

## TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Albemarle County School Board (“Board”) accepts training for effective citizenship as one of the major purposes of education. This includes, in part, recognizing that many important areas of study involve issues on which differing positions are held by individuals or groups.

Multiple perspectives of the issue should be given so that students are taught to think clearly on all matters of importance, and to make their own decisions in light of all material that has been presented. The school principal, in consultation with the Department of Student Learning and in accordance with curricular guidelines, bears the primary responsibility for the development of school procedures for the teaching of controversial issues.

In considering such issues, it shall be the purpose of the Albemarle County Public Schools (“Division”) to recognize the responsibilities and rights of both students and teachers as they relate to controversial issues.

Students shall have the right to:

1. Study any controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance and which is within the range, knowledge, maturity and competence of the students, and which does not conflict with Virginia Board of Education regulations and Board policies and regulations.
2. Access instructional resources containing a wide range of views on controversial issues so that students may develop the practice of critical reading and thinking.
3. Conduct research in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
4. Form and express opinions on assigned issues without creating substantial or material disruption in the learning environment.

The role of the teacher in the presentation of assigned issues is vitally important. Teachers shall use the following criteria for determining the appropriateness of issues for consideration as part of the curriculum:

1. The treatment of the issue in question shall be within range, knowledge, maturity, and competence of the students.
2. There shall be materials and resources available from which a reasonable amount of data pertaining to diverse aspects of the issue may be obtained.
3. The issue shall be significant and shall be curriculum-related.
4. A teacher who is in doubt concerning the advisability of discussing certain issues in the

classroom should confer with his/her principal as to the appropriateness of the lesson.

Assistance and guidelines shall be made available to principals and teachers concerning the teaching of controversial issues from the Department of Student Learning.

Adopted: July 1, 1993

Amended: April 11, 2019

Reviewed: July 12, 1999; December 9, 2004; September 26, 2013

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Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §22.1-78

Cross Refs.: KF, Distribution of Materials by School-Sponsored, Governmental, or Outside Organizations