

## Instruction

**SUBJECT: CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

- 1) Opportunities should be provided within the instructional program to study controversial issues under competent guidance from instructional staff. At all grade levels, these opportunities should be provided to students with consideration of their developmental level and ability to analyze and discuss the concepts involved.
- 2) A BOCES regional collection, regional union catalog, or library media center's collection, both print and digital, will include items that are considered to be controversial. Widely differing perspectives may be controversial, but they are essential for learning. Materials from other sources, such as interlibrary loans, may also contain controversial items.
- 3) The study of controversial issues should, at all times, minimize the emphasis on opinion and be objective, scholarly, and reflective of New York State learning standards and curriculum guidance issued by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Instructional staff must approach controversial issues in an impartial and unprejudicial manner and must refrain from using the classroom to promote a partisan or personal point of view. All sides to any issue should be presented.
- 4) Planning for the teaching of any controversial issue must be carried out with the acknowledgment of the building principal or program director as to the topic, materials used, guest speakers, etc. An informed building principal or program director is better able to support instructional staff and the instruction regarding concerns, questions, and/or challenges to what is being taught and discussed.

Students and/or parents are to be informed before beginning a planned unit of study which may be considered controversial in nature.

Spontaneous discussion of an issue is permitted when the occasion arises naturally in the course of a lesson.

- 5) In discussing controversial issues, instructional staff should consider that the classroom is a forum for discussion, and not a committee for reaching a consensus or solution. During classroom discussions, students should not be made to feel responsible for reaching a consensus or solution regarding controversial issues.
- 6) The consideration of any controversial issue should require only as much time as is needed for satisfactory study by the class, but sufficient time should be provided to cover the issue adequately.

- 7) It is the instructional staff's responsibility to bring out the facts concerning controversial questions. They have the right to express an opinion, but in doing so it is important that students understand it is an opinion and is not to be accepted as an authoritative answer.

(Continued)

## Instruction

**SUBJECT: CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES (Cont'd.)****Objections**

Any objection to how a controversial issue is being taught, including the use of a guest speaker, should be directed to the building principal or program director who will consult with appropriate instructional staff to address the objection.

If the objection is related to instructional material being used in the teaching of a controversial issue, the process for requesting reconsideration of library or instructional materials should be followed. Objections to instructional materials by community members or component districts must be submitted in writing to the District Superintendent on form #8330F -- Request for Re-Evaluation of Instructional and Library Materials. If the objection is related to the curriculum or New York State learning standards, the building principal or program director will address the matter with the individual(s) raising the objection.