

Topic 4:  
**POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND FEEDBACK  
– Controversial  
issues**

# Need clarity on what is considered 'controversial'



Focus  
Group  
Data

Focus group participants called for greater clarity on what would be considered controversial, recognizing that the term "controversial" is subjective. They wondered what drives a term to be labeled as controversial and whose comfort is being prioritized with such designations. (Reported by 5 out of 6 focus groups.)

"A math teacher said it was a good day for accountability (after the Derek Chauvin trial) and a white student popped up and said is this a math class or is this social justice class?" - Student

"One person's controversial is another person's intrigue. Maybe we use a different word for controversial. Maybe we list the topics. A teacher could have no problem teaching civil rights, but another teacher could feel uncomfortable. We need to back up and understand the terms that go into the policy." - Family/Community Member

# Need clarity on what is NOT considered 'controversial'



Stakeholders also indicated that several topics should NOT be designated as 'controversial', such as core values, human rights, students' humanity, police brutality, and minoritized people's roles in historical or current events. (Reported by 5 out of 6 focus groups.)

"I never really heard teachers go out of their way to talk about race or discrimination aside from what in curriculum is discussed. My Asian identity is not there. When we do talk about it, we barely scratch the surface. In recent year, attacks on Asian Americans, my teachers are working hard to integrate current events in this country. It's surprising that it's starting now, only when something happened... When it gets brought up, it becomes a debate with white kids, its like wow you really don't want me to exist." - Student

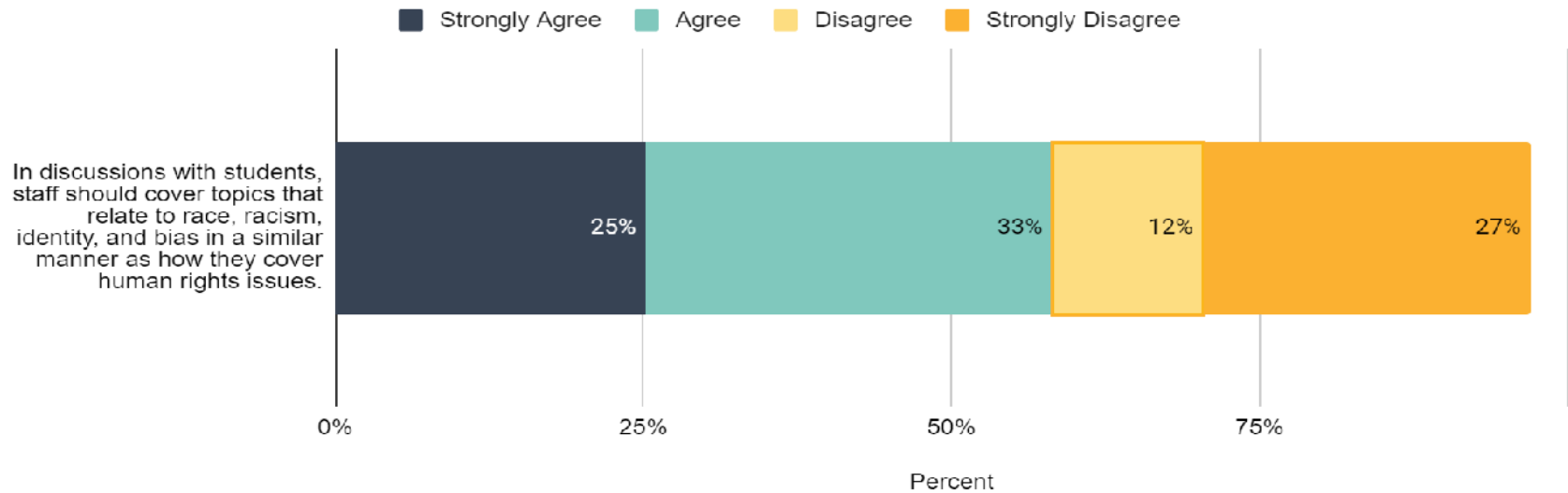
We are so used to not addressing [issues] that it becomes controversial. A person being shot by a police officer is wrong, not controversial. Gender non-confirming? Not controversial. Just because somebody does not come to grips, because white folks are not comfortable, that does not change what is right or wrong." -Staff

# What is Controversial?

“In discussions with students, staff should cover topics that relate to race, racism, identity, and bias in a similar manner as how they cover human rights issues.”



Survey  
Data



More likely to agree:	Less likely to agree:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Asian</li><li>•Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</li><li>•White</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Hispanic or Latino/Latina</li><li>•American Indian or Alaska Native</li><li>•Black or African American</li><li>•MENA (Middle Eastern or North African)</li></ul>



# FCPS must take a stand and not try to be neutral



Focus  
Group  
Data

Participants urged the Division to take a stand in what topics should be covered by schools. They noted that neutrality does not serve students well. While the district may receive pushback, it should be clear in its stance and back up works with action. (Reported by 3 out of 6 focus groups.)

"I think a lot of teachers take this race neutral approach; it is very offensive. One example recently: Reading a book about slavery. We were doing a discussion with one question: what does it mean to, do you think there is such a think there is a good or bad slave owner? ... she took a point of neutrality, but that should not be a point of contention. We were offended." - Student

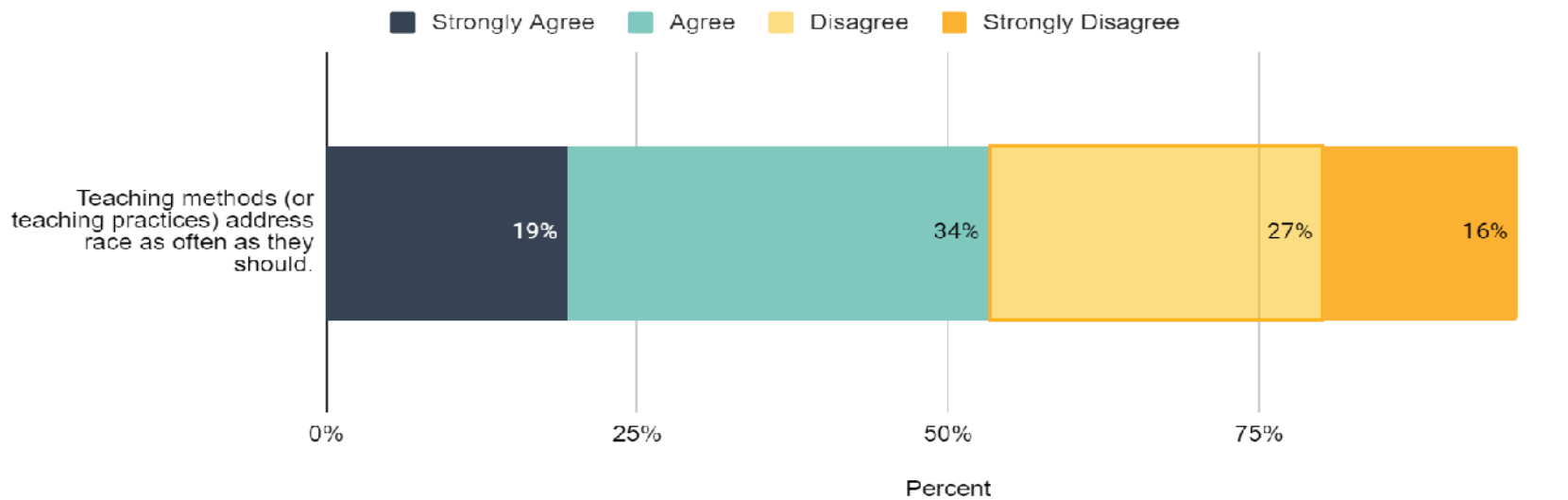
"Most admins take 'neutral' positions, or just want to move past the incident instead of take accountability or talk about the issues. 'Neutral' isn't enough - faculty need to be actively ANTI racist/sexist/etc if change is wanted." - Student

# No Neutrality

“Teaching methods (or teaching practices) address race as often as they should.”



Survey  
Data



## More likely to agree:

- Hispanic or Latino/Latina
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- MENA (Middle Eastern or North African)

## Less likely to agree:

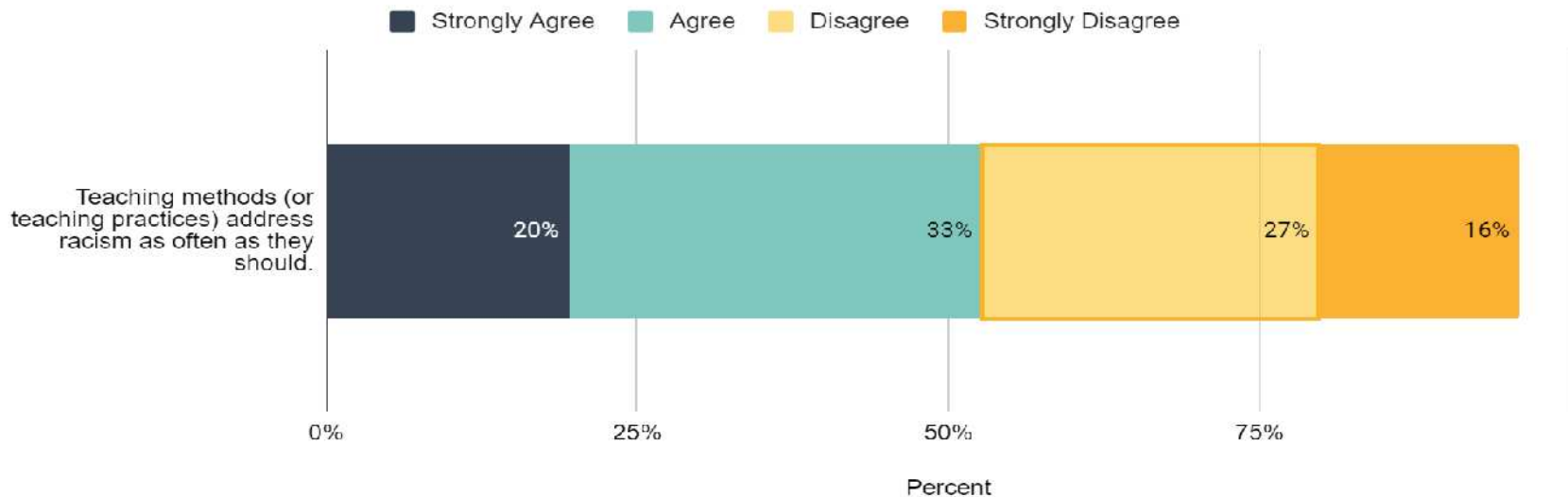
- Asian
- Black or African American
- White

# No Neutrality

“Teaching methods (or teaching practices) address racism as often as they should.”



Survey  
Data



More likely to agree:

- Hispanic or Latino/Latina
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- MENA (Middle Eastern or North African)

Less likely to agree:

- Black or African American
- White

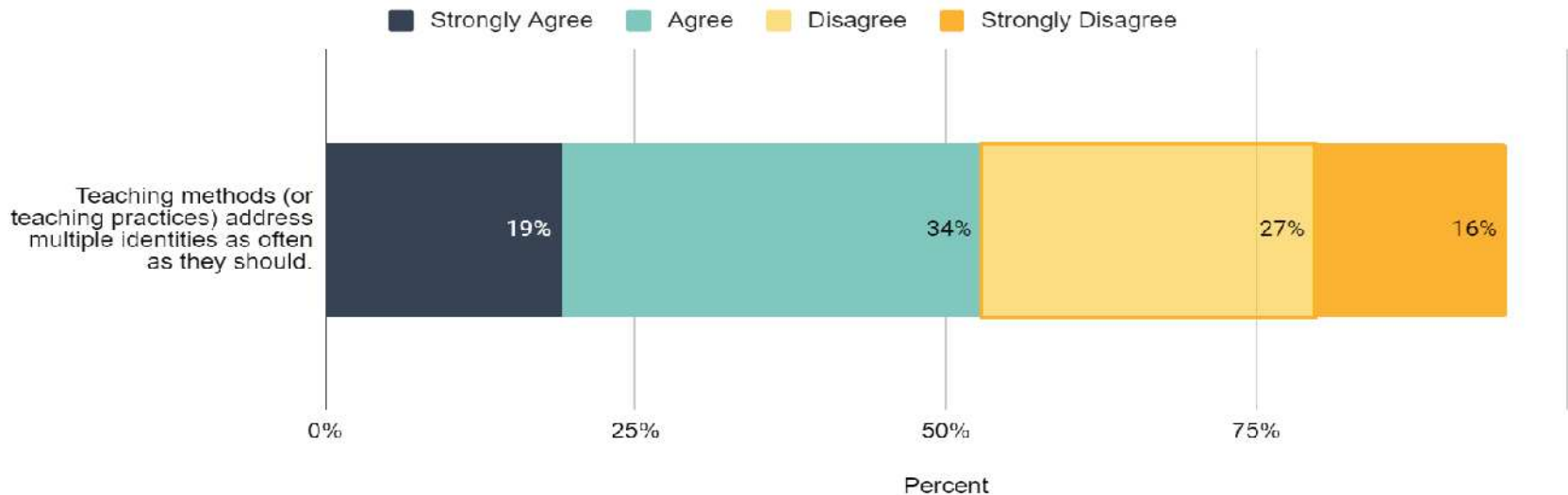


# No Neutrality

“Teaching methods (or teaching practices) address multiple identities as often as they should.”



Survey  
Data



More likely to agree:

- Hispanic or Latino/Latina
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- MENA (Middle Eastern or North African)

Less likely to agree:

- White

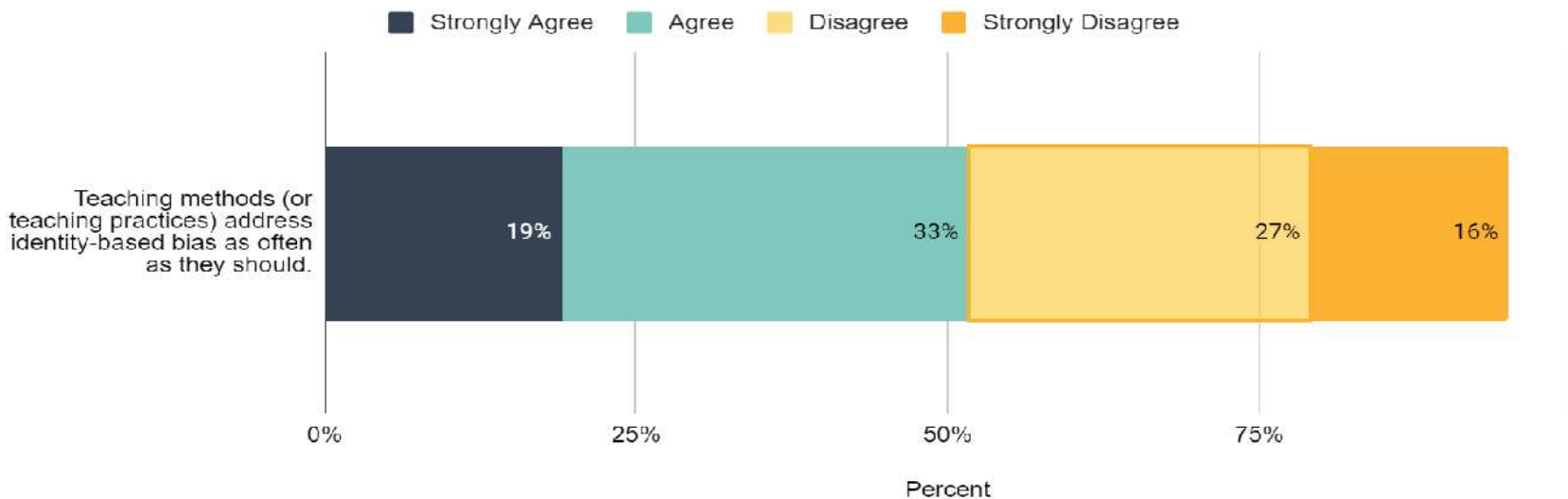


# No Neutrality

“Teaching methods (or teaching practices) address identity-based bias as often as they should.”



Survey  
Data



More likely to agree:

- Hispanic or Latino/Latina
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- MENA (Middle Eastern or North African)

Less likely to agree:

- White



# Participants' specific recommendations for the controversial topics policy:



- Include training for staff "to provide a bias-free atmosphere"
- Specify the topics
- Focus on implementation
- Be mindful of what is appropriate for developmental levels
- "Help support students with their own way of thinking"
- Consider accountability "for when it doesn't happen"
- Protect staff when they cover issues ("this language, as is, can be used to be weaponized against teachers who call out white supremacy.")
- "Saying 'freedom from bias, prejudice, or coercion' is difficult because expressing anything could be seen as biased"
- "Impartially clause will excuse discriminatory practices. It's a real problem, the guise of impartiality."
- Clarify term "program of studies"