

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Public Schools have the responsibility to educate students to be informed conscientious citizens, capable of critical thinking and problem-solving. Students must be given the opportunity to face important issues, to evaluate complex situations, and to express themselves through discussion, in writing, and by exercising their right to vote.

The intelligent discussion of vital current public issues, including those that are controversial, is an important part of developing effective citizenship. Every student has the right and responsibility to examine controversial issues without prejudice.

The Oxnard Union High School District prohibits, at any district school or school activity, unlawful discrimination, including discriminatory harassment, intimidation, and bullying, targeted at any student by anyone, based on the student's actual or perceived race, color, ancestry, nationality, national origin, immigration status, ethnic group identification, ethnicity, age, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression; or genetic information, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

Definition

An issue is controversial when a question is debatable and when some of its proposed components conflict with the intellectual or emotional commitments of the community to cherished interests, beliefs, or loyalties.

Purposes of Study

Study of a controversial issue should provide opportunities for students to develop techniques of examining the issue that strengthens their inquiry skills.

The study of such issues shall develop from among the following:

1. To study relevant issues and to examine potential solutions
2. To use norms for communicating
3. To recognize that differences of opinion are valuable and normal
4. To recognize that reasonable compromise is a possibility
5. To analyze and evaluate sources of information

Selection of Issues

1. The issue must align to the California standards and the Board adopted course description
2. The issue must be appropriate for students' interests, experience, and maturity
3. There must be adequate time for the presentation of the issue
4. The issue should involve the students sufficiently to interest them, but not to such an extent that they are unable to study it rationally.

Process

1. If an issue is identified by a teacher, parent/guardian, or student as controversial in nature, the teacher should confer with the principal or designee to discuss the issue, the development of lessons and supplemental materials, and the potential need for providing additional information to parents and/or guardians. (cf. 6161.1 – Textbooks and Instructional Materials)
2. Instruction shall be presented without advocacy, with inquiry encouraged
3. Instruction shall identify points of discussion, sources of information, and potential solutions
4. Instruction shall promote rational methods of analyzing information, including inquiry strategies, and identify support for conclusions drawn regarding the issues discussed.
5. Students shall be assured of their right to form and express an opinion without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher or school provided their verbal and written statements and/or body language does not constitute harassment, threats, intimidation, or bullying or is otherwise unlawful
6. Students shall be assured of their right to form and express an opinion without jeopardizing their grades or being subject to discrimination, retaliation, or discipline, provided their verbal and written statements and/or body language does not constitute harassment, threats, intimidation, or bullying or is otherwise unlawful
7. No out-of-school group or individual shall present information about a controversial issue without prior permission of the teacher and the principal.

Students Rights

1. The right to study controversial issues in a manner appropriate to student's age and maturity level
2. The right to have access to all relevant information
3. The right to study in an atmosphere free from bias or prejudice
4. The right form and express individual opinions on controversial issues without jeopardizing relations with teacher or others provided their verbal and written statements and/or body language does not constitute harassment, threats, intimidation, or bullying or is otherwise unlawful.

ADOPTED: 5/1/19