

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Isle of Wight County School Board recognizes that ~~preparation for effective citizenship~~ preparing students to become effective citizens is one of the major purposes of education; accordingly, the study of controversial topics and issues is a vital component of education. By their nature, the study of history, sociology, literature, the arts, and other disciplines can include topics which may be construed as controversial. ~~The preparation for effective citizenship includes the study of issues that are controversial. Such study is carried out in an atmosphere free from bias, prejudice, or coercion.~~

A topic or issue may be controversial whenever it can be viewed from starkly differing but valid positions such that people with differing views are unable (or unwilling) to accept the validity of the opposing view. This policy establishes the framework for teaching about controversial issues or topics and provides clarification to parents concerning how controversial topics are handled in the classroom.

This framework consists of the following principles:

- A. Parents or guardians have the sole responsibility for guiding their children's views on controversial topics.
- B. Life should be viewed without bias or discrimination toward any individual or group based on their characteristics or identities.
- C. No one is inherently a victim or oppressed due to their race (consciously or unconsciously), skin color, gender, religion, national origin, sex, medical condition, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, military status, or disability.
- D. A person's value, success, and moral character are not determined by their race, ethnicity, or sex.
- E. Socio-economic or citizenship status does not make a person superior or inferior to others.
- F. There is no systemic racism or bigotry perpetuated by the United States or any governmental entity.
- G. Employees of Isle of Wight County Schools shall not endorse any political party, candidate, or ideology in the performance of their duties or responsibilities, but rather remain neutral.

Teachers shall instruct students in accordance with this framework. The Board expects that instruction concerning controversial topics and issues will include the many forms of racism, sexism, and other "isms" that exist today and in the past.

Teachers will establish a safe and respectful learning environment in which students study curriculum appropriate to the student's knowledge and maturity, guiding students to think critically without promoting, advancing the idea, or persuading students to presume that controversial topics should be viewed through any particular lens, within an atmosphere that is free from personal bias, prejudice, or coercion.

~~In teaching about controversial issues, teachers are expected to~~

- ~~• establish a learning environment where each student can study the issues within a curriculum that is appropriate to the student's knowledge and maturity; and~~
- ~~• provide instruction in an atmosphere that is free from bias, prejudice, or coercion.~~

~~Although the instructional program includes study of the political party system in the United States, the School Board does not endorse any political party or candidate.~~

Revised: ~~June 10, 2021~~

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

Cross Ref.: KF Distribution of Information/Materials
JOB Administration of Surveys and Questionnaires
KLB Public Complaints About Learning Resources