

RSU #63

- a. NEPN/NSBA Code:** **IMC**
- b. Title:** **Controversial Speakers/Programs**
- c. Author:**
- d. Replaces Policy:**
- e. Date Approved:** **01/30/2023 RSU #63**
- f. Previously Approved:** **09/27/2021**
- g. Policy Expiration:** **Review as Needed**
- h. Responsible for Review:** **Policy Committee**
- i. Date Reviewed:** **11/07/2022 Policy Committee**
- j. References:** **Policy IMB-R – Teaching Controversial and Sensitive Issues; Policy IMDC – Religious Observances and Displays; Policy IMD – School Ceremonies and Observances**
- k. Narrative:**

A goal of education is to prepare our students to participate in a democratic, pluralistic society, a society that holds many differing opinions and espouses differing causes. It is important students develop an understanding of ideas and people who may seem alien to them. It is also important students develop judgment, a capacity to discern the difference between fact and opinion, and to weigh arguments, slogans, and appeals. Books, films, and other media are valuable for giving students exposure to many different ideas; but for effective learning, it is also useful to invite appropriate persons not on the educational staff to speak or meet with groups of students as part of the educational process.

The RSU #63 Board of Directors (the Board) believe it is important for students to have access to information; to appreciate the knowledge, experience, and accomplishments of others; to be exposed to issues upon which there may be disagreement; to learn to discriminate between facts and opinion; and to analyze and discuss different points of view and draw their own conclusions.

- I.** The Board, in an effort to uphold the students' freedom to learn while recognizing obligations which the exercise of freedom entails, establishes the following guidelines:
 - A.** The teacher/sponsor and the Building Principal will exercise judgment and investigate fully proposed resource persons.
 - B.** When appropriate, teachers/sponsors should encourage the use of resource persons representing various approaches or points of view on a given topic in order to afford the students a more comprehensive understanding of the topic/issue. At the same time, teachers are expected to use professional judgment in determining the appropriateness of an issue to the curriculum and/or maturity of the students. When unsure, the teacher should consult with the building Principal.
 - C.** The ideas presented and the resource persons invited to present them will have a demonstrable relation to the curricular or co-curricular activity in which the

participating students are involved.

- D.** Teachers/sponsor will provide a fair and balanced approach when choosing the resource person.

- II.** A teacher (or staff member) who wishes to invite a speaker in relation to presentation of a controversial or sensitive subject must:
 - A.** Obtain the approval of the building Principal;
 - B.** Submit requests for speakers at least one week in advance; and
 - C.** Notify parents in advance if a speaker's presentation may be controversial.

A teacher/staff member whose request has been denied may appeal to the Superintendent, whose decision will be final.

- III.** Principals may invite or approve speakers for school assemblies when the experience is consistent with the objective of this policy. Special assemblies should be scheduled in a way that minimizes interruption of the instructional program. Whenever practicable, teachers/staff should be given advance notice of such assemblies at least 5 school days in advance.