

ACADEMIC FREEDOM/TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The board believes students should have an opportunity to reach their own decisions and beliefs about conflicting points of view. Academic freedom is the opportunity of licensed employees and students to study, investigate, present, interpret, and discuss facts and ideas relevant to the subject matter of the classroom and appropriate to and in good taste with the maturity and intellectual and emotional capacities of the students.

A "controversial issue" is a topic of significant academic inquiry about which substantial groups of citizens of this community, this state or this nation hold sincere, conflicting points of view.

Also, it is the belief of the board that controversial issues that arise from the board adopted curriculum or present in the current events of the day should be fairly presented in a spirit of honest academic freedom so that students may recognize the validity of other points of view but can also learn to formulate their own opinions based upon dispassionate, objective, unbiased study and discussion of the facts related to the controversy.

It shall be the responsibility of the instructor to present full and fair opportunity and means for students to study, consider and discuss all sides of controversial issues including, but not limited to, political philosophies.

It shall be the responsibility of the instructor to protect the right of the student to study pertinent controversial issues within the limits of good taste and to allow the student to express personal opinions without jeopardizing the student's relationship with the teacher.

It shall be the responsibility of the teacher to refrain from advocating partisan causes, sectarian religious views, or selfish propaganda of any kind through any classroom or school device; however, an instructor shall not be prohibited from expressing a personal opinion as long as students are encouraged to reach their own decisions independently.

The board encourages full discussion of controversial issues in a spirit of academic freedom that shows students that they have the right to disagree with the opinions of others but that they also have the responsibility to base the disagreement on facts and to respect the right of others to hold conflicting opinions.

It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure academic freedom is allowed but not abused in the classroom and that the teaching of controversial issues is appropriate within the context of the school setting.

Legal Reference: Iowa Code §§ 279.8; 280.3, .6 (2014).

Cross Reference: 502 Student Rights and Responsibilities
603 Instructional Curriculum
904.5 Distribution of Materials

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