

Controversial Issues

The district shall offer courses of study that will afford learning experiences appropriate to the level of student understanding. The instructional program shall respect the right of students to face issues, to have free access to information, to study under teachers in situations free from prejudice and political bias, and to form, hold, and express their own opinions without personal prejudice or discrimination.

Academic freedom is not to be construed as a freedom to stray from adopted standards or the instructional learning targets. Controversial issues are permissible when they can logically arise from clearly defined instructional learning targets; they are not permissible when they are contrived outside the scope of the daily learning targets and district approved standards. Instruction that may be considered of a controversial nature should be well-planned and must comply with all other District Policies and Procedures.

It should be noted that, free inquiry in a democratic society requires that controversial issues arising in the normal classroom situation be handled as a regular aspect of instruction and learning in such a way as to not inhibit the dignity, personality or the intellectuality of either the teacher or the student.

Teachers shall guide discussions and procedures with thoroughness and objectivity to acquaint students with the need to recognize opposing viewpoints, the importance of fact, the value of judgment and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions. It is the Board's belief that quality instruction derives from a focus on teaching students to think critically, and not from instruction designed to sway the learner. Teachers will exercise professional judgment in determining the appropriateness of the issue to the curriculum and the maturity of the students. When in doubt regarding appropriateness or the level of resolution about the controversial issue, the matter should be referred to the principal.

The district respects the rights of parents and guardians regarding their concerns about controversial topics and shall grant appropriate access to such materials relevant to their student. It is the Board's belief that two-way communication should occur between parent(s)/guardian(s) and school staff regarding controversial topics that are pre-planned or that arise in the classroom setting. If concerns regarding a controversial topic persist, the building principal will examine the situation procedurally.

**Adoption Date: 10.29.12
Oroville School District**