



**Series 6000  
Instruction**

## **Policy 6307**

### **Controversial Issues**

Free discussion of controversial issues is the heart of the democratic process. Freedom of speech and free access to information are among our most cherished traditions.

The study of controversial issues should be objective and scholarly. The teacher should approach controversial issues in the classroom in an impartial and unprejudiced manner, and must refrain from promoting a partisan point of view.

Policy adopted:           August 17, 2020



A controversial issue involves a problem about which different individuals and groups urge conflicting courses of action. It is an issue for which society has not found a solution, and it is of sufficient significance that each proposed way of dealing with it is objectionable to some sector of the citizenry. The objection may result from a feeling that a cherished belief, an economic interest, or a basic principle is threatened.

Because the development of rational thinking and preparation for citizenship are among the educational goals of the school system, the Clinton Public Schools have a responsibility to include, in various curriculum areas at all grade levels, content dealing with current critical issues, some of which will be controversial.

The Clinton Public Schools as an educational institution and the individual classroom teacher have a responsibility to give the student:

- An opportunity to study controversial issues which have political, economic or social significance about which students will begin to have an opinion.
- Access and training in how to identify and evaluate relevant information.
- Opportunity to learn and apply the techniques of critical analysis and make independent judgments.
- Competent instruction balancing the various points of view in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
- The right to form and express his/her own opinions on controversial issues and to present and support personal conclusions without jeopardizing his/her relations with teachers or the schools.

In fulfilling this responsibility, the teacher shall make a deliberate effort to achieve balance within a reasonable period of time in the viewpoints and information to which students are exposed.

In selecting certain controversial issues to be included in the instructional program the staff, in consultation with the principal, shall use the following guidelines:

- The issue should contribute toward helping students develop techniques for examining other controversial issues.
- The issue should be suitable for students of the maturity and background represented in the class.
- The issue should be related to the course content and help achieve course objectives.
- The issue should be of continuing significance, including the objective re-examination of long-standing issues, and of newly significant issues.



In instances where a controversial issue arises on an unanticipated basis during the course of a class discussion, as the result of a student's question, or in the coverage of current events, and where that issue is neither directly related to the course content nor specified as a part of the curriculum, the teacher may deal with the issue on a limited basis, recognizing the existence of legitimate student interest and devoting sufficient time to the question to assure balanced, impartial coverage.

Recognizing the difficult position in which teachers will sometimes be placed in carrying out this policy and in giving students an opportunity to study a controversial issue, the Board places trust and confidence in its employees and will support their appropriate actions and decisions related to controversial topics and as outlined in this regulation in such a manner that they are protected insofar as possible from anonymous, unreasonable, or ill-considered complaints. It must be stated that teachers are required to teach the approved curricula for which they are responsible unless an individual exemption has been given.

Legal Reference: Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-51q  
*Keyishian v. Board of Regents* 395 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)  
Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81)

Regulation adopted: September 21, 2004  
Regulation revised: October 17, 2005  
Regulation revised: August 17, 2020