



Teaching and Learning About Controversial Issues

October 2020

As the Ellington Board of Education is non-partisan, it expects its graduates to develop the skills that will allow them to be exceptional learners and leaders who are courageous, reflective, and contributing citizens of the world. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Ellington educators to ensure a school environment - whether within the walls of the classroom or other school related matters - that is safe for all students to exercise their right to freedom of expression and speech without creating a significant disruption of the learning environment.

This includes students exercising these rights when learning about controversial current issues and events (*ie: Presidential Election 2020, climate change, immigration*) as facilitated by Ellington educators who ensure their personal bias is vacant.

Effectively teaching and learning how to *deliberate* controversial issues aligns with Ellington's [Seeds of Civility](#).

- Listen, Observe, Reflect
- Assume Good Intentions
- Allow for Emotional Reactions
- Debate (Deliberate) the Issue, Respect the Person
- Speak One's Truth
- Face to Face (In-Person)
- Find Similarities, Value Differences

*To deliberate is to follow the Seeds of Civility and **thoughtfully weigh options** with a purpose of finding common ground and gaining a mutual understanding of how society evolves together.*

Ellington educators are informed about controversial current issues or events and are committed to providing instruction that is:

1. Free from their personal bias.
2. Current and educationally relevant.
3. Sufficiently balanced with sources / information on the issue.
4. Modified to an age and grade appropriate level.

In addition to referring to the [Seeds of Civility](#), Ellington educators guide classroom discussions emphasizing:

1. Encourage deliberation based on justified analysis.
2. Facilitate the examination of sources' / informations' biases.
3. Avoid persuading students to adopt a particular viewpoint.
4. Ensure all students the opportunity to express their opinions in a safe learning space.

Real world current issues and events enhance relevance and rigor in student learning and can be memorable experiences. Ellington educators practice professionalism in teaching controversial issues that encourage civil and respectful deliberation. They recognize they are role models and that removing personal bias from the learning activity is paramount.