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Controversial Issues in the Science Classroom

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Video will open in new window via YouTube.

Research Briefs -- Video Introduction

"Science offers an understanding of the natural world that everybody can approach through things like the systematic collection and analysis of data or

the replication of studies, and thereby serves as a nonpartisan common ground where students can get together and engage in respectful and well-reasoned discourse about these issues," said David Owens, Ph.D.

Watch the above video for an introduction to the article, [Controversial Issues in the Science Classroom](#).

Also available is a podcast on Lab Out Loud about the article. [Listen here](#).

Abstract

Given that formal opportunities for individuals to learn about, discuss, and debate socioscientific issues begins to wane after high school, it is imperative that students are provided ample opportunity to do so throughout the formative years of K-12 education. The purpose of this work is to offer a socioscientific issues approach to instruction that teachers can use to enhance students' understanding of the science concepts that undergird these issues but also positions students to recognize and evaluate the various societal components that must be addressed when attempting to resolve them. If schools expect to promote civil discourse that begins to bridge the partisan divide concerning contemporary contentious scientific issues, we suggest that engaging learners in the thoughtful negotiation of SSI can be a useful and effective pedagogical approach.

What practical tips will you gain from this article?

1. A clear understanding of what socioscientific issues are and how they serve as meaningful contexts for teaching and learning science in a manner that promotes the kind of civil discourse that democracy requires.
2. An instructional framework for helping teachers and curriculum designers consider key elements for enacting socioscientific issues as learning experiences.
3. Including contentious issues and discussion of values and ethics in classroom settings does not have to be a difficult or risky business for teachers - we provide strategies for doing so.

Citation

Owens, D. C., Sadler, T. D., & Zeidler, D. L. (2017). Controversial issues in the science classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(4), 45-49.

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