

Teaching about Controversial Issues and Use of Controversial Materials

The Board of Education (the “Board”) for Mapleton Public Schools (the “District”) recognizes that our community is comprised of people from diverse backgrounds and as such, have varying beliefs. Controversial issues and materials will inevitably enter the classroom and this policy is designed to ensure they contribute to the educational experience rather than detract due to their divisive nature.

Controversial issues are defined as those problems, subjects, or questions about which there are significant differences of opinion and discussions of which generally create strong feelings among people. Although there may be disagreement over what the facts are and what they mean, subjects usually become controversial issues because of differences in interpretation or the values people use in applying the facts.

Controversial materials are defined as learning resources which are not part of the District's approved learning resources and which are subject to disagreement as to appropriateness because they refer or relate to a controversial issue or present material in a manner which is itself controversial. Examples of such materials include, but are not limited to, those that depict explicit sexual conduct, graphic violence, profanity, drug use, or other socially undesirable behaviors, or materials that are likely to divide the community along racial, ethnic, or religious lines.

Films and/or videos rated R, PG-13, or PG shall be considered controversial in accordance with this policy. X rated and NC-17 rated films and videos shall not be used in District schools. PG, PG-13, and R rated films and videos shall be considered controversial at the elementary school level. PG-13 and R rated films and videos shall be considered controversial at the middle school level. R rated films and videos shall be considered controversial at the high school level. Films and/or videos that are not rated should be reviewed by the school director to determine whether it is controversial and subject to this policy.

Teachers may use controversial learning materials and discuss controversial issues if they contribute to the attainment of course objectives directly related to District academic standards. The educational purpose of teaching about controversial issues or using controversial materials must be student achievement in academic standards rather than reaching conclusions about the validity of a specific point of view.

In teaching about controversial issues, teachers shall work cooperatively with the school director. Teachers shall obtain approval from the school director prior to the use of any controversial materials. If a teacher has a question regarding whether an issue or resource is controversial within the meaning of this policy, the teacher shall contact the school director. The school director may instruct the teacher to notify students' parents/guardians to obtain permission prior to discussing a controversial issue or using controversial

materials. Teachers shall inform the school director of controversial issues that arise unexpectedly which cause or are likely to cause concern for students and/or their parents/guardians.

When teaching about controversial issues, teachers may express their personal viewpoints and opinions; however, they also have the obligation to be objective and impartially present the various sides of an issue. Controversial issues are to be presented with good judgment and coordination with the school director, keeping in mind the maturity of the students.

When controversial issues or controversial materials are used as part of the instructional program, alternative learning activities shall be provided when feasible at the request of a student or the student's parent/guardian.

Adopted September 25, 2018, by the Board of Education for Mapleton Public Schools.

CROSS REFERENCES:

IJ: Instructional Resources and Materials

KEC: Public Concerns/Complaints about Instructional Resources

KEF: Public Concerns/Complaints about Teaching Methods, Activities or Presentations