

Controversial Issues Policy

- ~~A controversial issue is defined as an issue of community concern which may have opposing viewpoints.~~ Students are exposed to a wide range of issues, information, ideas and values at school, at home and in the community. Particular issues may be controversial because of differing political, religious, moral or ethical beliefs. In the context of the educational program and approved curricula, the Board supports discussion of controversial issues in an atmosphere that promotes learning and respect for the beliefs of others.

The consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the public school curriculum. ~~and thus the following principles are to be recognized:—~~

Principles:

- a. Discussion of a controversial issue is to be conducted in an atmosphere of respect. Teachers must be aware of their responsibility to allow multiple viewpoints to be presented.
- b. Ideas should emerge from discussion and not from authoritative instruction. The purpose is to have students see as fully as possible all sides of the question and begin to develop their own techniques for the consideration of controversial issues.
- c. A controversial issue is to be handled responsibly in an appropriate setting. Discussion of a controversial issue shall take into consideration the maturity level and needs of the students, and the applicability to the area of study. —
- d. A controversial issue, may arise unexpectedly. In such case the teacher shall handle it in accordance with a,b, and c above.
- e. The building principal shall be available to staff for consultation, advice and assistance in implementing controversial lessons.
- f. Parents have options to restrict their child's participation in part or in whole in any planned discussion or course of a controversial nature. However, the wishes of one child's parents to restrict his/her child's participation in a class discussion will not infringe on other student's rights to participate in such discussion. It will be the responsibility of the parent to provide written consent for the student to absent himself/herself and be provided with an alternate placement and/or assignment.

g. In light of the teacher's considerable influence, restraint and careful judgment must be exercised in stating personal opinions to which students might ascribe more weight than is intended, that might distort or destroy the objectivity of viewpoint, or that might be interpreted as prejudiced, slanderous or self-serving. Educators shall not use the classroom as a forum to advance their personal views.

h. Students or their parents/legal guardians who object to particular topics based on their particular, sincerely held religious, moral or philosophical beliefs may request an accommodation in accordance with Board Policy IMBB.

Maine Regional School Unit No. 22

Adopted: 4/20/77, amended 7/1/88, ~~and~~ 4/02/03, _____

Cross Reference: IMBB - Exemption from Required Instruction
ILD - Student Submission to Surveys, Analysis, or Evaluations