

**TUCSON UNIFIED**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

**GOVERNING BOARD POLICY**

POLICY TITLE:

Teaching about Controversial/Sensitive Issues

POLICY CODE: IMB

**Teachers are Role Models**

Democratic tradition often involves dealing with controversial issues. Knowledge and understanding of such issues are an indispensable part of education.

Critical thinking skills are essential for our students' development into participatory members of our community.

The teacher holds a position of authority and respect in the classroom and community and by virtue of that position may have great influence in the formation of the values of all students. All teachers must recognize that personal views are not a part of the instructional program and must be tempered by the responsibility to maintain professionalism.

**Guidance for Teachers**

To ensure that controversial issues are dealt with fairly and objectively, and with instruction as their goal, such issues may be a part of the curriculum as long as the following policies are observed:

- A. Teachers should instruct students in the principles and techniques of the scientific method and provide opportunities for practice in applying established facts to specific problems.
- B. Teachers should seek to develop in students the ideals of truth and honesty.
- C. All personnel should seek to create an atmosphere in which difference of opinion can be voiced without fear and hostility and with mutual respect for all viewpoints.
- D. Constitutional guarantees of due process and freedom of speech will continue to be observed as to students and teachers alike when they are involved in a controversial issue.
- E. Teachers should encourage the suspension of judgment and conclusions until all relevant and significant facts have been assembled, critically examined, and checked for accuracy.
- F. Teachers should seek to develop in students a sense of

responsibility for their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and actions.

G. Teachers should place major emphasis upon "why" and "how" to think rather than "what" to think.

Such discussions shall always be aligned with the curriculum and age appropriate.

## Principal Consultation

The following is deemed to be discriminatory content under Governing Board Policy AC [Non-Discrimination](#):

Epithets, slurs, jokes, negative stereotyping, or threatening, derogatory, intimidating or hostile acts that relate to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, national origin or disability, and, written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, national origin or disability.

However, open and balanced discussion of these issues in a fair and objective context are an indispensable part of education in a democratic society. Teachers are encouraged to follow the "Guidance for Teachers" when planning lessons on the above topics.

Furthermore, state law and Board Policy KB - *Parental Involvement in Education* require advance parental notice and the ability to opt out of any instructional activity parents may deem "harmful" to their child. At the same time, teacher academic freedom is protected under Policy IB – *Academic Freedom*. As the instructional leader of the school, the Principal has responsibilities to both teachers and parents to maintain open lines of communication with parents while protecting the academic freedom of teachers within the bounds of the "Guidance for Teachers" above, and Policy IB.

Therefore, teachers intending to include any of the above as part of classroom lessons, activity, discussion, or learning material of any kind, shall provide advance notice to the school principal in sufficient time to allow for parental notification under Policy KB and Regulation KB-R should parental notice be required. The Principal shall provide guidance to the teacher to assure that the lesson is age appropriate and adequately connected to the curriculum, and shall determine whether notice and an opportunity to choose an alternate learning opportunity shall be provided to parents/guardians in accordance with Governing Board [Policy KB](#) and [Regulation KB-R](#) *Parental Involvement in Education*.

**Academic  
Freedom**

Nothing in this Policy shall be construed to infringe on the Academic Freedoms outlined in Policy IB – Academic Freedom.

ADOPTED: July 24, 2007  
REVISED \_\_\_\_\_

CROSS REF:

A [District Mission, Vision and Values](#);  
AC [Non-Discrimination](#);  
ADF [Intercultural Proficiency](#);  
IB – Academic Freedom  
IMC [Guest Speakers](#);  
KB [Parental Involvement in Education](#)

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