

1 **TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES REGULATIONS**
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3 Teaching about controversial issues necessitates the study and discussion of issues on which
4 differing positions may be held by individuals or groups. The goal is for students to be taught to
5 think critically on matters of importance, and to be well informed about the issues.
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7 In teaching about such issues, staff must ensure students:
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- 9 ● have access to age appropriate relevant information and materials;
- 10 ● conduct research in an atmosphere free from the staff members’ personal bias, prejudice,
11 and coercion;
- 12 ● participating in structured discourse on topics;
- 13 ● act in a respectful manner; and
- 14 ● form and express opinions on assigned issues.

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16 The role of the teacher in the presentation of issues is vitally important. All sides of the issue
17 should be presented to the students in a neutral and unbiased manner. Indoctrination is not the
18 intent or purpose of the school division.
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20 It is essential that when discussing or debating controversial issues and expressing opinions,
21 students are required to provide evidence to support their perspectives, claims, and assertions.
22 They should also be taught to consider multiple points of view related to a controversial issue,
23 problem, or decision—including why a specific issue may raise multiple opinions and
24 perspectives. Critical thinking skills such as comparing and evaluating sources, including analysis
25 and evaluation of potential evidence of bias or propaganda, are essential for dealing with
26 controversial issues within a class context.
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28 In order to minimize bias or the appearance of ‘taking sides’, teachers should refrain from
29 expressing a personal opinion on controversial topics.
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32 Adopted: New
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35 Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-78
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37 Cross Refs.: KF Distribution of Information/Materials
38 JOB Administration of Surveys and Questionnaires

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES REGULATIONS

Teaching about controversial issues necessitates the study and discussion of issues on which differing positions may be held by individuals or groups. The goal is for students to be taught to think critically on matters of importance, and to be well informed about the issues.

In teaching about considering such issues, staffteachers must ensure students:

- have free access to all-age appropriate relevant information and materials in the school;
- conduct research in an atmosphere of freedom from the staff members' personal bias, and prejudice, and coercion;
- participating in structured discourse on topics;
- act in a respectful manner; and
- form and express opinions on assigned issues.

The role of the teacher in the presentation of assigned issues is vitally important. All sides of the issue should be presented to given the students in a neutral and unbiased dispassionate manner. The goal is for students to be taught to think critically clearly on all matters of importance, and to make decisions in the light of all the materials that have been presented or can be researched on the issues. Indoctrination is not the intent or purpose of the school division.

It is essential that when discussing or debating controversial issues and expressing opinions, students be are required encouraged to provide evidence to support their perspectives, claims, and assertions. They should also be taught encouraged to consider multiple points of view related to a controversial issue, problem, or decision—including why a specific issue may raise multiple opinions and perspectives. Such eCritical thinking skills such as comparing and evaluating sources, including analysis and evaluation of potential evidence of bias or propaganda, are essential for dealing with controversial issues within a class context.

When appropriate, or when asked, the teacher may give their his/her opinion but must be sure that the student recognizes the given opinion as the teacher's personal opinion. In order to minimize bias or the appearance of 'taking sides', teachers should refrain from expressing a personal opinion on controversial topics.

Adopted: New

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

Cross Refs.: KF Distribution of Information/Materials
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Commented [1]: This is a new regulation which holds content relocated from the policy.

Commented [2]: Slightly reworded from the policy to clarify that this is the teacher's responsibility.

Commented [3]: Slightly reworded from the policy to clarify that this is the teacher's responsibility.

Commented [4]: How do we ensure that teachers are properly trained to provide these experiences for students? Does the division provide professional learning opportunities around this topic?

Commented [5]: The whole point of this is to make the discussion evidence based.

Commented [6]: The goal is to teach them the skill of considering multiple perspectives.

Commented [7]: This is complicated as it could infer the teacher is endorsing something (political, religious, etc.). Suggest we revise to note that teachers should refrain from expressing a personal opinion.