

Eastern Panhandle Preparatory Academy (EPPA)

Date Approved:

Policy on Teaching of Controversial Issues

A safe and respectful environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. This policy details EPPA's positions on teaching of controversial issues.

EPPA shall address controversial topics in an impartial and objective manner. Teachers shall not use the classroom to transmit personal beliefs regarding political or sectarian issues. Students and educators shall ensure that, to the extent possible, discussions are conducted fairly and courteously.

In guiding classroom discussion of controversial issues, teachers shall:

1. Foster students' critical thinking skills.
2. Encourage discussion based on rational analysis.
3. Create an atmosphere in which students learn to respect others' opinions and disagree courteously.
4. Ensure that multiple viewpoints about the issue are presented by introducing an unexpressed viewpoint when necessary.
5. Avoid any attempt to coerce or persuade students to adopt the teacher's point of view.
6. Comply with the instructional requirements and prohibitions imposed under West Virginia law.

A student or parent with concerns regarding instruction about controversial issues shall be directed to the complaint policy at EPPA.

The requirements and prohibitions described in this policy are not intended to, and shall not, prohibit students from forming student led groups related to the topics described herein or otherwise discussing these topics privately.

Exemption from Instruction

A parent or person standing in parental relation may remove the parent's child from a class or other school activity that conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs if the parent presents or delivers to the teacher of the parent's child a written statement authorizing the removal of the child from the class or other school activity.

Limitations

A parent or person standing in parental relation is not entitled to remove the parent's child from a class or other school activity to avoid a test or to prevent the child from taking a subject for an entire semester. This policy does not exempt a child from satisfying grade level or graduation requirements in a manner acceptable to the school and the state.

Required Social Studies Course Restrictions

The following requirements apply to any social studies course in the required curriculum.

Current Controversial Topics

A teacher may not be compelled to discuss a particular current event or widely debated and currently controversial issue of public policy or social affairs.

A teacher who chooses to discuss a topic described above shall, to the best of the teacher's ability, strive to explore the topic from diverse and contending perspectives without giving deference to any one perspective.

Political Activism and Advocacy Participation

EPPA administrators or teachers may not require, make part of a course, or award a grade or course credit, including extra credit, for a student's:

Political activism, lobbying, or efforts to persuade members of the legislative or executive branch at the federal, state, or local level to take specific actions by direct communication; or

Participation in any internship, practicum, or similar activity involving social or public policy advocacy.

Non-educational Political or Religious Education

EPPA administrators or teachers may not require or make part of a course any non-educational political or religious topics and no non-educational items such as symbols or flags (other than the flags of the United States and West Virginia) shall be allowed to be displayed at the school. These topics and items can be used for educational purposes such as teaching about the Civil War or the functioning of the federal or state government.

Training, Orientation, and Therapy

A teacher, administrator, or other employee of EPPA may not be required to engage in training, orientation, or therapy that presents any form of race or sex stereotyping or blame on race or sex. This prohibition as it relates to race is covered more fully in the EPPA policy on racism.

Complaint Process

If any complaints arise in relation to this policy, the complaint process outlined in detail in the Anti-Bullying Policy will be followed.