



Book	Cincinnati City School District Policies
Section	2000 Programs
Title	Controversial Issues
Number	2240
Status	Active
Adopted	Not provided
Last Revised	1.11.2019
Last Reviewed	Not provided

The Board of Education believes that the consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the instructional program of the schools. Properly introduced and conducted, the consideration of such issues can help students learn to identify important issues, explore fully and fairly all sides of an issue, weigh carefully the values and factors involved, and develop techniques for formulating and evaluating positions.

For purposes of this policy, a controversial issue is a topic on which opposing points of view have been promulgated by responsible opinion and/or likely to arouse both support and opposition in the community.

The Board will permit the introduction and proper educational use of controversial issues provided that their use in the instructional program:

- A. is related to the academic content standards of the course of study and level of maturity of the students;*
- B. does not tend to indoctrinate or persuade students to a particular point of view, and;*
- C. encourages open-mindedness and is conducted in a spirit of scholarly inquiry.*

Controversial issues related to the curriculum may be initiated by the students themselves provided they are presented in the ordinary course of classroom instruction and it is not substantially disruptive to the educational setting.

Controversial issues may not be initiated by a source outside the schools unless prior approval has been given by the principal.

When controversial issues have not been specified in the course of study, the Board will permit the instructional use of only those issues which have been approved by the principal. In the discussion of any issue, a teacher may express a personal opinion, but shall identify it as such, and must not express such an opinion for the purpose of persuading students to his/her point of view.

No classroom teacher shall be prohibited from providing reasonable periods of time for activities of a moral, philosophical, or patriotic theme. No student shall be required to participate in such activities if they are contrary to the religious, moral or ethical convictions of the student or his/her parents or guardians.

The Board acknowledges that it may not adopt any policy or rule respecting or promoting an establishment of religion or prohibiting any individual from the free, individual, and voluntary exercise or expression of the individual's religious beliefs. However, such exercise or expression may be limited to lunch periods or other non instructional time periods when individuals are free to associate.

The Board also recognizes that a course of study or certain instructional materials may contain content and/or activities that some parents find objectionable. If after careful, personal review of the program

lessons and/or materials, a parent indicates to the school that either the content or activities conflicts with his/her religious beliefs or value system, the school will honor a written request for his/her child to be excused from a particular class for specified reasons. The student, however, will not be excused from participating in the course and will be provided alternate learning activities during times of such parent requested absences.

The Superintendent shall develop administrative guidelines for dealing with controversial issues and with parental concerns about program content or the use of particular materials.

**CINCINNATI CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

Procedure Name: Controversial Issues	
Procedure No. 2240-00-01	Eff. Date: 08/01/18
Implements Board Policy(ies) 2240	Last Reviewed: 1.11.2019

1. Background

This procedure provides guidance around Board Policy 2240. Specifically, the procedures provide guidance to educators on the use of “controversial issues” and the procedure for addressing parental concerns about program content or the use of particular materials.

Board Policy 2240 addresses “Controversial Issues” in the curriculum within Cincinnati Public Schools. The policy states, “The Board of Education believes that the consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the instructional program of the schools.” The policy then goes on to define “controversial issues” and the conditions in which “controversial issues” are permitted in the classroom and curriculum.

2. Responsibilities

Title: Director of Curriculum & Instruction

Address: 2651 Burnet Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45219

Phone: 513.363.0127

Describe responsibilities:
The Director of Curriculum & Instruction shall be responsible for the review of this Board Policy and the regular review and revision of this connected Board Procedure.

The procedures should address the following, as directed by the Board Policy: “develop administrative guidelines for dealing with controversial issues” and parental concerns about program content or the use of particular materials.”

3. Action Steps

1. *Initial procedures need to be completed for Board Policy 2240 that address developing “administrative guidelines for dealing with controversial issues and addressing parental concerns about program content or the use of particular materials.*
2. *Curriculum Department should then review and update procedures annually.*

4. Equity Considerations

Curriculum resources need to be aligned with guidelines in this Board Policy.

5. Related Documents / Forms

Document Title	Description	Last Reviewed
1. Controversial Issues in Social Studies (refer to link or information below) https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-5Qjm4_tZ7p39RBbiR5H3MuTLJMz8czYeSIL-1vV6lg	<i>This document represents guidance given to social studies teachers on controversial issues in Social Studies. It is presented here as a sample of procedures/guidelines around controversial issues within one content area.</i>	<i>March 2018</i>

6. Additional Information

None to include.

Controversial Issues in Social Studies

CPS Social Studies teachers should be engaging students on grade-appropriate historical and current topics with diverse perspectives, historical narratives, historical documents, and credible contemporary sources across the K-12 Social Studies curriculum in order for students to develop a complex and nuanced understanding of history and the world around them.

This aligns with our vision in Social Studies that CPS graduates will be inquisitive historical thinkers empowered to take informed action as engaged global citizens in college, career, and civic life.

There are some helpful frameworks produced by some notable civic and social studies education groups that can help guide educators in making sure they approach these topics in an evidence-based and inclusive manner. For example, we would recommend the following guides on Structured Academic Controversies (SAC) and other guidance for educators approaching issues with multiple, nuanced perspectives:

- From TeachingHistory.org- National History Education Clearinghouse- <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/21731>
- From StreetLaw - see attachment "Steps in a SAC"
- Guidance from *Deliberating in a Democracy in the Americas*: http://www.dda.deliberating.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=50&lang=en
- Guidance from Teaching Tolerance: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/controversial-subjects-in-the-classroom>

In summary, the goal for educators should be to structure the learning experience for students in a manner that shifts the focus to utilizing evidence and reasoning to support claims being made about a topic. The goals should be to avoid debates steeped in emotion to deliberations that shift to consensus building, problem-solving, and informed action.