

Controversial Issues and Academic Freedom Protection

The District shall offer courses of study which will afford learning experiences appropriate to the level of student understanding. The instructional program shall respect the right of students to face issues; to have free access to information; to study under teachers in situations free from prejudice; and to form, hold, and express their own opinions without personal prejudice or discrimination.

The Board recognizes the need for teachers to have the freedom to discuss and teach subjects and issues which may be controversial. Such subjects and issues may include but are not necessarily be limited to:

1. Politics;
2. Science;
3. Health and sex education; and
4. Values and ethics.

Teachers shall guide discussions and procedures with thoroughness and objectivity to acquaint students with the need to recognize opposing viewpoints, the importance of fact, the value of good judgment, and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions.

The Board encourages and supports the protection of academic learning as it pertains to the presentation of approved curricular materials and recognizes it as a necessary condition to aid in maintaining an environment conducive to learning and the free exchange of ideas and information.

The Board believes academic protection carries with it a responsibility that is shaped by the basic ideals, goals, and institutions of the local community. These standards are expressed via the goals and objectives of the adopted curriculum, by the adopted textbooks, by Board policy, and by the District's mission statement.

In the study or discussion of controversial issues or materials, the Board directs the teaching staff to take into account the following criteria:

1. Relative maturity of students;
2. District philosophy of education;

3. Community standards, morals, and values;
4. The necessity of a balanced presentation; and
5. The necessity of seeking prior administrative counsel and guidance in such matters.

As a consequence of its responsibility to guarantee the protection of academic learning to both students and teachers, the Board expects that:

1. All classroom studies will be curriculum-related, objective, and impartial;
2. Teachers will create and maintain an atmosphere of open-mindedness and tolerance, and recognize that no one idea or viewpoint should necessarily prevail;
3. Teachers will not attempt, directly or indirectly, to limit or control students' judgment concerning any issue, but will make certain that full and fair consideration is given to the subject and that facts are carefully examined as to their accuracy and interpretation;

To this end:

1. The teacher shall be free to choose supplemental materials to support and enhance the regular classroom curriculum, having been previously approved by the Board, except in sex education instruction, as outlined in item four of this section. To encourage the free flow of information and enhance student creativity, unplanned issues may be brought up in the classroom and briefly discussed.
2. The teacher shall notify parents or guardians when controversial issues may be discussed. After receiving notice of a controversial issue, parents may have their child excused, and the teacher will provide an alternative assignment. Students may also request to be excused from controversial issues. If the student is unable to verbally articulate this to the teacher, the student may make this request in writing regarding the conflict.
3. Any parent or legal guardian may have his or her child excused from any planned sex education instruction upon filing a written request with the Board. The Board has established Policy 2340F as a form to either remove their child from any planned sex education instruction or include their child to participate in any planned sex education instruction. If a child is opted out of any planned sex education instruction, then an alternate educational endeavor shall be provided.
4. For any planned sex education instruction, all parents or guardians shall complete the Parental Option Form for Sex Education, Policy 2340F. Sex education is defined as the study of the anatomy and the physiology of human reproduction pursuant to Idaho Code

33-1609. The Board directs that a philosophy of abstinence shall be a part of and the underlying principle in all sex education instruction.

5. When speakers are to be used in classrooms or at school functions, the principals are required to determine approval pursuant to Policy 2345 and the procedures identified in Policy 2345P.

Cross Reference:	2345 2345P	Speakers in the Classroom and at School Functions Controversial Speakers Procedure
Legal References:	I.C. § 33-138 I.C. § 33-139 I.C. § 33-512 I.C. § 33-1605 I.C. § 33-1608 I.C. § 33-1609 I.C. § 33-1610 I.C. § 33-1611	Dignity and Nondiscrimination in Public Education Prohibition on the Expenditure of Moneys for Certain Purposes District Trustees - Governance of Schools Health and Physical Fitness - Effects of Alcohol, Tobacco, Stimulants and Narcotics Family Life and Sex Education Legislative Policy. “Sex Education” Defined. Involvement of Parents and Community Groups. Excusing Children from Instruction in Sex Education

Policy History:

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