

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES POLICY

One of the roles of the school is to introduce and discuss issues of concern in a respectfully and discerning manner. In doing so, these issues may be called controversial because of the diversity of religious, moral, and ethical views present in the community. The RSU 19 School Board supports the discussion of controversial issues in an atmosphere of consideration and appreciation of all sides of the issue.

There are ideas, beliefs, and customs which are so cherished by cultures that they are known as values. Parents should be society's most valuable means of imparting values. It is not the function of the school to help set the values, but rather to help students identify values and their impact on people's decisions and actions. The teachers will consider the developmental appropriateness of these discussions prior to the lesson planning.

- A. The Board of Directors acknowledges the need to protect employees from censorship or restraint which interferes with their professional obligation in the implementation of the approved curriculum. The Board of Directors has trust and confidence in the professional judgment of its employees.
- B. It is the responsibility of the teacher to allow a variety of viewpoints to be represented.
- C. The handling of controversial issues in classes should be free from the assumption that there is only one correct opinion. Ideas should emerge from discussion and not from authoritative instruction. Teachers are encouraged to help students to begin to develop their own techniques for the consideration of controversial issues.
- D. A controversial issue is to be handled in an appropriate setting by a teacher prepared for this responsibility. If this is not the case, then provision must be made for an alternative means for that class to cover the material.
- E. Parents will have the opportunity to review curriculum and/or the material utilized as a part of the curriculum.
- F. Parents have the option of limiting their child's participation, in part or whole, in any discussion or course of a controversial nature. However, the wishes of the child's parents to restrict their child's participation in a class discussion will not infringe on other parents' rights to permit their children to participate in such discussion. An appropriate alternate assignment may be recommended by the teacher.
- G. Restraint and careful judgment must be exercised by the teacher when stating personal opinions to which students might ascribe more weight than is intended.

Note: Procedures for Objection to Curriculum Topic or Material are on file at the Office of the Superintendent.

1st Reading: 10/20/09

Adopted: 11/17/09