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CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom will be on an informative basis and relevant to the course. The professional staff will guard against giving their personal opinions on sectarian or political questions or any other controversial issues until the students have had the opportunity to find, collect, and assemble factual material on the subject; to interpret the data without prejudice; to reconsider assumptions and claims and to reach their own conclusions. By refraining from expressing personal views before and during the period of research and study, the teacher encourages the students to search after truth and to think for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled, weighed, and relationships seen before drawing inferences or conclusions, is among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system.

The policy can best be described by listing three basic rights of the students:

1. The right to study controversial issues which have political, economic, or social significance on which, at his/her level, he/she could begin to have an opinion.
2. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
3. The right of access to all relevant information freely available in the school or public libraries.

Emotional criticism and the promotion of a cause within the classroom are inappropriate and unscholarly. The professional staff's attitude should be that of the true scholar which is truth-seeking, open minded, and tolerant.

Date: January 21, 1993

Legal References:

N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 General mandatory powers and duties  
N.J.A.C. 6:8-2.1(b)1 State educational goals

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