

IKB-R Controversial Issues

7/1/22

RATIONALE/OBJECTIVE:

The Cobb County School District (District) provides a broad-based curriculum and believes that students should understand varied perspectives as part of a balanced education and as part of producing the graduates described in Board of Education Policy IA (Student Performance Standards and Expectations).

RULE:**A. GENERAL PROVISIONS:**

Parents/guardians should refer to the following Board of Education Policies and Administrative Rules for additional information regarding curriculum selection and content:

- Policy IA (Student Performance Standards and Expectations);
- Policy IB (Instructional Program Goals and Objectives);
- Policy IFBC (Media Programs)
- Policy IH (Student Achievement);
- Rule ICD-R (Pilot Projects);
- Rule ICFA-R (Curriculum Guides and Course Outlines);
- Rule IFAA-R (Instructional Resources Selection and Adoption).

B. POLITICAL/PARTISAN ISSUES:

1. District employees shall refrain from using classroom instruction or their relationships with students to influence students, or through them, their parents/guardians, regarding any one political or partisan side of an issue.
2. District employees shall refrain from using classroom instruction or their relationships with students in order to espouse personal political beliefs. As defined in O.C.G.A. §20-1-11, "espousing personal political beliefs" means intentionally encouraging or attempting to persuade or indoctrinate a student, school community member, or other school personnel to agree with or advocate for such individual's personal beliefs concerning divisive concepts (see Administrative Rule IFAA-R).
3. As addressed in O.C.G.A. §20-2-786, parents have the right to direct the upbringing and the moral or religious training of their children. Therefore, District employees shall not improperly infringe upon this right.
4. **Intent:**
This Rule shall not be interpreted to:
 - a. Prohibit the discussion of political or controversial issues that are aligned with the Cobb Teaching and Learning Standards and District goals; or
 - b. Discourage teachers from taking an active part in public issues and in supporting candidates of their choice.
5. **Instruction:**
During classroom instruction:
 - a. Objectivity on all issues shall be observed in instructional procedures;
 - b. Balanced points of view on issues shall be presented; and
 - c. Employees shall refrain from identifying their personal position on issues or preference regarding political candidates.

C. THEORIES OF ORIGIN:

The study of the origin of the species remains an area of intense interest, research, and discussion among scholars. The study of this subject shall be handled in accordance with this Rule and with objectivity and good judgment on the part of teachers, taking into account the age and maturity level of their students.

1. Intent:

It is the intent of the District that this Rule NOT be interpreted to:

- a. Restrict the teaching of evolution;
- b. Promote or require the teaching of creationism; or
- c. Discriminate for or against a particular set of religious beliefs, religion in general, or non-religion.

2. Curriculum:

Theories of origin shall be taught as defined within the Georgia required standards. Teachers should seek to help students demonstrate proficiency in understanding those aspects of the theory of origins defined in the required standards and the impact of scientific theories on the disciplines studied.

3. Discussion:

Teachers are expected to set limits on discussion of theories of origin in order to respectfully focus discussion on scientific subject matter while recognizing that scientific instruction may create conflict or questions for some students with regard to belief systems. Therefore:

- a. Discussion should be moderated to:
 - (1) Promote a sense of scientific inquiry and understanding of scientific methods; and
 - (2) Distinguish between scientific and philosophical or religious issues.
- b. It may be appropriate to acknowledge that:
 - (1) Science itself has limits, and is not intended to explain everything; and
 - (2) Scientific theories of origin and religious belief are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

4. Instruction:

- a. Under no circumstances should teachers use instruction in an effort to coerce students to:
 - (1) Adopt a particular religious belief or set of beliefs; or
 - (2) Disavow a particular religious belief or set of beliefs.
- b. Instruction should be respectful of personal religious beliefs and encourage such respect among students.
- c. Teachers:
 - (1) Should not interject their personal faith-based beliefs, or lack thereof, into instruction; and
 - (2) Should maintain a posture of neutrality toward religion.

5. It is recognized that instruction regarding theories of origin is difficult because it is socially controversial and potentially divisive. The administration expects, and will support, every teacher's effort to provide objective and professional instruction.

Adopted: 8/9/78

Adopted: 12/12/79

Reclassified an Administrative Rule: 9/1/04

Revised: 4/28/83; 8/8/84; 7/28/94; 8/9/95; 9/26/02; 1/13/10; 3/14/12

Revised and re-coded: 9/27/12 (Previously coded as Administrative Rules IHADA and IMB)

Revised: 5/22/15; 7/1/22

Legal Reference

O.C.G.A. 20-1-11

O.C.G.A. §20-2-786

Protecting Students First Act

Parent Bill of Rights