student achievement in the academic subjects and students' civic development, rather than reaching conclusions as to the correctness of any particular point of view. The instruction must reflect due consideration of the maturity of the students, the values of the community, sound professional judgment, and coordination with the administration.

The Board also expects teachers to ensure that all sides of a controversial issue are impartially presented, with adequate and appropriate factual information. Without promoting any partisan point of view, the teacher should help students separate fact from opinion and warn them against drawing conclusions from insufficient data. The teacher shall not suppress any student's view on the issue as long as its expression is not malicious or abusive toward others.

Teachers sponsoring guest speakers shall either ask them not to use their position or influence on students to forward their own religious, political, economic or social views or shall take active steps to neutralize whatever bias has been presented.

In matters related to controversial issues and learning materials, the Superintendent and Board have final authority in deciding whether discussion of a controversial issue follows established professional ethics, content standards, and curriculum, and is appropriate for students.

Legal References (See next page)

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(cf. 1312.1 - Complaints Concerning School Personnel)
(cf. 1312.2 - Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials)
(cf. 4119.25 - Political Activities of Employees)
(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)
(cf. 6141.2 - Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs)

Legal Reference:

ALASKA STATUTES

14.03.090 Sectarian or denominational doctrines prohibited