

**Policy**

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CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Board of Education believes that pupils should be informed as fully as possible on areas of controversy, past and present. It is important for their development into intelligent adults and responsible citizens and that they be familiar with the basis for historical decisions and that they be aware of facts and opinions with which their own world is contending. Free discussion of controversial issues--political, economic, social--shall be encouraged in the classroom whenever appropriate for the level of the group.

Teachers in areas of the curriculum which touch upon such matters shall make every attempt to present to their pupils objectivity, the relevant facts on opposing viewpoints, domestic or international.

Issues may be considered controversial which arouse strong reactions, based either on personal conviction or allegiance to a group. School treatment of controversial issues shall be designed to instruct pupils in fair and objective study techniques. The decision on whether a particular controversial issue shall become a matter for school study shall be based on the timeliness of the question, the maturity and needs of the pupils and the purposes of the schools. Classroom discussions on controversial questions which arise unexpectedly shall be the responsibility of the teacher, who shall provide relevant information on both sides of the question. Such discussions shall be kept free from the assumption that there is one correct answer that should emerge from a discussion and be taught authoritatively to the pupils.

Pupils shall be taught to recognize each other's right to form an opinion on controversial issues, and shall be assured of their own right to do so without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher or the school.

When public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties: in the classroom, at board meetings, and at other meetings related to educational issues affecting the district, the employees are not speaking as citizens for [First Amendment](#) purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline (*Garcetti v. Ceballos*).

The building principal shall have the authority to limit or suspend discussion of controversial issues pending a review of the issue/materials. Instructional materials not previously approved must be reviewed by the principal before being introduced into the classroom.

Adopted: 1994  
NJSBA Review/Update: December 2008  
Readopted: March 2009

Key Words

Controversial Issues, Curriculum, Instructional Materials, Censorship

**Legal References:** N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 General mandatory powers and duties  
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-34 Written approval required prior to acquisition of certain survey information from students  
N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20 Powers of board (county vocational schools)

Pupil Protection Rights Amendment - 20 U.S.C. 1232h

Tenure Hearing of William Lee Johnson, Clearview Regional School District, 79 S.L.D. 267; 79 S.L.D. 273 aff'd with deletion of paragraph

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES (continued)

Garcetti v. Ceballos 2006 U.S. LEXIS 4341(May 2006)

**Possible**

**Cross References:** \*1312 Community complaints and inquiries  
5145 Rights  
\*6115 Ceremonies and observances  
\*6141.2 Recognition of religious beliefs and customs  
\*6145.3 Publications  
\*6161.1 Guidelines for evaluation and selection of instructional materials  
\*6161.2 Complaints regarding instructional materials

\*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.