

Guidelines for Staff Regarding Controversial Issues

A "controversial issue" is a topic of significant academic inquiry about which substantial groups of citizens of this community, this state or this nation hold sincere, conflicting points of view.

It is the belief of the Board that controversial issues should be fairly presented in a spirit of honest academic freedom so that students may recognize the validity of other points of view but can also learn to formulate their own opinions based upon dispassionate, objective, unbiased study and discussion of the facts related to the controversy.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to present full and fair opportunity and means for students to study, consider and discuss all sides of controversial issues including, but not limited to, political philosophies.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to protect the right of the student to study pertinent controversial issues within the limits of good taste and to allow the student to express personal opinions without jeopardizing the student's relationship with the teacher.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to refrain from advocating partisan causes, sectarian religious views, or selfish propaganda of any kind through any classroom or school device. Teachers may express a personal opinion as long as students are clearly informed that this is the teacher's opinion and not necessarily based on fact, and students are encouraged to reach their own decisions independently.

The Board encourages full discussion of controversial issues in a spirit of academic freedom that shows students that they have the right to disagree with the opinions of others but that they also have the responsibility to base the disagreement on facts and to respect the right of others to hold conflicting opinions.

Legal Reference: Code of Iowa 282 Chapter 25.3(6)

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