

1st Reading: 12/9/13

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading/Adopted: 1/13/14

## **POLICY:TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL /SENSITIVE ISSUES**

Effective citizenship is a major goal of the educational experience at the Barre City Elementary and Middle School. To achieve this purpose, students should have an opportunity to examine instructional materials reflecting a wide variety of experiences.

### **Definitions**

Controversial and sensitive issues are defined as those problems, subjects, or questions about which there are significant differences of opinion, for which there are no easy resolutions, and discussions of which generally create strong feelings among people. Although there may be disagreement over what the facts are and what they mean, subjects usually become controversial and sensitive because of the different values people use in applying the facts as known.

### **Implementation**

1. Controversial and sensitive issues shall be handled as they arise in the classroom and shall not be avoided in order to restrict or restrain the academic freedom, as defined in the Master Agreement between the teachers and board of school directors, of either the teacher or the student. Teacher initiation of controversial and sensitive issues should have direct relevance to the topic being discussed.
2. Controversial and sensitive issues shall be studied with objectivity by both teacher and students. In handling a controversial or sensitive issue, the teacher shall not suppress a student's view, value and/or belief on that issue as long as the expression of that view, value, or belief is not derogatory, malicious or abusive toward other students' views. On the other hand, one student shall not be permitted to dominate the discussion. In handling controversial or sensitive issues in the classroom, both teachers and students shall be encouraged not to determine what is right and what is wrong in certain issues, but rather to come to their own conclusions as to a particular issue after independent inquiry and parental discussion.
3. In the course of a planned presentation at Barre City Elementary and Middle School, topics may be presented which could cause discomfort in light of students' or families' personal beliefs. Parents will be given advanced notice of the presentation and have an opportunity to view the materials, if requested. Students and/or their parents/guardians may request an alternative experience. This request should be made to the student's teacher.