

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL AND SENSITIVE ISSUES

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2 The Loudoun County School Board recognizes that preparation for effective
3 citizenship is one of the major purposes of education. The preparation for effective
4 citizenship includes the study of issues that are controversial and/or sensitive. An
5 issue is controversial when there are significant academic, social, political, and
6 ideological matters about which there exists opposing viewpoints and/or multiple
7 perspectives within the K-12 educational setting. In contrast, a sensitive issue is a
8 resolved historical fact that must be addressed in a manner that supports a safe
9 learning environment for students. The study of controversial and /or sensitive issues
10 shall be conducted in an atmosphere in which facts and knowledge related to the
11 curriculum can be freely accessed and the critical thinking of students can be
12 developed through academic research and classroom discussion within the guidelines
13 of the instructional program. Such study will be carried out in an atmosphere as free
14 from bias, prejudice, or coercion as possible.
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16 A. Expectations. In teaching about curriculum-related controversial and/or
17 sensitive issues, instructional staff are expected to:
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19 1. Establish a learning environment where each student can study the
20 issues within a curriculum that is appropriate to the student's knowledge and maturity;
21 and learn to discuss controversial and/or sensitive issues in a civil manner that
22 promotes intellectual integrity and preserves personal dignity.
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24 2. Provide instruction in an atmosphere that is free from personal bias,
25 prejudice, or coercion.
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27 3. Address controversial topics that are part of the curriculum as impartially
28 and objectively as possible. Instructional staff shall not allow personal biases or
29 personal beliefs to interfere with professional judgment or presentation of the content
30 of the curriculum.
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32 4. Ensure clarity of the goals for teaching curriculum-related controversial
33 and/or sensitive issues. The purpose of classroom discussions is to explore concepts
34 and perspectives.
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36 5. Agreement is not an intended outcome when students engage with
37 controversial issues in the curriculum.
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39 6. Remain aware of students who have strong emotional reactions or
40 confusion regarding a controversial or sensitive issue and contact the school's Unified
41 Mental Health team when appropriate.
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43 7. Consult with school leadership before controversial materials or
44 speakers are presented in class.
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47 B. Free From Endorsements. Although the instructional program includes study of
48 the political party system in the United States, including elections and political current
49 events, the School Board does not endorse any political party or candidate.

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51 Adopted:

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55 Legal Ref: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-78

56 Cross Ref: Policy 7524, Staff Participation in Political Activities

57 Policy 8-62, Students Not Required to Convey Certain Materials

58 Policy 8-65, Solicitation, Distribution and Posting