

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Free discussion of controversial issues political, economic, social shall be encouraged in the classroom whenever appropriate for the level of the group.

Issues may be considered controversial which arouse strong reactions, based either on personal conviction or allegiance to a group. School treatment of controversial issues shall be designed to instruct students in fair and objective study techniques. The decision on whether a particular controversial issue shall become a matter for school study shall be based on the timeliness of the question, the maturity and needs of the students and the purposes of the school. Classroom discussions on controversial questions which arise unexpectedly shall be the responsibility of the teacher, who shall provide relevant information on both sides of the question. Such discussions shall be kept free from the assumption that there is one correct answer that should emerge from a discussion and be taught authoritatively to the students.

Students shall be taught to recognize each other's right to form an opinion on controversial issues, and shall be assured of their own right to do so without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher or the school.

When public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties: in the classroom, at board meetings, and at other meetings related to educational issues affecting the district, the employees are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline (Garcetti v. Ceballos).

The building principal shall have the authority to limit or suspend discussion of controversial issues pending a review of the issue/materials. Instructional materials not previously approved must be reviewed by the principal before being introduced into the classroom.

Adopted: December 11, 2008

NJSBA Review/Update: August 2019

Reviewed and Readopted:

Key Words

Controversial Issues, Curriculum, Instructional Materials, Censorship

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 18A:111 General mandatory powers and duties
N.J.S.A. 18A:3634 Written approval required prior to acquisition of certain survey information from students
N.J.S.A. 18A:5420 Powers of board (county vocational schools)

Student Protection Rights Amendment - 20 U.S.C. 1232h

Tenure Hearing of William Lee Johnson, Clearview Regional School District, 79 S.L.D. 267; 79 S.L.D. 273 aff'd with deletion of paragraph

Garcetti v. Ceballos 2006 U.S. LEXIS 4341(May 2006)

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES (continued)

Possible

<u>Cross References:</u>	*1312	Community complaints and inquiries
	5145	Rights
	*6115	Ceremonies and observances
	*6141.2	Recognition of religious beliefs and customs
	*6145.3	Publications
	*6161.1	Guidelines for evaluation and selection of instructional materials
	*6161.2	Complaints regarding instructional materials

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.