

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Alexandria City School Board (Board) recognizes that preparation for effective citizenship is one of the major purposes of education. The preparation for effective citizenship includes the study of issues that are controversial. Such student learning is carried out in an atmosphere free from bias, prejudice, or coercion.

Definitions:

Controversial Issues - Topics where there are open questions; that are significant in terms of society or the past; and on which it is important to explore different perspectives that have legitimate sources of information

In teaching about controversial issues, staff are expected to

- establish a learning environment where each student can study the issues within the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) curriculum in a manner that is appropriate to the student’s knowledge and maturity; and
- provide instruction in an atmosphere that is free from bias, prejudice, or coercion.

Although the instructional program includes study of the political party system in the United States, the Board does not endorse any political party or candidate.

Adopted: January 9, 1997
 Amended: July 1, 2005
 Amended: March 12, 2015

Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-78.
 Cross Refs.: KF Distribution of Information/Materials
 JOB Administration of Surveys and Questionnaires

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Alexandria City School Board (Board) recognizes that preparation training for effective citizenship ~~is~~as one of the major purposes of education. ~~The preparation and recognizes that T~~The preparation for effective citizenship includes the study of ~~issues that are controversial issues, on which where differing positions may be held by individuals or groups.~~ Such student learning is ~~carried out in an atmosphere free from bias, prejudice, or coercion.~~

Definitions:

Controversial Issues - Topics where there are open questions; that are significant in terms of society or the past; and on which it is important to explore different perspectives that have legitimate sources of information

In teaching about controversial issues, staff are expected to

- establish a learning environment where each student can study the issues within the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) curriculum in a manner that is appropriate to the student’s knowledge and maturity; and
- provide instruction in an atmosphere that is free from bias, prejudice, or coercion.

In considering such issues, it shall be the purpose of the Alexandria City Public Schools to allow study of teacher-assigned issues. The student shall:

- (1) Have free access to all relevant information and materials in the school;
- (2) Conduct research in an atmosphere of freedom from bias and prejudice;
- (3) 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 given to the students in a dispassionate manner. The goal is for students to be taught to think 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 controversial issues and expressing opinions, students be encouraged to provide evidence to support their perspectives, claims, and assertions. They should also be 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 critical thinking skills 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 his/her opinion but must be sure that the student recognizes the given opinion as the teacher’s personal opinion.~~

Commented [1]: With revisions this is word for word the VSBA model policy. The struck content has been relocated to the new regulation and revised.

Commented [2]: Relocated to the regulation

Commented [3]: Frame this in terms of fostering critical thinking and debate as skills that should be taught by ACPS.

Commented [4]: Relocated to the regulation

Commented [5]: Relocated to the regulation

Commented [6]: It’s important to stick to the standards and curriculum.

47 Although the instructional program ~~of the school division~~ includes ~~many facets study~~ of the
48 political party system in the United States, the ~~School~~ Board does not ~~approve as a part of the~~
49 ~~school program the involvement of students in activities that imply school endorsement of an~~
50 ~~individual~~ endorse any political party or candidate.

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