

Section I: Instructional Goals and Objectives	Knox County Board of Education Policy			
	Controversial Issues	Descriptor Term:	Descriptor Code:	Issued:
			I-420	7/95
			Reviewed:	Revised:
	5/17	8/17		

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Free discussion of controversial issues is the heart of the educative and democratic processes. Freedom of speech and free access to information are among our most cherished traditions. Only through the study of political, economic, or social issues do youth develop an understanding of a democratic society, and through carefully taught conversation and argumentation skills, students develop abilities needed for citizenship in our democracy.

Teachers should use the following criteria for determining the appropriateness of certain issues for consideration as a part of the curriculum:

- (1) The treatment of the issue in question must be within the range of knowledge, maturity, and competence of the students.
- (2) There should be study materials and other learning aides available from which a reasonable amount of evidence-based information and/or data pertaining to all aspects of the issue may be obtained.
- (3) The consideration of the issue should require only as much time as is needed for satisfactory study by the class; however, sufficient time should be provided to cover the issue adequately.

Teachers will establish a process for discussion of controversial issues in their classrooms, and the Office of Professional Development will provide training support for those teachers who need or want to develop their skills for engaging students in discussions around sensitive content.

In discussing controversial issues, the teacher should keep in mind that the classroom is a forum. The class should feel no responsibility for reaching agreement.

The teacher's responsibility is to bring out the facts concerning controversial questions. The teacher has the right to express personal opinions, but in so doing must see that students understand that it is the teacher's own opinion and is not to be accepted by them necessarily as an authoritative answer.

It is recognized that citizens of the community have a right to protest to the school administration when convinced that unfair and prejudiced presentations are being made by a teacher. Such protests shall be registered in compliance with the procedures adopted by the Board of Education for handling complaints.