



Teaching Controversial-Sensitive Issues

Controversy is inherent in the democratic way of life. It is essential, therefore, that the study and discussion of controversial issues have an important place in education for citizenship in a free society. Students can develop into free citizens with informed loyalty to democracy only through the process of examining evidence, facts and differing viewpoints; through the exercise of freedom of thought and moral choice, and through the making of responsible decisions.

The Park West School Division supports the presentation and discussion on an informative basis, of controversial social, political, and economic issues and problems at the school level in an atmosphere devoid of bias and prejudice. Such presentation and discussion may be within the classroom and may be directly related to curriculum content or may occur as part of co-curricular activities before and after school, within or outside of the school building, wherever students groups are involved.

In supporting the rights of students to examine such issues, the division supports such discussion on the following understandings:

- That the issues and questions raised come within the range of knowledge, maturity, interest, and competence of the students involved;
- That students are cautioned to examine all sides of the issue, to listen to the viewpoints of others with an open mind, and to evaluate the viewpoints represented with impartiality and objectivity on an intellectual basis;
- That factual, accurate, and balanced presentations respecting the issue are made available to students;
- That students have access to relevant material resources freely available in the school and other libraries; and
- The teacher also has the obligation to be as objective as possible and to present fairly the several sides of an issue. Although the teacher has the right to express personal viewpoints and opinions, the teacher does not have the right to indoctrinate students to those views. Teachers should withhold the expression of personal opinions until students have had the opportunity to find, collect, assemble, analyze, and interpret information on the issue without prejudice and time to reach their own conclusions.