

Policy

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The school provides opportunities for the study of controversial issues.

The presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom must be on an informative basis. Teachers must guard against giving their personal opinions on sectarian or political questions or any other controversial issues until the students have had the opportunity to:

- A. Find, collect, and assemble factual materials on the subject;
- B. Interpret the data without prejudice;
- C. Reconsider assumptions and claims;
- D. Reach their own conclusions.

By refraining from expressing personal views before and during the period of research and study, the teacher encourages the students to search after truth and to think for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled, and weighed, and relationships seen before drawing inferences or conclusions is among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system.

Students must be guaranteed the right to:

- A. Study any controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance and concerning which (at his/her level) he/she should begin to have an opinion;
- B. Have free access to all relevant information, including the material that circulates freely in the community;
- C. Study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice;
- D. Form and express his/her own opinions on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing his/her relations 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).

Adopted: March 2007
NJSBA Review/Update: June 2014
Readopted: December 2014

Key Words

Controversial Issues, Curriculum, Instructional Materials, Censorship

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 General mandatory powers and duties
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-34 Written approval required prior to acquisition of certain survey information from students
N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20 Powers of board (county vocational schools)

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES (continued)

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)

Possible

Cross References: *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.