

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL/SENSITIVE ISSUES

The Board believes that as a public institution the Augusta schools have a responsibility to provide for the study of controversial issues. Many areas of study abound with vital issues that should be carefully studied and adequately discussed to develop student abilities in reflective and critical thinking. Facing issues without prejudice and withholding judgments until facts have been gathered, and considered and conclusions drawn, are valuable student outcomes of a free educational system. A free exchange of ideas is essential to a democratic society. Serious consideration of purposeful, carefully planned investigations of controversial issues relating to a course of study is important in the citizenship education of students.

In providing for the study and discussion of such issues, schools must maintain non-partisan, neutral positions. Controversial issues may be presented and discussed in school classrooms. Such study shall be objective and scholarly, and teachers shall guard against giving their personal opinions until after students have had the opportunity to collect and assemble factual information on the subject, interpret data without prejudice, reconsider assumptions and claims, and reach personal conclusions. Students must be encouraged to search after truth as well as to form, express, and justify personal views in controversial issues.

The teacher has the right to express personal views regarding controversial issues that have been previously presented and discussed in class. Such points of view should be clearly identified as opinions. The teacher may also express his/her views to generate additional thought and discussion but should identify these opinions and their purposes.

Further, the teacher has the obligation to assist students in achieving a scholarly competence, teach factual information and concepts upon which truth is based, help students develop a respect for factual knowledge as the basis for critical thought, avoid discussion of issues beyond the comprehension and maturity of students, lead students to recognize that some problems and issues escape solution, and demonstrate a deep respect for the dignity of each student and his/her right to express opinions without jeopardizing relationships with the teachers of the school.

The Board may adopt guidelines teaching about controversial issues that are consistent with this policy.

Cross Reference: IMBB-Exemption from Required Instruction
 KE-Public Concerns and Complaints

Adopted: January 14, 2014

AUGUSTA BOARD OF EDUCATION