

# Santa Barbara Unified School District

## Administrative Regulation

**Instruction**

**AR 6144**

### **CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

Controversial issues may be discussed in the classroom, provided that:

1. The issue is related to the course of study and provides opportunities for critical thinking, for developing tolerance, and for understanding conflicting points of view.
2. The issue has a meaningful relationship to matters of concern to the students.
3. Available information about the issue is sufficient to allow alternative points of view to be discussed and evaluated on a factual basis.
4. All sides of the issue are given a proper hearing, using established facts as primary evidence.
5. The issue has points of view that can be understood and defined by the students.
6. The teacher does not use his/her position to forward his/her own religious, political, economic or social bias.
7. Discussion or study of the issue is instigated by the students or by the established curriculum, but not simply at the request of a source outside of the schools.
8. The discussion does not reflect adversely upon persons because of their race, sex, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, sexual orientation, or occupation.
9. The oral, visual or written presentation does not violate state or federal law. Issues that are obscene, slanderous or libelous are prohibited.

The Superintendent or designee shall have the authority to judge whether the above conditions are being met.

It is the teacher's responsibility to select issues for study based in general on the following criteria:

1. Outcome Sought from Controversial Issues Studies
  - a. Ability and desire to study complicated social, economic or political problems and to make intelligent choices of alternatives.
  - b. Skill in critically evaluating sources of information and in recognizing propaganda.
  - c. Ability to use reason rather than emotion in arriving at decisions about significant issues.
  - d. Respect for the differing opinions of others.
  - e. Understanding of the principles of majority rule and rights of minorities.
  - f. Willingness to express conviction that may be divergent from the generally accepted views of the group.
  - g. Ability to discern areas of agreement in differing points of view.
  - h. Creativity in developing compromises when necessary.
  - i. Respect for law and order.
2. Teacher Responsibilities for Controversial Issues Planning
  - a. Select topics or guide students in the selection of topics.
  - b. Encourage students to use a wide variety of source materials.
  - c. Help students to consider and evaluate the consequences of alternatives.
  - d. Direct class discussion to cover all points of view.

- e. Assist students in learning how to detect fallacious agreements, personal attacks, propaganda techniques, and emotional references to points not germane to the issue.
- f. Prevent acrimonious discussion, or stop it at once if it occurs.
- g. Stimulate students to pursue further study of significant issues.
- h. Reinforce respect for lawful procedures through which change can be accomplished.
- i. Screen guest speakers per Board Policy 6161.4 Guest Speakers In The Schools
- j. Provide the principal with advance notice of the activity.
- k. Provide parents notification in a timely manner, and an alternative assignment for students who opt out of the activity.
- l. Instruct guest speakers to sign in at the main office before entering the classroom.

The teacher is the key member of the school staff in the actual handling of controversial issues.

SANTA BARBARA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Santa Barbara, California      May 5, 2009; April 27, 2010; May 13, 2011