

## CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM

The Parkview School Board believes that the consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the instructional program of the schools.

Properly introduced and conducted, the consideration of such issues can help students learn to identify important issues, explore fully and fairly all sides of an issue, weigh carefully the values and factors involved, and develop techniques for formulating and evaluating positions. In addition, the opportunity can lead students to learn about how to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills, to study and analyze relevant issues, evaluate different sources of information, make intelligent decisions regarding issues, and how to appreciate the value of differing viewpoints.

For purposes of this policy, a controversial issue is a topic on which opposing points of view have been promulgated by responsible opinion and/or likely to arouse both support and opposition in the community. These issues may range across a wide spectrum of political, social, economic, and religious topics.

The Board will permit the introduction and proper educational use of controversial issues provided that their use in the instructional program:

- A. is related to the instructional goals of the course of study and level of maturity of the students;
- B. encourages open-mindedness and is conducted in a spirit of scholarly inquiry;
- C. does not cause a substantial disruption in the school environment;
- D. has both sides of the issue equally presented
- E. has been approved in advance by the Building Principal

Controversial issues related to the program may be initiated by the students themselves provided they are presented in the ordinary course of classroom instruction, relate to the topic of instruction, and do not cause substantial disruption to the school environment.

In the discussion of any controversial issue in the classroom or in the course of professional duties, a teacher may express a personal opinion, but shall identify it as such, and must not express such an opinion for the purpose of persuading students to their point of view. Teachers should be mindful that this does not permit them to offer opinions on topics which would not be the subject of discussion in the classroom due to their appropriateness for the age(s) of the students involved. As always, teachers are expected to serve as exemplars for their students by demonstrating good judgment as professionals when discussing controversial issues and expressing personal opinions in the classroom. The classroom shall not be used as a forum for the discussion of District employment issues.

The Board recognizes that a course of study or certain instructional materials may contain content and/or activities that some parents find objectionable. If a controversial issue is going to be discussed in a classroom, the teacher will send a notification to the parents prior to the discussion

letting them know about the controversial issue(s) that will be discussed. If after careful, personal review of the program lessons and/or materials, a parent indicates to the school that either content or activities conflicts with their religious beliefs or value system, the school will honor a written request for their child to be excused from that particular classe(s) for specified reasons. The student, however, will not be excused from participating in the course or activities mandated by the State and will be provided alternative learning activities during times of parent-requested absences.

**APPROVED:**     JULY 15, 2024