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**Policy on Teaching of Controversial Issues**

The WWJ Dorn Charter School Governing Board recognizes the role of public education in preparing students for effective citizenry. The Board also recognizes that as students prepare for effective citizenry, they often encounter issues that may be considered controversial. As a public institution the School has a commitment to objectivity and fairness in the presentation of all sides of an issue.

WWJ Dorn Charter School was founded on principles of anti-racism and educational equity.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the teaching and discussion of controversial issues at WWJ Dorn Charter School.

**Definitions**

“Controversial Issue” for the purpose of this Policy means a point or matter about which there may exist significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives.

“Curriculum” for the purposes of this Policy means the prescribed elements of programs and courses which state clearly and specifically what students are to know and be able to do, how well they will be able to do it, how they will meet the learning objectives and by what means they will be assessed.

**Guidelines**

A controversial issue may be considered as part of Curriculum when the following conditions are met:

* The issue has political, economic, or social significance and is presented within appropriate curricular guidelines;
* Students are provided access to relevant and credible information pertaining to the issue under study;
* Students are able to form and express their own opinions on the issue without jeopardizing their relationship with teachers or the school; and
* Controversial issues shall be presented as impartially and objectively as possible, with any/all perspectives given a voice. Given that no person is impartial or without bias, teachers will be provided with professional development on implicit bias and their role in understanding and addressing their power in the classroom, so as to allow the student(s) freedom to express their views.

**Compliance**

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that information from all views on a controversial issue is presented in an appropriate manner. Any complaints alleging a violation of this Policy are to be filed with the School’s Principal.

* The teacher will serve as a moderator to uphold the School’s Charter and will not attempt, directly or indirectly, to limit or control the opinion of pupils on controversial issues. It is the intent of the policy that the teacher will foster the study of such issues rather than teach particular viewpoints.
* Freedom to teach is essential to the accomplishment of the District’s goals. Therefore, teachers have the right and responsibility to exercise professional judgment, within the limits of the above guidelines, in initiating and actively pursuing consideration of controversial issues.
* The School and its faculty will adhere to approved curriculum and established overarching/accepted research when considering the scope of instruction and its approach to controversial issues.
* In the event the Principal believes that a teacher’s presentation (oral, written or visual) of a controversial issue falls outside these Guidelines, the Principal will so advise the teacher, discuss the basis of his/her objections and recommend an alternative approach to the issue.  The teacher shall adhere to the Principal’s recommendation pending mediation of the dispute by the Governing Board, or their designee.  The mediation shall be conducted within 2 working days of the date the controversy arose.

**Student and Parent/Guardian Rights**

* Students have the right to encounter diverse points of view. They will have opportunities to hear speakers, review learning materials and view presentations representing a wide range of views in classes, school events and assemblies under guidelines established by the School.
* If it is established that a student and/or parent/guardian objects as a matter of principle to participation in an activity assigned by school personnel, an alternative activity will be assigned without penalty or embarrassment to the student.