

MINNETONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Policy #607: CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS AND MATERIALS-AND THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

I. PURPOSE

A “controversial topic or material” involves a topic or material that is part of the District’s curriculum or media collection about which an individual and/or group urge the District to alter the use of said topic or material in the schools. It may deal with a topic for which society has not found a solution, and it is of sufficient significance that all proposed ways of dealing with it arouses a contrary response, or it may involve a material that contains language or treatment of topics that are objectionable to the citizen challenging the material.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Policy of the Minnetonka School District (District) is as follows:

- A. The District has a responsibility to include, in various curriculum areas and at all grade levels, content dealing with critical topics and using materials, some of which will be controversial or raise objections within the community.
- B. Development of rational thinking and preparation for citizenship are the primary reasons for including the study of controversial topics or use of controversial materials in the curriculum.
- C. The District, as an educational institution and as individual classroom teachers have a responsibility to give the student:
 - 1. An opportunity to study controversial topics or read controversial materials which have political, economic or social significance about which they will begin to have an opinion.
 - 2. Access to all relevant information, including the materials that circulate freely in the community.
 - 3. Competent instruction balancing the various points-of-view in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
 - 4. The right to form and express their own opinions on controversial topics or materials without jeopardizing their relations with teachers or the schools.

5. Deliberate effort shall be made by the teacher to achieve balance over time in the viewpoints to which students are exposed. The teacher shall not espouse a biased viewpoint that is intended to influence students' creation of their own viewpoints.
6. Any outside speaker on controversial topics shall be approved by the Principal prior to utilization of the speaker. The use of any speaker on a controversial topic shall be balanced by another speaker who espouses an opposing view.

III. GUIDELINES

Guidelines for the selection of controversial topics or materials to be studied in the classroom:

- A. The topic or material should contribute toward helping students develop techniques for examining other controversial topics or materials.
- B. The topic or material should be suitable for students of the maturity and background represented in the respective class.
- C. The topic or material should be related to the standards and course content and help achieve those standards and course objectives.
- D. The topic or material should be of continuing significance.
- E. Exceptions to the above expectations may be granted by the building principal on a case-by-case basis.

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