

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 pupils 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 pupils and the purposes of the schools. 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 pupils. Similarly, when speakers are invited for a class or school-wide program, the teacher/principal/Chief School Administrator must consider whether the speaker is controversial for any reason, the topic is controversial or sensitive or known to arouse strong community feelings, and/or the speaker would gain an advantage by having a captive audience.

Pupils 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.

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.

First Reading: October 24, 2005

Second Reading: Nov. 14, 2005

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)

Pupil Protection Rights Amendment – 20 U.S.C. 123h

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

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.