

Pagosa Peak Open School
Policy Concerning Controversial Issues and Materials
Draft, September 20, 2023

Whereas, the Mission of Pagosa Peak Open School is:

Developing brave and experienced lifelong learners who contribute to our evolving world;

and;

Whereas PPOS staff are brave and experienced lifelong learners who serve as important role models for students at the school; and

Whereas “controversial issues” have been defined by the Archuleta School District (ASD) as “those problems, subjects or questions about which there are significant differences of opinion and discussion of which may create strong feelings among people”; and

Whereas “controversial materials” have been defined by ASD as “learning resources which are not part of the district’s approved learning resources and which are subject to disagreement as to appropriateness because they refer or relate to a controversial issue or present material in a manner which is itself controversial”; and

Whereas controversial issues and materials may include, but are not limited to, such important civil concerns as legal abortion; the existence of institutional racism; gun control; immigration policies; the existence and importance of human-cause climate change; the rights of citizens to adopt alternative sexual patterns without discrimination, including same-sex marriage; the current crisis in health care; environmental policies; income inequality; the influence of wealth in politics; equal rights and equal pay for women; the proper role of AI and the Internet; alleged political corruption; and the continued existence of Confederate monuments; and

Whereas these topics are not only controversial, but also some of the most important topics in current civil discourse, and are eminently worthy of debate and the open exchange of ideas; and

Whereas PPOS staff, who may wish to present our students with exposure to the most important ideas in current civil discourse, may also have no way of knowing, in advance, whether any particular classroom discussion will offend or disturb members of the PPOS community; and

Whereas PPOS does not wish to inadvertently and unintentionally discourage discussions and education about the most important topics in current civil discourse; and

Whereas PPOS recognizes that the sharing of controversial issues and/or materials could have a potential impact on student enrollment, and earnestly wishes to mitigate any unintended distress or discomfort caused by the sharing of such issues and/or materials;

Now Therefore, it is the policy of PPOS to authorize PPOS staff to discuss controversial issues and present controversial materials, when staff believes the discussions and materials will enhance the education of PPOS students, and aid in the development of brave lifelong learners who can contribute to an evolving world; and

Whenever any sharing of controversial issues and/or materials, discussed or shared in a classroom, causes discomfort or distress among the members of the PPOS community — students, parents, staff or members of the larger community — such affected and distressed persons will be actively and earnestly invited to make a presentation to the classroom in question, to present, respectfully, alternative points of view about the matter in question, to the same classroom where the original issues or materials were shared; and

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.