**HANCOCK CENTRAL SCHOOL 4810-R**

 **TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES REGULATION**

The teacher is responsible for creating in the classroom an atmosphere of freedom for students to raise questions dealing with the issues of the time, and for maintaining an atmosphere conducive to spirited interplay of ideas.

Teachers should present all aspects of an issue in an honest fashion. Every attempt should be made to deliberately eliminate misinformation and rumor. Statements represented and opinions expressed during discussion of a controversial issue are to be carefully scrutinized, making sure to substantiate facts and, when possible, to check the credibility of arguments proposed.

If a teacher does not feel qualified for an exploration of a particular controversial issue, he/she should guide the students to the proper and qualified staff members who can help the students to arrive at conclusions based upon factual information.

The teacher should acquaint students with books, newspapers and source materials which present data on all aspects of a controversial issue under discussion. Teachers should communicate these needs to the librarian, as well as in developing department materials.

The teacher, through the use of examples, can effectively illustrate and help the student to recognize various biased and slanted techniques in writing. Other topics such as the study of stereotypes and word connotations may be helpful to a student studying controversial issues.

It is expected that any teacher would utilize good professional judgment with regard to the use of outside speakers. If the speaker is biased, the information should be regarded in that context. The teacher may present alternative views or plan a speaker of opposite convictions to balance the study of an issue. A sense of proportion should be maintained, not allowing material to be presented which might be unsuitable for the level of the student. Good judgment is also needed when using the services of a political candidate or an official.

In discussing controversial issues, the teacher shall keep in mind that the classroom is a forum and not a committee for producing resolutions or dogmatic announcements. The class should feel no responsibility for reaching an agreement.

Teachers of subjects involving controversial issues should have the administration and Board’s support if it is found that such teachers have been subjected to unfair criticism or partisan pressures from individuals or groups.

ADOPTED: 9/27/93