Board Policy 2340: Controversial Issues **Status:** ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 05/17/2021 | **Last Revised Date:** 11/15/2021 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 07/21/2025

The District shall offer courses of study that provide learning experiences appropriate to the students' level of 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 District affirms that the District, including its employees and students, are to respect the dignity of others and acknowledges the rights of others to express differing opinions and foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry, and instruction as well as speech and association rights appropriate for the educational setting.

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 limited to:

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

Teachers shall guide discussions and instruction in a thorough and objective way to help students understand the need to recognize opposing viewpoints, the importance of fact, the value of good judgment, and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions.

In the study or discussion of controversial issues or materials, however, 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 academic freedom 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 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, including but not limited to requiring students to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere that any race is inferior or superior or on inherent responsibilities regarding: sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color or national origin, 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. This shall include not

arguing that individuals should be treated adversely on the basis of any of the attributes listed above;

4. No distinction or classification of students shall be made on account or race or color, other than as required for collection or reporting of demographic data required by public schools.

To this end:

1. The teacher shall be free to choose supplemental materials to support and enhance the regular classroom curriculum 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 school shall provide for parents or guardians to have their child excused from a topic which may be contrary to their religious or moral values. This shall be done in writing by the parent or guardian and include an explanation of the conflict. The student may also request to be excused if the student personally finds the topic to be contrary to their religious or moral values. The student must explain in writing the nature of the conflict. The teacher will provide an alternative assignment if the request is approved by the teacher and principal.
3. The teacher shall notify parents or guardians when controversial issues may be discussed and that they may have their child excused if family religious or moral values so dictate. The teacher should have the principal view questionable materials.
4. Members of the community may only be invited to speak in class with permission of the principal as outlined in Procedure 2345P Controversial Speakers Procedure.

Legal References	**Description**
IC § 33-138	Dignity and Nondiscrimination in Public Education
IC § 33-139	Prohibition on the Expenditure of Moneys for Certain Purposes
IC § 33-512	District Trustees - Governance of Schools

Cross References

Code	**Description**
2320	Health, Sex Education, and Human Sexuality
2320	Health, Sex Education, and Human Sexuality
2345	Speakers in the Classroom and at School Functions
2345	Speakers in the Classroom and at School Functions
2425	Parental Rights
2425	Parental Rights
2425	Parental Rights
2580	Use of Animals in Educational Programs
2580	Use of Animals in Educational Programs
2580	Use of Animals in Educational Programs