

Teaching about Controversial Issues and Use of Controversial Materials – Regulation

Responsibilities

Teaching about controversial issues, all of which may contain a significant emotional element, requires the recognition and acceptance of responsibilities by all persons concerned, including students, teachers, administrators, and patrons of the District.

1. **Students.** Student responsibilities begin with a willingness to examine objectively one's own point of view and to make a concerted effort to understand the reasons for differing points of view. Such willingness is basic to working effectively with others on issues of common concern but with divergent possible solutions. Responsibilities relating to this basic premise are further emphasized in the recognition that honest people may differ without malice, without the disruption of emotional outburst, and without impugning the character or integrity of those who have differing opinions.
2. **Teachers.** The effectiveness of the educational program in achieving the objectives set forth in this policy statement is primarily dependent upon the classroom teachers. Teachers have the obligation to facilitate such issues in a professional manner, fostering an atmosphere in which students feel free to form and express their own points of view. In teaching about controversial issues, teachers shall work cooperatively with the building principal. In this regard, specific responsibilities of the teacher are
 - A. To obtain approval from the building principal 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 consult with the principal. The principal may instruct the teacher to notify students' parents/guardians and obtain parents/guardians' permission prior to discussing a controversial issue or using controversial materials.
 - B. To inform the principal of controversial issues that arise unexpectedly which cause or are likely to cause concern for students and/or their parents/guardians.
 - C. To determine the necessity of the issue or material with respect to the Colorado Academic Standards, course objectives, and the knowledge, age, maturity, and ability of the students. Instructional value from the use of the controversial material must outweigh the

likeliness to cause concern for students and/or their parents/guardians.

- D. To make provision for suitable instructional materials and adequate time to give reasonably thorough coverage of the topic, and otherwise to present the issues after adequate planning and preparation.
 - E. To be sensitive to the impact on students, parents/guardians, and the community and judicious in treatment of the controversial issue.
 - F. To maintain an active concern for the rights and impact on individuals, including the right to privacy.
 - G. To demonstrate by teaching style and instructional demeanor a commitment to the methods of objective inquiry in group activities.
 - H. To project in the most positive way their personal and professional adherence to practices which reflect respect for the dignity of the individual.
 - I. To ensure a balanced presentation through the careful selection of materials, guest speakers, and other instructional resources.
 - J. To label their opinion as such when it is expressed as a personal point of view. Teachers may respond to unsolicited questions regarding their personal viewpoints and opinions; however, they also have the obligation to be objective and impartially present the various sides of an issue.
 - K. To teach students those skills required for the analysis of complex issues and to provide a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable developing and expressing their own points of view.
 - L. Provide alternative learning activities when feasible at the request of a student or the student's parents/guardians
3. **Administration.** The building principal shall have the following responsibilities:
- A. To notify staff of this policy and address questions as they arise.
 - B. To consult with the teachers concerning the appropriateness of proposed content, materials, and methods of teaching about controversial issues.
 - C. To maintain a general atmosphere conducive to the facilitation of controversial issues.
 - D. To support and protect teachers from undue and unjustified criticism that might arise from dealing with controversial issues in the classroom.
 - E. To ensure that the instructional program is not exploited by special interest groups or pressure tactics. (This does not preclude the

utilization of guest speakers to present different points of view as long as the prior approval of the principal is secured.)

F. To seek guidance from Legal Relations whenever the presentation of a controversial issue has been challenged on legal grounds or threatens the orderly operation of the school.

4. **Parents and Guardians.** Parents and guardians of students of Huerfano School District are responsible:

- A. To recognize that it is the responsibility of the school to present controversial issues appropriate to the Colorado Academic Standards.
- B. To refrain from attempting to suppress the teaching about controversial issues, assuming that the guidelines of responsibility and appropriateness have been followed.
- C. To inform the teacher, principal, and/or other appropriate personnel when they have concern for controversial issues that are facilitated in an inappropriate manner.

Complaint Procedures

Any person having a complaint related to any matter within the scope of this policy may seek review through the procedures set forth in Policy KEF, Public Concerns/Complaints about Teaching Methods, Activities or Presentations.

Adopted: April 25, 2022

CROSS REFS.:

IMB-R, KEC, Public Concerns/Complaints about Instructional Resources

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

KEF*-E, Public Complaints about Teaching Methods, Activities or Presentations Form

Huerfano School District RE-1 Walsenburg, Colorado